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des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 27 June 2002

Jeudi 27 juin 2002

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 27 June 2002

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 27 juin 2002

The House met at 1845.

Hon John R. Baird (Associate Minister of Francophone Affairs): I ask for unanimous consent to proceed with the adjournment debate before orders of the day and that the sessional day begin when the first government order is called.

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

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: I recognize the member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): In a spirit of co-operation, I just want to make sure we understand what we're doing here. We're going to be allowing Mr Kennedy to do his late show, at which point the government, when his late show is done, will come back and call Bill 148. At the end of Bill 148, when it collapses, there are no other orders that are going to be called. On that basis, we're prepared to give consent.

Hon Mr Baird: I would certainly indicate to the member opposite that if Bill 148 collapsed and the vote on second reading were to occur, we wouldn't call anything as a government order after that.

Mr Bisson: I just want it to be clear for the record: when Mr Kennedy gets an opportunity to do his late show, that's the only business we deal with there, and then we'd move to the next, orders of the day, which would be Bill 148 and the adjournment, right?

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I can't understand what we're doing here either. That's why I was trying to listen to them and find out.

Interjection.

Mr Murdoch: What's that?

I would like the member who just introduced this to explain it again.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Baird, if you could go through that motion once again, please.

Hon Mr Baird: I seek unanimous consent to proceed with the adjournment debate before orders of the day and that the sessional day begin when the first government order is called.

Basically, that would allow the late show to take place before orders of the day, so that Mr Kennedy could have his late show.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? It is agreed.

1850

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): Thank you for the co-operation of the House. I have a late show due to dissatisfaction with the response the Premier gave yesterday, and I guess he or his representative will be here to respond, which the people of Ontario require.

The Premier declined to give either facts or policy or outlook as to why it is that the students of this province, particularly in large urban areas, some of which are represented by government parties—there are government representatives in some of these urban areas, but they aren't standing up either. We may hear from some of them tonight because they'll get the additional opportunity that I'm providing with this late show to say why they're in favour of stripping money out of their boards, why they want to see students in urban areas get by with less.

The Premier, in his capacity as a seven-out-of-eight-year member of this government, as the Treasurer in the former administration that he tries to create distance from, still has the intimate responsibility for what has happened to our urban-area school boards and, most importantly, the students.

I'm here to defend students, and I would hope to enlist a number of members of the government. Frankly, defenders of students right now are some of those much-maligned school boards because what has happened is, for example—and I'm happy to table these figures here in the Legislature today—\$616 million has been cut by this government in the course of its life from the school board in Toronto. Now, \$616 million is a lot of money and the government of the day would like the public to not notice it because they would like to decline responsibility for the \$90-million shortfall that the board is wrestling with.

In fact, including London, Hamilton and Ottawa, the other cities that have declined to put forward forced balanced budgets, there is \$853 million that the Eves government has cut, has taken away from those boards, and meanwhile they say they have shortfalls in the amount of \$144 million. I think a reasonable person would say that if the government is cutting \$853 million, that might have something to do with the fact that the school boards cannot find the amount of cuts the

government is demanding. There is a limit. There is a point at which students are being harmed. If there's a point to be reached, it will be reached more accessibly and more quickly in the urban areas. We haven't heard that from the members opposite who represent urban areas. Perhaps they haven't been in touch with the students.

They're going to release their report card very shortly on our MPP back-to-school program. I want to congratulate a few of the members opposite. Mr Miller will be one, and there will be others, who went back to school for a day. There will be a number of members opposite who will get Fs, not because of anything anybody in the opposition did, but simply because they couldn't find the time, they couldn't be bothered to go back to school and find out if there are schools in their ridings in need of some of the funds that the school boards are presenting to us, to the Ontario public, as necessary for their children's education.

Instead, what the Premier declined to answer yesterday is—if he represents any kind of new era, even if his small little finger or some portion of what he wishes to do is new and he wants the confidence of the public, it'll be judged on his actions. All he has to do is put forward to this House a willingness to entertain the possibility that having cut five times as much money from these school boards as they're now showing as problematic deficits—either money that they have to run as a deficit, which is illegal under the current government, and should be, or they have to in fact make cuts that will hurt children to that amount. Many of them believe they've already made those cuts and they've already harmed the education of children. For example, 55% of kids have failed their grade 9 math test, and none of the members I know of on the other side of the House have said, "We've got to help those kids pass. Some of those have got to go on and be part of a future workforce and have got to succeed." Not a single one. I didn't hear a single member opposite say that special education is going to improve because we're going to do something about that, we're actually going to do something about it.

There may be somebody, one of the members opposite, who will get up on behalf of the Premier and claim numbers, and they'll claim numbers like \$557 million and so on. In the budget it says there was a \$314-million increase in education, which is less than the rate of inflation. What has actually happened is, even this year there is \$87 less for every single student; and in the school boards being talked about, there's even less: \$2,000 less over five years, over \$100 less in terms of the last year in Toronto; similar numbers—\$1,800 less—in Ottawa; similar numbers for Hamilton and London—around the \$1,200 range. That's less money that each child gets per year.

It's not the money that counts; it's their education. What we have from the Premier and from the members opposite is apparently a lack of interest, a lack of conviction and a willingness to hide behind a public relations

agenda, manipulating numbers, rather than giving us the facts and the answers that those students need.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): It does give me great pleasure, on behalf of the Premier, to perhaps answer this question which is related to—I was ready yesterday to answer this late show. I'm not sure if the member was here. I was ready before 6 o'clock today and I'm ready now. I do have many numbers but I'll be very happy to provide those numbers so the member doesn't have to note them down.

Three things we did in the current budget that Minister Ecker brought in, the fourth budget in a row which is balanced. There are three areas where we increased the spending: record spending in health care; record spending in education; and record spending in environment.

Coming back specifically to the question from the member for Parkdale-High Park, I'd like to state that our government is increasing funding for Ontario's public schools by almost \$400 million for the 2002-03 school year. That's a record increase, up to \$14.26 billion. This increase is more than the \$360 million that we announced this time last year. This increase means that the funding will increase by 2.9% over last year, while enrolment itself is only increasing by 0.4%. In fact, while more than half of school boards may see a drop in the number of students, almost all of them—all 72 school boards—will have received an increase in funding. This funding increase of 2.9% is more than double Ontario's economic growth, which was only 1% over the past year.

Not only does this increased funding recognize the expected increase in enrolment, it also includes significant enhancements in key areas. For example, \$200 million for boards to address local priorities—this increases the local priorities amount from \$200 million to \$400 million, which represents an increase of \$100 for every student in the province of Ontario; \$43 million in new permanent transportation funding to recognize cost pressures; \$23 million for boards with declining enrolment; \$25 million for school renewal; \$15 million for the learning opportunities grant to help students who may be at risk of not achieving their full potential.

Last year, we introduced the notion of flexible funding to increase boards' ability to match funding to local priorities, so we're giving them the flexibility. For 2002-03, boards will have \$490 million in flexible funding. This increased funding builds on other commitments made in the throne speech as well, as you would have heard.

There will be three-year base funding for school boards so that they can plan better—they know how much money they'll be receiving—a new budget cycle where budgets are delivered before the start of the fiscal year, and the quality in the classroom fund.

With this \$14.26 billion in funding, we are giving school boards more of the resources and tools they need to enhance learning opportunities for students and making a solid commitment to sustaining a strong public school system in Ontario.

At a time when we've had to make difficult spending decisions, we clearly made the education of Ontario stu-

dents our priority. Since new Premier Ernie Eves was sworn in, our government has announced almost \$560 million in new spending for Ontario's public school funding, including \$65 million for new textbooks and learning resources to give students the tools they need to master the new curriculum, \$25 million for the implementation of the new early math strategy and to expand the early reading strategy; \$350 million in increased funding for Ontario's public schools in 2002-03 announced in May, and \$117 million in additional funding announced in the June 17 budget.

Since its introduction in 1998, student-focused funding has increased by 9.2%, or more than three times the rate of inflation, and the critical area of special-education funding has increased by more than 17%, or roughly six times the rate of enrolment growth.

I'll be very happy to table this so that the member opposite can take a look at it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The late show has ended. I don't know whether to call it the early show or the late late show.

Mr Gerard Kennedy: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Were the legislative rules of order to allow it, I would ask for a late show on the late show because of the regurgitation ably done by the member opposite. I would challenge the member opposite—

The Acting Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order.

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ORDERS OF THE DAY

EMERGENCY READINESS ACT, 2002

LOI DE 2002 SUR L'ÉTAT DE PRÉPARATION AUX SITUATIONS D'URGENCE

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 26, 2002, on the motion for second reading of Bill 148, An Act to provide for declarations of death in certain circumstances and to amend the Emergency Plans Act / Projet de loi 148, Loi prévoyant la déclaration de décès dans certaines circonstances et modifiant la Loi sur les mesures d'urgence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): When we left off, the member for Niagara Centre had just finished his remarks, his debate, so we are now into questions and comments. We'll go in rotation and we'll start with the government caucus. The Chair recognizes the chief government whip and deputy House leader.

Hon John R. Baird (Associate Minister of Francophone Affairs): I was here for the remarks by the member for Niagara Centre. They were interesting and engaging. Every member on the floor is wiser, having heard the member.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I thought the minister was going to say that he was literally on the

floor last night, laughing as a result of some of the comments that were made about the black dog and his colleague Mr Turnbull, who is probably out working at the 7-Eleven again this evening.

Last night the minister was trying to convince members in the House to give unanimous consent to the bill. During the remarks that my colleague from Niagara Centre made last night, I think he made it very clear why we had concerns and why we had put it to this minister that this bill should go out for some committee hearings.

I want to read into the record again a piece of correspondence that my colleague read into the record last night which we think clearly indicates why the minister should have full public hearings if he is really serious about this issue. This was a letter that was sent to the previous minister, David Turnbull, December 8, 2001, and it says the following:

"I am writing today with respect to legislation you introduced in the Legislature on Thursday, December 6, 2001. Bill 148, the Emergency Readiness Act ... is a good first step and opportunity toward making the citizens of Ontario safer...."

"However, my disappointment lies in the fact that this legislation is lacking in enforcement mechanisms for municipalities that do not comply. As well, there is no authority given to a 'body' of the government such as Emergency Measures Ontario to obligate a municipality to have minimum response requirements given their risk assessments.

"For this legislation to truly succeed ... communities must be obliged to produce an appropriate response.

"On behalf of the 9,000 members of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association I respectfully request that you submit Bill 148 for extensive public consultations and hearings. This will allow for proper dialogue and input to occur from the emergency response agencies responsible for delivering these services and from the citizens we are protecting."

I would encourage the minister to respond positively to this letter.

Mr Bob Wood (London West): My comments are going to be very brief. The member does have a long history of experience and interest in this area. While I certainly don't always agree with all his opinions, I thought his speech showed his experience and interest in the subject and he made a number of points that are well worth considering.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I want to raise one of the points made by my colleague the member for Niagara Centre.

I'm wondering about this particular letter, dated December 8, from the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, signed by Fred LeBlanc, executive vice-president, which says, "However, my disappointment lies in the fact that this legislation is lacking in enforcement mechanisms for municipalities that do not comply. As well, there is no authority given to a 'body' of the government such as Emergency Measures Ontario to obligate a municipality to have minimum response re-

quirements given the risk assessments.” It goes on to talk about no money coming with these new powers.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): There is no money.

Mr Bisson: There’s no money. I want to ask the member from Niagara Centre this question: has any minister of the crown seen this letter? Has Bob Runciman seen the letter? I can’t believe that Sheriff Bob, if he had seen the letter, because we know him to be an honourable member who cares deeply and passionately about firefighters and police officers across this province, would go ahead with this bill, having seen basically what the firefighters’ associations are saying about it.

From our perspective, we think the bill is probably doing some good things. No argument, but here’s the problem: once you transfer all of those new-found powers and responsibilities on to local firefighters and other emergency response people, where’s the beef? How are they going to pay for it? Does it mean that municipalities will say, “In order to carry out our new obligations, we’re going to have to cut back on snowplowing, we’re going to have to cut back on who knows what other services, less time in pools for kids, less time to fix our roads,” or whatever it is? It’s a question of give and take. Municipalities only have so much room when it comes to taxation and when it comes to the sizes of budgets they have. If we’re going to download services on to municipalities, I would argue as a New Democrat that you need to make sure they’ve got the tools—that means cash—to be able to do it. I want to know, did Minister Runciman or any other member of cabinet see this letter?

The Acting Speaker: The member for Niagara Centre has two minutes to respond.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): In but two minutes—look, some significant issues. Yes, the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association says there’s a need for extensive public hearings. New Democrats agree.

Interestingly, the bill was presented for first reading on December 6, 2001. Then, last night, June 26, 2002, the current Solicitor General came into this chamber and was frantic about how this bill has got to pass in a hurry because it’s been so long since September 11. Yet, between December 6 and mid-December, when the House rose for Christmas, had this bill been called for second reading?

Interjection: No.

Mr Kormos: Not at all. When did we come back here, folks? April 12 or so?

Interjections.

Mr Kormos: April 9—

Hon Mr Baird: May 9.

Mr Kormos:—until June 26—

Hon Mr Baird: May 9.

Mr Kormos: May—had the bill come forward for second reading? No, not at all. Zip. Zero. Meanwhile, the government brings motions darned near every week to create two sessional days out of one calendar day: sit afternoons and sit evenings. Was the bill called? No.

While one is hard-pressed to attach a whole lot of credibility to the minister of public security, he says, “Oh, it’s really urgent. We’ve got to pass this bill.”

Sorry; the government orders its own agenda. The government establishes priorities. The government determines when we come back, as we came back late by at least a month, if not more, coming back in the early part of May. Too bad; so sad. The bill may well complete second reading today, but clearly the government wasn’t interested in seeing this bill go out to committee during the summer break—didn’t bring a motion to that effect. How interesting.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): It’s my pleasure to have the opportunity to speak to this bill tonight since I haven’t had that opportunity as yet. As my colleagues have already pointed out, our caucus has some serious concerns about this bill. We want it to go to full committee hearings, as do the firefighters. They’ve made that very clear. I think it’s incumbent on the government, when they bring forward such a serious bill that can have an enormous impact on so many people—municipalities, firefighters, other bodies—and there are concerns expressed about it, we should be taking the bill to committee.

I understand that the government did come to our House leader and ask for unanimous consent to bring this forward. We did not give our approval to do that because in fact there has been concern expressed, and some of the reasons have already been pointed out. We agree that municipalities should be required to have plans in place to deal with an emergency, not just for the unlikely event of an attack but if an arena roof caves in or in the case of flooding or other natural disasters. But our first concern is that this bill puts the onus on already cash-strapped municipalities to come up with plans based on what we already know here are their very limited and now inadequate resources as a result of the downloading from this government.

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We need to see a commitment from the government to provide the necessary funding to ensure that our police, firefighters and other emergency workers are able to handle such a crisis. Bill after bill after bill has been coming forward in this House with consequences for municipalities without the necessary resources coming from the government to ensure that they can actually handle those new requirements.

The fire marshal’s staffing guideline of 10 firefighters on the scene in 10 minutes is currently not happening. Most municipalities are not in compliance with this. So we want to know, what are the standards the government will impose on municipalities in regulations? How will they differ from the standards already in place? How will they ensure compliance if there isn’t funding to help municipalities deal with their existing needs? They don’t have the funding for their existing needs, not to mention the needs they would have in times of crises.

There are a lot of unanswered questions in this bill. I can understand the government wanting it to move for-

ward, although they had ample opportunity in this House to have brought this bill forward and have full debate on it. It's just common sense—dare I use the term; I see the government doesn't use that one very much any more—to bring a substantive bill like this out for public hearings so that those who are directly affected, like municipalities, police, firefighters and other civil servants who have to set the standards for emergency management, can have a say in making amendments and improving upon this bill, making sure that the resources are there to actually make the bill work, because without those resources it's not worth the piece of paper it's written on, it's all smoke and mirrors. The government can say, like a whole lot of other bills they bring forward, “Oh, we brought in”—whatever the great title is—“Bill 148, the Emergency Readiness Act, 2002.” That's going to look good on paper, like the titles of a lot of other bills, but it won't happen if the resources aren't there to do it.

In the context of this bill, it has been a very disappointing day here in this Legislature for me and perhaps for members all around. I know the government wanted this bill to be passed by unanimous consent. We couldn't agree to that, because we don't support the bill. But all three parties here today had certain bills that everybody supported and agreed with, but because of the general games and last-minute negotiations that go on between all three House leaders of all three parties, the games that most people don't see—

Interjection.

Ms Churley: This is serious, actually, because I blame everybody in the Legislature for the mess we're in now. When I came into politics, and over the years it has grown—and coming back to this bill, there's a reason why I can't support unanimous consent for it today. But when I came into politics I came, like most people, wanting to do the most good for the most people, especially my constituents, but all of the people of Ontario. I believe that's why we all get elected and come to this House, no matter which party we're from. God knows, I don't usually agree with Tory legislation, but sometimes I agree with some of the legislation. Some of the Tory backbenchers have good pieces of legislation; I would say innocuous legislation, nice legislation. The Liberals had some good legislation that we all agreed with today, like the environment and health committee, which we all supported. I had two bills today, the adoption bill, Bill 77, which, God knows, I've been trying to get through in this House since 1999—and Tony Martin before that. The majority of people agree with it, but a few people continue to hold it up, whereas there are thousands and thousands of people in support of that particular bill, unlike this bill here today, which people have problems with.

Another bill, Bill 3, the Safe Drinking Water Act, to our surprise the government agreed to send out to committee for public hearings. Lo and behold, later this afternoon I realized in the context of this bill—the bill I'm speaking to—and other bills the government wanted unanimous consent on today, that we ended up not getting Bill 77.

I wasn't surprised by that. It's difficult. There are a couple of key, influential players in the government who keep holding it up, and I'll just keep working away on it. I did tell my House leader that that should be the thing we should fight for and that we should negotiate around, but I did admit I didn't think we could get that bill. I didn't realize that Bill 3 was going to come into it, as with the bill I'm speaking to here, Bill 148, the Emergency Readiness Act, 2002, and other bills that we knew the government wanted.

Lo and behold, I just took it for granted that Bill 3, the Safe Drinking Water Act, which was in Premier Ernie Eves's budget speech, a bill the Premier stood up and said he wanted to go out to committee, that it was a good bill to take forward, a bill I've been talking to the Minister of the Environment about for some weeks now, a bill I've been talking to community after community about over the last little while—people were very excited to see, once and for all, what they want to see more of: legislators working together for the common good. Bill 3 is a shining example of that.

What did we see today? I say, “Shame on all of us,” that we couldn't come together—the little games we play in the Legislature on the last day of the session that no people out there care about. Most people have no idea of the games that are played and the negotiations that go on. They're part of how this place works. Those of us who have been around for a while—my colleagues here—have been on both sides. We know how the games are played on the last day of the House. House leaders sit down and negotiate. That's what happens. It's horse-trading: “You give me this, and I'll give you that.”

What's happening more and more is that trading isn't happening. For some bills, like this bill, Bill 148, the Emergency Readiness Act, there are good reasons. We have real problems with this bill, and there is no way we were going to agree to it today. We want it to go to public hearings. I do not see why, when we had a bill such as Bill 3, a Safe Drinking Water Act that all three parties agreed to, or Mr Duncan's private member's bill to set up a select committee to look at the connections between health and the environment—there are a lot of people out there, after hearing the debate, which I spoke favourably to, looking forward to that committee being started this summer.

I was told that Bill 3 would go out in the fall. I do not understand how Bill 3 entered into the negotiations whatsoever as I talk about Bill 148, the Emergency Readiness Act, which I do not support in its present form. We all agreed that Bill 3, in the context of Judge O'Connor's recommendations, was a good bill, that it had to go out and, yes, that it had to be substantively changed, because when I wrote my bill—I worked hard on that bill, and so did a lot of other people—we were trying to do something that was good for all Ontarians. But I agreed with the minister and the Premier that it needed changes, because now we had the benefit of Judge O'Connor's recommendations.

When that bill goes to committee, if it ever does now, I may not agree with all the amendments. I still have the

ability, if I don't like it, to kill it. Then the government would have to come back with its own bill. But I am working with environmentalists now. I am trying to make sure the amended bill will be in place as soon as possible, so that we'll never see another Walkerton again. That's what we're supposed to be doing in this Legislature. That is why we're here. Yes, we get up and debate and argue and have fun and games time after time, and mostly we don't agree with each other. And those debates are important. But for heaven's sake, when once we get a bill before this Legislature that's going to have a huge impact on our water, that's going to protect our water so that it's safe to drink, a bill that the Premier said he wanted to send out for hearings, that none of the House leaders could get together today and find a way to make that happen is a disgrace to this whole House.

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I would say to each and every party today that there is still an opportunity before we leave this Legislature tonight to get together, to sit down and say, "Let's work something out here," so we can send Bill 3 out to committee, because I'll tell you, it should not be a part of any of the negotiations today. I told my House leader that, and I told the government House leader and the Liberal House leader that, that I was shocked and surprised when I found out that Bill 3—a bill that the government said it wanted to go out to committee, and the Liberals had supported it going out to committee and, of course, my caucus—was even included in the negotiations. I think we all agree that was a bit of a shock.

I understand that the House leaders were fighting with each other and couldn't agree on things. That's accepted; that's happening more and more. We see very little agreement any more in this Legislature. But it's not only not fair to me—and I am upset, I'm hurt, I'm angered and, frankly, I'm shocked that this isn't going forward. I felt so good as a legislator that I worked for two years on a bill and finally got the agreement of the whole House that it should go to committee, I felt so good as a legislator that I was doing something positive and bringing forward something positive, I was being listened to. So personally, it's a real blow and a real shock to me.

But that's not what it's really all about. It's the Ontario—

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): It's in the budget.

Ms Churley: Yes, it was in the budget too. Your Premier said he wanted to bring this forward in answer to a question I asked one day. Furthermore, my name and the name of the bill were mentioned in your government's budget. Today this bill somehow gets caught up in silly negotiations around who gets what.

Again, I want to make it clear that there shouldn't be horse-trading over bills where there are problems. If any party disagrees with the content of a bill and feels that it needs to go out for hearings—as does this bill, the bill I'm speaking to tonight, Bill 148, the Emergency Readiness Act, 2002—then nobody should have to negotiate away any bill that they have concerns with. But there

were bills on the table that I'm aware of from all three parties from private members that we all supported, and those bills should have been, could have been, supported tonight.

Coming back to this bill before us tonight, I regret to say that I'm not in a position to say I can support it. I know the government wants it supported and wants to push it through, but we do have concerns about it and it really should go to committee. I think quite frequently, when opposition members hold up bills and demand committee, there is good reason for it. For instance, if Bill 3 were not going out to committee, even I, the author of this bill, would want to send it out to committee because I know it needs some scrutiny. I want to hear from the experts in the field. I want to hear from environmental lawyers and community people, the people of Walkerton, municipal leaders, all of the people whom this will impact. I want to hear what they have to say. I'm sure that the government would want to hear what those affected by this bill have to say.

As for Bill 77, I'm sorry that it got caught up in all of this because we went to the wall in the last sitting. We went to the wall and wouldn't allow any other bills to pass, although some we wouldn't allow because we had problems with them; there's no doubt about it. But we stood firm because this adoption disclosure reform is so critical for thousands of people across the province, some of whom have been fighting for this since the 1970s. We know that only a few people are opposed to it and yet we can't get it passed.

I must tell you that I wasn't surprised that we couldn't get it through today. I will keep trying, I will be back and I know that my caucus will support me on it. But what I don't want to see happen is every good piece of legislation that comes before us in this Legislature, that we all agree on, getting held up in silly negotiations on the last day, with big egos involved, and at the end of the day, nobody gets anything.

Do you know what? We're not the losers. We all go off on our—well, I don't know about you, but I'm not really going on holidays. I've got a lot of work ahead of me. But we all leave here tonight and we go on with our lives and there are lots and lots of things happening. I will move on and go on and I will keep struggling. I don't know what the government plans to do with this bill now. But the losers are the people of Ontario. We're here. This is not a joke. This is really serious. That's why, to be sincere here, it's very seldom in this Legislature that we do this, but at this stage of my life, what I want to do is not—yes, I want to have fun and enjoy what I'm doing, but I want to serve the people of Ontario. I want to be able to do things that matter, that make a difference, that make a change for the positive. I would think that most of the members here would agree with that.

So in closing, I don't know if the House leaders are watching. One is in the chamber tonight. I'll speak directly to the other House leaders. I would ask them to get back in here tonight and stop playing games around

Bill 3. I know that we're not going to get Bill 77 passed today. I understand that there are members who have serious problems with it, and I know over time I will change their minds. I will keep working on it. But it will happen, believe me. It will happen.

As for Bill 3, the Safe Drinking Water Act, it is incumbent on all of us tonight, before we leave this chamber—let's leave, dare I say, with our heads high. Let's leave here having gone forward with a promise that the Premier of this province made shortly after he was elected and, indeed, included in his budget speech. We don't know when we're going to be back here again. I don't know when the Tories are going to recall the House. The clock is ticking.

We have a good bill in Bill 3. A lot of serious work went into it. It should not be a part of these negotiations that went on today. I know House leaders are mad at each other and some are mad at me, but that is beside the point. I think that we still have an opportunity tonight to do the right thing. I notice that the government whip is here. I'm sure there will be unanimous consent to bring Bill 3 forward and for bringing forward Mr Duncan's private member's bill, which I personally support very strongly. I think the faster we get out there on that committee, the better.

There are some government bills that I think should be and could be brought forward tonight. I don't mean this one. I have problems with this bill and I want it to go to committee. But there are some private members' bills that I personally support. I just don't like this kind of game playing that holds up bills that are of benefit to all the people of Ontario, bills that we all can support and all do support. So I would ask that the House leaders get in here and let's get Bill 3 on the road tonight. Let's get the select committee on health and the environment out. Let's get some of the Tory private members' bills out.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Murdoch: I want to thank the member across for probably one of the better speeches she has made in here. I totally agree with her. She mentions a lot of things—and I guess you and I have been here about the same length of time and we get sort of used to this, but it's not a nice thing to get used to because this seems to happen every time we adjourn our House; we get into these little squabbles.

I agree with you. I was sort of proud that our party mentioned your bill in our budget. I thought that showed a sign that we were maybe getting along with the other parties, and that's good because this place never works right unless we do. As you say, your bill is for everybody across Ontario, not just for yourself.

I also have a bill—and it's not as important as your bill, I'll admit that, but it's the marriage commissioners. We need them all across Ontario, up north, in rural Ontario and I'm sure here in Toronto. It has gone to committee. We had committee hearings, two days of debate, and then we had a day of clause-by-clause. It wasn't a big bill, but we did that. It's back in the House and unfortunately it doesn't look like we're going to get

it through either. I know the Liberals have some good bills. I just wanted to say that I was pleased to hear what you said today because you told it like it is and maybe somebody will listen to us before the night's over.

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Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Well, this House leader is in the House, has been in the House and has been listening to you. I would like to say a couple of things. First of all, there was agreement between the government and the official opposition with respect to Bill 3, with respect to a number of other private members' bills, with respect to the resolution I put forward this morning. The position the member put forward now is different from the position that her House leader put forward, which is that unanimous consent on Bill 77 would be required. Now the government, unfortunately, did tie your bill into that.

I've suggested that other opportunities can happen and I've just suggested to the government House leader that possibly we could send Bill 148 to committee right now for a day or two of hearings, to allow the third party to put positions, to allow us to put whatever amendments, provided we agree to bring it back first thing when we come back in September and therefore allow a break in this log-jam.

I think we all regret—and I must say that I felt the government was reasonable in its request. They offered what I thought was a reasonable offer to both opposition parties. If you're reflecting a change in your House leader's position, I think we can possibly break this log-jam. I would suggest strongly to the government whip and the government House leader that this party, the Liberal Party, would certainly support an opportunity to move Bill 148 into committee now to allow for a certain amount of hearings, whether it be a day or whatever, and we would agree to give it speedy passage upon resumption of the House in September in exchange for your very important bill. Ms Churley's worked very hard on Bill 3. I know that she'd be disappointed about Bill 77, as I would be. I attempted to get it passed today. But I think that would break the log-jam and hopefully that can happen.

Mr Bisson: I want to echo many of the comments that my colleague made, because quite frankly she's right to an extent. Far too often in this Legislature members bring forward in good conscience, good faith, private members' bills that they feel strongly about—they're trying to do something on behalf of a constituency or constituents—and far too often many private members' bills—the vast majority of them unfortunately, both bills and motions—don't get passed here. So I hear her call, and I think it's a call that we all make as members of this assembly, that we have to have a process by which private members' bills have easier passage.

Bill 77 I thought was rather unfortunate. This is like her third bill; I'm not sure, Marilyn, your third or your second bill? Mr Martin has had this bill in the House before. It's a bill that many stakeholders have called for, many people have wanted to get passed. Unfortunately,

when the House leaders met, the government said, "What do you want?" The process was that the government said, "Here's what we want," including Bill 3. They asked the opposition what they wanted, which was their two bills—Mr Dwight Duncan's bill and Mr Bradley's bill—and asked what we wanted. We wanted Bill 77 and the government said, "No, you can't have it."

Unfortunately, we get caught up in that situation where a government, by way of its majority, basically doesn't allow many private members' bills to go forward. So as parties we're left in the unenviable position after that of saying, "All right. They're not allowing our bill to go forward." It's a bill that Marilyn feels very strongly about. We know how passionate she is on it. She's been advocating for this bill for a long time. And other bills get caught up in the interim, in this particular case Mr Wettlaufer's and others. So I think she's right. We need to have a process to be able to deal with private members' bills and we need to figure out a way to make that happen sooner rather than later.

As far as what's happening with the House leaders and the whips, I can just say that we certainly are more prepared to allow Bill 3 to go to committee. We don't have a problem. Obviously it's our bill. Unfortunately the government didn't call it, could have brought a motion today and didn't.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): It was very noble talk from the member for Toronto-Danforth, and I appreciate what she was saying, but I think she should also realize that it was not just the government that was holding up passage of bills. We also had a bill that was non-controversial, that was debated in this House on December 13, the Nikkei heritage bill, and the NDP held it up at Christmastime. Once again today the NDP held up passage of it. I stood up, asked for unanimous consent for passage on third reading today and again the NDP held it up. So, Speaker, I wanted you to know that for all this noble talk from that corner over there, they should realize they're as guilty as anybody.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Toronto-Danforth has two minutes to respond.

Ms Churley: I'd like to thank all the members for their comments. We're back a bit into the blame game. What I'm trying to say here is, let's stop that tonight—except for the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, I believe.

What I'm saying is that Bill 3 shouldn't be part of those negotiations. I don't know how they entered into it. Think about Walkerton.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): Oh, please.

Ms Churley: He says, "Oh, please." That's what Bill 3 is all about, for heaven's sake. I wrote Bill 3 as a result of people dying in Walkerton and over 2,000 people getting sick. In response to that, Mr Eves, your Premier, said it was a good bill. Mr Harris did not support it, but what I'm saying is that your government already said we were going to go forward with committee hearings on Bill 3.

I ask people again, stay away from the blame game right now. Think about what your Premier promised and

the fact that Bill 3 should not have become part of those negotiations. We were this close to having a motion brought forward to allow that committee to go forward in September. I think that was what we had finally worked out. In fact, the environment minister, myself and my House leader worked hard, along with the official opposition, to—

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Environment and Energy, Government House Leader): You didn't tell the truth, that's the problem.

Ms Churley: Chris, I'm trying to stay away from the blame game here because what I'm talking about is that Bill 3 should not be part of these negotiations. You're the environment minister and you should care just as much as I do about this bill getting out there for committee hearings. I ask you again to stand up and make a motion so it can go out to committee.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): It is indeed my pleasure to stand and speak to Bill 148, the Emergency Readiness Act. In my short time here in the House I have learned that, try as it might, sometimes the government misses a target by a lot. An example of that would be Bill 58, the Hydro One act. Sometimes it gets very close, like Bill 81, which had a lot of good sense to it but which Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals were not able to support because it really didn't protect water as well as it could have and left farmers, who were having a very difficult time, out on their own with no financial assistance.

Sometimes they pass good legislation that is absolutely bang on what's needed. I can think of yesterday when the House passed the bill that protects children from sexual exploitation. However, I then realized, once I put it down on my list of good legislation, that in fact it was a slight modification of a bill put forward by our member for Sudbury, Rick Bartolucci.

Dalton McGuinty recognized immediately that this bill was required. It was a reaction to September 11, and good for the government for doing that. But Dalton McGuinty put forward amendments that would have provided some financial resources to the municipalities to make it actually happen. It's no good to make plans and it's no good to talk about being ready for an emergency if there are not finances there to be ready for the emergency.

I would suggest there's a pretty good example of how unprepared this government is for an emergency and how little they recognize the crossover from ministry to ministry, and from municipalities to school boards to the provincial government. Certainly, in my riding—and I suspect in a lot of Ontario—the government funding formula for schools has produced such cutbacks that we have schools in this province, predominantly rural schools, that have no principal, no secretary and no custodian in the building.

Right now I'm ashamed to say that if there's a family emergency affecting one of the children in our community, they phone the school and leave a message on an

answering machine. That may be 1:30 in the afternoon. That message may get picked up at recess, if the teachers aren't outside with the students, or it may get picked up at the end of the day. That means that in the event of a significant disaster or a significant crisis in all of Ontario or in one specific community, if the schools were phoned, the police or the school board officials, whoever is involved, would have to leave a message on the answering machine to be listened to an hour or two hours later.

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The government should be ashamed that it has come to this, that there is no way to have direct contact. If they're concerned about safety in a school, there needs to be a gatekeeper. Whether it be a custodian or a principal or a secretary, there needs to be one available in each school, because the teachers are naturally in the classroom. Someone is free, unfortunately, in some cases, to come into some of our smaller rural schools and wander at will in the hallways or in other rooms. So if we're interested in security, surely security of our students should be the number one obligation. The rhetoric has been good about being concerned about children and the rhetoric has been good about being concerned about safety, but there has been no action.

One shouldn't judge a government by its rhetoric; one should judge a government by its actions. People in Ontario have now had since 1995 to judge this government's actions regarding a lot of issues, but specifically this evening regarding emergency preparedness. What is this government's commitment to being ready for an emergency? I would suggest that one of the major players in being ready for an emergency would be our police forces. In fact, I will focus on the Ontario Provincial Police in eastern Ontario.

The OPP need to be dispatched to their calls, for reacting to a call or reacting to an emergency, from a dispatch centre. The OPP have decided that it is in their best interests and the best interests of the people of Ontario to have five dispatch centres in all of Ontario. Three of them have been up and running for quite a number of years now. It's probably mere coincidence that the three that are up and running are all located in ridings that are held by members of the Progressive Conservative Party. It may be a coincidence—maybe I'm a little cynical and skeptical.

For people in northern Ontario who are served by the Ontario Provincial Police and for people in eastern Ontario served by the Ontario Provincial Police, they are utilizing a radio dispatch system that is between 25 and 30 years old. Let's put that in perspective. The desktop computer is only about 20 years old. The OPP are using radio systems that were designed and put in place 10 years earlier than that, 30-year-old radio equipment. We're moving so fast in technology now—we had beta, we had VHS, we have DVD, MP3 players. I don't understand it all, but I know we're moving at a rapid pace. But for the people in northwestern Ontario and eastern Ontario, they're using 30-year-old technology. There are

significant numbers of police officers using radio technology that was in place before they were born. That is absolutely unforgivable in today's climate.

The government recognized that this equipment needed replacing. I became aware in 1999 that they were looking for a site in eastern Ontario. In the beautiful riding of Prince Edward-Hastings, there was a brand new OPP station built—it was called the Quinte detachment—that was built at the intersection of Highway 401 and Wallbridge-Loyalist Road, a brand new building, state of the art, the best of everything. Very shortly after it was built, the government cut the OPP loose and said to municipalities, "You've got to amalgamate and you can do whatever you want for police forces." The local municipalities chose to go with the municipal forces and expand them. So now we have a brand new state-of-the-art building that's about a year and a half old. The Ontario Provincial Police had no need for it and closed it.

However, the OPP were also very aware that they needed a new centre for radio communications and they identified some criteria—the OPP did; not the politicians, not the Ontario Realty Corp, but the Ontario Provincial Police. They identified that the building had to be one storey. That's what it is. It had to be located on a main highway. The 401 is as main a highway as you'll get. This government will probably download it if they can find a way to do it, but at the moment it is still an extremely major provincial highway. In fact, the volume of traffic between Windsor and the Quebec border is probably the highest anywhere in Ontario, potentially in all of Canada. Certainly it's a significant road.

The building had to be equipped with a backup generator, which it was. It had to be accessible to the telephone trunk lines that exist in Ontario, and certainly a corridor runs along Highway 401. So it met every criterion. The OPP and Bell Sympatico, which would be providing the radio service, looked at it and said, "This is the ideal site."

For some reason, though, when the politicians got involved, they decided that it was not an ideal site because it unfortunately had the problem of being located in a Liberal riding. I guess there's probably a similar situation in northern Ontario, where the ridings are held either by members of the New Democratic Party or by the Liberals. So they decided, "We'll look for a nice, close location that will kind of match this area." Ads appeared just in one area, and that happened to be in the Perth area, to find a new location there. They advertised. No building was put forward. No building was found to meet their criteria. I was somewhat relieved, because I felt it was important that, though the centre may not necessarily go in the riding of Prince Edward-Hastings, it is important from a safety and security viewpoint for the people of Ontario, for the people of eastern Ontario, for our citizens, for our police officers, that they have state-of-the-art equipment.

I thought, "Things would move fairly rapidly forward now to get this in place." I met with the Solicitor General, who said, "As you know, a radio centre can go

anywhere,” and I agreed with him, a radio centre can go anywhere. But he said, “There will certainly be advertisements made, requests for proposals to determine interest in all the areas that could potentially host a site.” That was fine. I knew that this particular OPP station would meet the criteria and would certainly be a strong candidate. Nothing happened. Nothing happened.

Now, think about that in terms of a government that says they are absolutely committed to emergency readiness. To my surprise, to a lot of people’s surprise, about a week and a half ago an ad reappeared looking for a site for the eastern Ontario OPP radio communications centre, but it must be located in Lanark county within a certain town. I think it’s within five kilometres of Perth or Smiths Falls or on County Road 43 running between the two.

I thought about the criteria. One criterion is for a one-storey building. Local realtors have assured me that there is in fact no building in those communities that meets that criterion at this time. That doesn’t prevent one from being built. But at the moment we’re comparing a one-storey existing building with a zero-storey. The former OPP Quinte detachment building is paid for. The people of Ontario bought it and it is sitting there empty. Realtors have indicated to me to rent the equivalent floor space in the Perth-Smiths Falls area would cost approximately a quarter of a million dollars a year, plus the request for proposal says the government will pick up the additional costs, like the emergency generator and things that may be involved with parking and so forth.

The OPP requirement—and I believe it is fundamentally wrong for politicians to interfere or dabble in police forces—is that the station be on a main highway. So now we have Highway 401 and we have County Road 43. I would suggest again that it tends to favour Highway 401 as being a major highway.

In addition to the building, the government will pay for a backup generator. It already has a backup generator.

Bell Sympatico wants it located where their major trunk lines are. From what we can determine, the major trunk lines are along the 401, not along County Road 43 between Perth and Smiths Falls.

Here we have an example of the rhetoric being, “Let’s get the radio centre going.” The actuality is, “We’re going to wait, because it has to go in a riding that is held by a member who sits on the government side.”

Interestingly, when we first became aware of this ad in the paper, we contacted the Ontario Realty Corp and said, “We understand you have a request for proposals out.” This would be on a Tuesday, because the ad had been in the paper the previous day. They said no, they had not been involved in placing this ad and they weren’t sure. What is even more dismaying is the Ontario Provincial Police, the users of the services, were not aware that Ontario Realty Corp had requested that a real estate firm put out a request for proposals. The OPP didn’t know there was action happening on their dispatch centre.

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It concerns me that as we put through legislation such as Bill 148, it produces a sense of security among the

population that the government has everything under control, the government is going to put things in place, when in actual fact their track record hasn’t borne witness to it. When we start to put political interests ahead of operational interests for our police force, there is something fundamentally wrong.

Democracy is a very fragile creature. I watch with dismay as fewer and fewer of the population take part in democracy through voting. There has been such a supreme price paid by so many individuals over the years to preserve democracy, and when I talk to individuals who don’t vote and will even say, “I don’t vote,” all too often it’s because they think their vote doesn’t really matter and they don’t trust politicians.

When the government chooses to play a little game of locating a police service, not where it should be operationally, but where it should be from the viewpoint of their political advantage, the people in eastern Ontario see that. And a few will write letters to the editor and a few will change how they vote and a few will phone call-in shows, but they’re the tip of the iceberg. There will be dozens or hundreds of thousands of others who join the cynical group that says, “There’s no point to voting. The politicians aren’t going to do it right.” When we see safety thrown aside for political favour, then we reinforce that loss of democracy that citizens are sensing.

This bill is nothing but rhetoric. The government would do well to put some actions behind it. The proposed amendments by Dalton McGuinty would provide some financial resources to absolutely make things happen. I can’t foresee, and I suspect most members in here can’t foresee, a need to be ready for a major disaster or a major attack in Ontario, but absolutely no one foresaw what was going to happen on September 11. We’ve learned we’re in a new world where we have to be ready for literally anything, and so I would urge that the government deliver some actions rather than just rhetoric. Take the bill and recognize the need to make it workable. But more than that, rethink what they can do to make the people of Ontario safe.

In the beginning, I touched on where we have schools with no one in the building other than the teachers and the students. If you want to be ready to protect the students, if you want to be ready for a disaster, then fund them. Fund the schools.

It seems so strange to have to stand here and make a statement that schools need principals. Before 1995, no one would ever have envisioned that request having to come forward. We’re now saying and begging you to recognize that schools need principals.

Schools need custodians. Your magic formula that provides for someone to come into a school before it opens and then return in the evening and do some of the cleaning doesn’t recognize the reality of rooms full of children and doesn’t recognize the reality that there are some evil people in this world who will come into a school and do unspeakable things—who will hide in washrooms and attack our children. I cannot, and you cannot, put a price on what needs to be spent to protect our children from predators.

By the same token, every citizen in Ontario is entitled to know that if they phone the OPP, they will have complete assurance that their call will be responded to, that there will not be a police car located in an area where radio signals are not accessible. They also need the assurance that this government is acting in the best interests of the public, not in the best interests of the members of this Legislature, not in the best interests of their party.

Although we may play games here, this is a very, very serious game. Whatever games we play should be focused on making the people in Ontario win. They should never lose so that someone in here can win. They should never be put at risk so that a member can look good for re-election. It's so fundamental that it disappoints me to have to say it.

People say to me, "What is your experience here?" I say, "I sit with 102 other honourable members." Do the honourable thing. You all came here to do the right thing. Don't get involved in partisan politics where safety is concerned. Don't interfere with the Ontario Provincial Police. Let the best location for anything we're doing for emergency preparedness be based on the best operationally and the most effective.

The people of Ontario, in the case I referred to, should not have to pay a million dollars for a new building and then continue to pay \$250,000 each year. The \$250,000 the government wants to channel toward rent can be used for—we're all aware that senior citizens in long-term-care homes in this province get a bath once a week. That \$250,000 would be better directed toward long-term care, toward support for farmers, toward education, toward getting doctors into Ontario. There are so many urgent, crying needs for the funding in Ontario. Don't throw it away on one spot just for cheap politics.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and question?

Mr Bisson: Thank you, Mr Speaker—

Mr Marchese: Downloading is bad.

Mr Bisson: Downloading is bad. There's just no other way of cutting it when you take a look at what the government is doing by way of this bill. It's another one of those bills where they're saying, "Let's look good in the eyes of the public and do something that's positive when it comes to beefing up emergency measures." Nobody in this House disagrees with the principle, but what they're doing is saying, "We're not going to do it; it won't be the province that does it. We're going to force municipalities to do it through their emergency measures people—police, firemen and others—and at the end of the day we're going to make the municipalities pay. Are we ever clever." There's really no other way of cutting this bill. It's just another example of this government that says one thing and does another. It says, "We want to do something positive. We want to beef up emergency measures." Everybody in Ontario, including the two opposition parties, come into the Legislature and say, "Great thing; we love it. But where's the beef?" If you're going to say the municipalities have got to do that, the province as the senior level of government has to cough up the money.

It reminds me a little bit of the argument the government makes when it comes to the federal Liberals on the issue of health care. They come into this House whining. You hear them whining all the way into the Legislature: "Oh, God, the federal government's not giving us enough money to pay for health care." We tried that when we were in government, about the Fair Share health care levy, and what did the Mike Harris of the day say? "Oh, you're just whining." So now they come in and whine and say to the federal government, "It's not right for you to transfer all this on to us. We pay the burden of health care costs and basically we get no money." But you've got to practise what you preach. If you're going to complain to the federal government about transfers we're not getting, don't start offloading your responsibilities on to the municipalities and say it's OK, because here is a New Democrat who's saying it's wrong. If we're going to deal with emergency measures, let the senior level of government pay for it. At the very least, transfer the money to the municipalities so that at the end of the day they've got the bucks to pay the bill.

Mr Wood: I thought the member spoke well. I was intrigued by some comment from a number of members tonight to the effect that the system with respect to bills at the end of the sitting doesn't work very well. I do want to briefly commend to members the motion I have on the order paper, so that in the fall we might change the system and have a mechanism in our standing orders that will deal with that kind of problem.

Mr Kormos: What's particularly interesting, in view of the rather late-night debate that's taking place around Bill 148, is that last night the minister came charging in here all "heck bent for election," as they say in some parts of the province, insisting that this bill have second and third readings. I stood up and praised that minister in a way he hadn't been praised in a long time. I spoke well of him. I commended him, among other things, for being a part of that old school that understands that ministers or their PAs should accompany their bills through debate. You notice, that doesn't happen a whole lot with the young Turks, if you will, in this revolution—not that the revolution is necessarily still alive and well. It seems to me that Che has been sent to Bolivia to be pursued by the CIA. It could well in fact be over. Notwithstanding that, the minister and/or his parliamentary assistant, who is here, has the same passion about this bill receiving second and third reading.

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Clearly, this government wasn't even interested, still isn't interested, in seeing this bill go out to committee during the summer months. What a remarkable change in position from last night to tonight. One has to wonder, really, what happened. New Democrats called for committee for this bill. The Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association and its membership want to see this bill go to committee. And I imagine there would be a whole lot of community leaders who would like to see this bill go to committee and would like to see it thoroughly debated as well. New Democrats will make sure of that.

Hon Mr Baird: I listened with great interest to the member for Prince Edward county. I do like Lanark county—I think it's a good part of the province—as I do Prince Edward county.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Prince Edward-Hastings has two minutes to respond.

Mr Parsons: I'm just checking the ridings. I would like to thank the member for Nepean-Carleton. I know he spends some time in Prince Edward-Hastings, and I have arranged that your money is at par while you're down with us. So it will be fine.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): Why, is there a winery there?

Mr Parsons: There is a winery there, yes. In fact, there will be another one this fall and another one the year after.

I also want to thank the members for Niagara Centre, London West and Timmins-James Bay for their comments.

I was pleased to hear that the member for London West appreciated what I said, because I think it really is just common sense. You will never buy something as cheaply as something you already own. The people of Ontario own an abandoned brand new police station that meets every criteria for it.

Mr Smitherman: Every one.

Mr Parsons: Every one. It is the centre that was selected by the Ontario Provincial Police. As responsible politicians, the instant the OPP said, "That's the centre," the politicians should have said, "We're out of here." This is not a matter for the Ontario Realty Corp to get involved in; this is not for the board of management; this is not for individual members.

Mr Smitherman: What has Doug Galt done about it, from Northumberland?

Mr Parsons: There are municipalities in the member for Northumberland's riding that have passed motions of support for it to be located there, because it's just common sense. We have a building that meets every need. It could have been in service three years ago. It hasn't been. Don't delay any longer. We do not ever want to read in the newspaper or stand in this House to remember someone who lost their life because the radio system in eastern Ontario or northwestern Ontario failed. Move now. If you're really interested in security, move now. Make the decision; get it up and running. The people of Ontario deserve nothing less.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bisson: I am pleased to put a couple of words on the record for this particular bill. I want to say right from the outset as a New Democrat and as a member of this caucus, we support, quite frankly, the direction this bill is taking. So let's just say right at the beginning that what the government is trying to do—this bill has a number of components in it that are positive steps, about how we're able to beef up emergency measures in order to make sure that if you do have some type of disaster in the future, there are better means to deal with those issues that come out of that disaster. I again want to say right up

front that I agree with some of the direction that this bill is taking.

The problem I have, and I raised this in the two minutes I had earlier to the speech that was made by Mr Parsons—I don't remember his riding—who basically said, "Listen, here we are as members of a senior level of government," in this case the provincial government, "saying we want to do something right. We want to beef up emergency measures. But, oh, we're not going to do it. We're going to tell municipalities, who are responsible for emergency measures, those people who run ambulances, fire services, who run police services and others, 'Here's what you have to do by prescription through the law,'" which is probably not a bad thing in itself, if there was money that was coming from the senior level of government to the municipalities to help offset this new responsibility we're downloading to them.

I say to the government across the way, kudos for trying to do something good as far as emergency measures, but ix-nay on you when it comes to not dealing with giving them the resources to make sure they can do those new responsibilities that you're downloading on to them. I want to make that point right up front and I want to make that point clear.

So yes, this particular caucus wants this bill to go to committee. The reason we want it to go to committee is because we want to make some amendments that address a number of concerns, the first concern being that we need to make sure we give the resources to the municipalities to be able to do the job that we're asking them to do.

The second thing is—and before I get to another issue I want to get to the committee—the old issue of going to committee in itself. I think this is rather important to state, because most people who were not in the Legislature as members or staff here won't understand that once we finish this bill tonight—and I predict with all confidence that this bill will achieve second reading tonight. Members probably within the next half-hour to hour will sit down and there will no longer be any debate. This debate will collapse and the government will get second reading of the bill. That's good; not a problem.

Here's the problem: the government House leader ordered this bill into the House tonight but failed to bring a motion earlier this afternoon that would have given them the ability to deal with sending this bill to committee. We have no motion now to send it to committee. So I'm saying, how serious an attempt do we have on the part of the government House leader to send this bill off to committee to really deal with the issues if he didn't bring a motion to refer it out to committee in the first place?

What we have is, I guess, a bit of an appeasement to Mr Runciman, who is the Minister of Security and everything else, to basically say that he got second reading of his bill. I have to believe and I have to suppose that later on this fall, when we come back to the Legislature for the fall session, the government will refer this bill out to committee in order to do public hearings. The

problem we have in the intersession is that the House has not given any direction for that committee to sit, and unless we do that by motion of the House, the only other way we can do it is by unanimous consent or to find some other mechanism when we get back in the fall by way of a motion in this House. So I make the point: if the government was very serious about trying to get this bill out to committee for passage, I think the government quite frankly would have put a motion to refer this out to committee so that this House could have dealt with it and referred it out when second reading was done.

Why did the government order the bill up this way? I think it's very simple. They're going to come back in the fall and they won't refer this to committee, more than likely, unless there's a lot of pressure put on by firefighters, police officers and others who demand committee hearings, and they may get heard by this government. So this might change. But at this point I think the strategy of the government is very simple: once the bill collapses at second reading debate, we're going to get a time allocation motion to push it to third reading. I predict that we'll come back in the fall and we'll have a one-day motion debate to refer this bill for closure so that you get third reading immediately and this bill is going to pass some time in the fall.

Again, I want to say outright, there's still a chance that this bill could go to committee. That's why our caucus will continue to try to pressure the government to do that, because we think a number of voices have to be heard on this bill, and you'll hear from one in a minute. But unless firefighters, emergency response people from the ambulance services, police and others put pressure on this government, quite frankly this bill will not get to committee. So I'm urging all those people who are going to read this debate in Hansard and all those people who may be watching or will see the reruns on Sunday, if you want this bill to get to committee, pick up your pen, write a letter, send a fax, send an e-mail to the minister responsible for security and the government House leader, along with the Premier, asking for committee time, because if you don't, my prediction is we're going to get a time allocation motion and we'll be dealing with this motion by way of a time allocation motion in the fall. I want to say that straight out front.

2010

One of the other voices I talked about—there are different voices that speak to this bill—that generally supports the direction of the bill but has some problems is the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association. I made reference to this letter earlier and I just want to read for the record this particular letter. It's addressed to David Turnbull, who was the Solicitor General. I'm wondering, quite frankly, if Mr Runciman ever saw this particular letter that was put forward by Mr Fred LeBlanc, who was the executive vice-president. I don't know. I can't believe that Mr Runciman would have come forward with his bill in this way if he had seen this letter. We all know Mr Runciman to be a friend of firefighters and other emergency response people, so I have to believe he never saw it. I want to read the letter:

"December 8, 2001,

"The Honourable David Turnbull," then-Solicitor General.

"Dear Minister Turnbull:

"I am writing to you today with respect to the legislation you introduced in the Legislature on Thursday December 6, 2001. Bill 148, the Emergency Readiness Act, 2001, is a good first step and opportunity for making the citizens of Ontario safer." So he, like New Democrats and others, agrees that this is a step in the right direction.

"By ensuring that municipalities must have emergency planning in place will force long-overdue inventories of our emergency services and their effectiveness to respond to large-scale incidents." So, like us, he sees something positive in this bill.

"However, my disappointment lies in the fact that this legislation is lacking in enforcement mechanisms for municipalities that do not comply." Why is it that the government does not put in enforcement mechanisms? Because they're not transferring the cash over. If they wanted to make sure there was enforcement, they'd be transferring the cash over to the municipalities in order to make this happen. So, basically, by way of this letter he's saying, "If you don't give them the cash, it's going to be hard for municipalities to do this. You've put in the legislation that there are no enforcement mechanisms to force municipalities to do what the province is asking, so therefore we're back to the status quo. He has some very serious reservations. I think that's a pretty large flaw in this bill and one of the issues we have to deal with when we get to committee. He goes on to say, "As well there is no authority given to a 'body' of the government such as Emergency Measures Ontario to obligate a municipality to have minimum response requirements given their risk assessments."

He's speaking to that issue we've all talked about in this Legislature. For example, do we have enough staffing and equipment etc to deal with proper fire services in our communities? If we're saying that we want to have these people do a better job, we've got to make sure they've got the equipment and the staff. He's saying in his letter that there's nothing that obligates municipalities to have minimum response requirements, given their risk assessments—possibly not enough police; possibly not enough ambulances. How are you able to make sure you can respond to a disaster if you don't do an inventory of what you've got in a municipality in order to determine what you can respond with, should there be an emergency?

I would argue that a lot of municipalities probably do have what they need to respond to emergencies—some—but there are many that don't, and that's what he is speaking to in this. In fact, where I come from, Timmins-James Bay, I've got communities that don't have ambulances. It's hard to believe that in this year, 2002, you'd have municipalities that don't have ambulance services. But places like Ogoki Post, Peawanuck and others don't have ambulances, and I've got communities where they've got ambulances but they have nowhere to park them.

Fort Albany's a good example. We have an application now before the Ministry of Health to fund the building of an ambulance garage to house our ambulance. We've got a brand new ambulance up there, an emergency response vehicle, and we have some people who are trained to use it. If there's an emergency in winter—I'm telling you it's cold in winter in Fort Albany; it's like 40 below and 50 below—they can't get the ambulance started because it's frozen even if it's plugged in, and by the time they get the ambulance going, a person could have frozen to death on the road. In fact—this isn't a joke—we had a case where I was up in a community in February or March sometime—I forget the exact date—and there was a gentleman who had a heart attack and fell on the road. People called for the ambulance to come over, and they couldn't get the ambulance going, so they threw the guy in the back of a pickup truck and drove him to the hospital—it's not even a hospital—drove him to the first aid station in Fort Albany. Imagine if nobody had been around with a pickup truck to pick him up. The man could have frozen to death before he was treated for his illness. So I say yes, we do need to take inventory of our equipment in this province to make sure we can even respond, in some cases, to the most basic of needs.

I urge the government, on the Fort Albany issue, to fund for the request that has been put forward by the James Bay General Hospital and the band council of Fort Albany, along with Chief Mike Metatawabin and others, to fund that garage. We have a wonderful opportunity right now, with the tragedy that has happened in the community with the burning of the old residential school, where we're going to have to rebuild a complex of some type to house a band office, the NAPS officers etc, and at the same time put in this particular ambulance facility. There's a really good opportunity to do something, so I urge the government to move that way.

He goes on to say in his letter, in the fourth paragraph, "For this legislation to truly succeed in its intent to make the citizens of Ontario safer within their communities, the communities must be obliged to produce an appropriate response." That's what I was speaking to earlier, when I talked about what happens in Fort Albany, where they have a hard time trying to respond to the emergencies that happen in the community and just regularly trying to respond to the needs of the community because they don't have the equipment.

My good friend Peter Kormos was with me last summer or the summer before. We toured a number of communities up in James Bay in order to look at their police services. In Attawapiskat, for a good example, we've got a situation where they've got a boat for the police officers there, the NAPS officers, because they have their own policing under the Nishnawbe-Aski police program, and there's no motor to put on the boat. So if somebody were to fall through the ice in the fall, or fall out of a boat, and NAPS officers or volunteer firefighters had to go out and try to rescue the person out of the Attawapiskat River, how would they get there? Push the boat out with a stick? They don't even have a motor to put in the back of the boat.

They've got a holding facility there that they call a jail that is very substandard and, I would argue, dangerous for people who are being held there. So I say that yes, I agree with the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association when they say, "For this legislation to truly succeed in its intent to make the citizens of Ontario safer within their communities, the communities must be obliged to produce an appropriate response."

In the case of Attawapiskat and others, we need the federal government to step up to the plate, because it's their responsibility to fund some of these things and to help us, the province, make sure we have the money to do that so that we have proper ambulance services, so we have proper policing services, so we have proper fire services.

I'll give you another example. In the community of Peawanuck, a fire happened in a home. I don't want to go into describing it, because it was quite tragic. But there was no fire response in that community, and as a result of that fire there was a tragedy. I just say to the government that I agree with the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association when they say we need to find a way to oblige communities to produce an appropriate response to emergencies that happen in a community.

Then Mr Fred LeBlanc, executive vice-president of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, goes on to say in closing, "On behalf of the 9,000 members of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, I respectfully request that you submit Bill 148 for extensive public consultations and hearings."

That brings me back to my first point. We, as New Democrats, agree that there are some good things in this bill. We're prepared to work with the government in order to fix this bill so it truly does what the government intends that it do. But you've got to refer it out to committee this summer so that we can deal with it. One of the ways you could have done that this afternoon would have been to introduce a motion to allow the committee to sit so we could have dealt with this bill. I very much fear, because you haven't done it, that this bill will pass second reading—bravo—but we're going to be no further ahead tomorrow morning than we were yesterday or this morning. The bill will not get referred to committee and we'll come back into the Legislature this fall, at which point I think the government's going to come with a time allocation motion, unless—again, I want to preface this—firefighters and everybody else come together and say, "Listen, we want extensive public hearings on this particular bill," and they lobby Mr Runciman. We know Mr Runciman is a friend of firefighters, police officers and others, as my good friend Mr David Christopherson was when he was Solicitor General. In fact, when Mr David Christopherson was the minister, he was probably the best Solicitor General we've ever had. I've heard that said a number of times.

This is what the firefighters are saying when it comes to wanting to have public hearings: "This will allow for proper dialogue and input to occur from the emergency response agencies responsible for delivering these ser-

vices and from the citizens we are protecting.” I urge the government to heed the advice that is being given by Mr Fred LeBlanc from the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association. Allow this bill to go off to committee, to do what’s got to be done.

We, as New Democrats, support the direction the government is going with this bill. We think it needs to be strengthened at committee, there’s no question, and that a good amount of time in committee—not an excessive amount of time, but a good amount of time—would allow members of this assembly to deal with the bill.

2020

In the last four minutes I have, I just want to relate this to an issue that I think is important, and that is how this House doesn’t work. Earlier today my good friend Marilyn Churley got up and talked about how sad it is that we end up in these situations where members put forward private members’ bills that don’t get passed. I am one who has advocated that we need to make changes, not so much to the Legislature but to how we elect people in this province. I, for one, believe that our system of electing members—for example, a party like mine, that got 38% of the popular vote in 1990 ended up with over 60% of the seats in the House because of the first-past-the-post system, and the Conservatives, with a 42% or 43% popular vote, ended up with 60% or 65% of the seats in the Legislature. That to me sounds disproportionate.

I would argue and advocate for people to look at what the New Democratic Party did at our biannual convention last weekend in London. We passed a resolution on the convention floor basically saying that if our party took office, one of the things we would do is go out and consult with Ontarians in order to design a system of electing people that was proportionate to the percentage of the vote people got, otherwise called voting reform or proportional representation. Why? Because fundamentally we believe that to truly make this place work, there has to be some way to even out power across both sides of the House.

Where we are now, the government holds all the rules in their back pocket and quite frankly can do what they want. They can introduce a bill on Monday morning, have three days of debate, introduce a time allocation motion and in four days the bill is done. That, to us, is not a good way of doing business. At least in a system where you elect people by proportion to the vote they get, you end up in a Legislature where if the people, by a majority vote, say, “We think party X should get 40% of the vote,” they should end up with no more than 40% of the seats in the House.

How that would work is fairly simple; there are a couple of different models. The one I prefer—different from the one that was put forward at the convention, but all of this is open to discussion through the process we would go through—is that you would have an election, just as you have now. You would have 103 ridings and 103 members, just as we do every time we have an election in Ontario. We would elect members to our

Legislature from our ridings as we did—first past the post; he or she who gets the most votes wins. But at the end of the day we would say, “What did the party get?” The Tories got 43% of the vote in the last election, so the number of members they elected would equal 43% of the seats in the Legislature.

Then you would go to the Liberal Party and say, “What did you get? You got some 30% last election. You elected X number of members.” You would then boost up, by way of list members that parties would list prior to the election, people who would come and represent regions they did not get elected in. Then you would go to the third party and do the same.

Each party would end up with a proportion of members in the House to which they were elected as a party overall. You would still have representation in your ridings. Your ridings wouldn’t change one iota. People would still elect people the way they do. The only difference is that the final outcome—if 40% of the people say, “Hey, we want Howard Hampton and the NDP,” that’s as much power as we’re given, whatever the public will give us.

There are different methods by which you can do this. There’s a two-ballot system where you vote for your member and then you vote for the party of your choice. That’s one of the various systems that have been advocated. But the overall concept is that no party should end up in the Legislature with more seats in the House by proportion than the number of votes they got. We think that way you would be able to at least have some equality when it comes to being able to negotiate what happens in this House when a member like Mrs Churley brings forward a bill. The government would need opposition parties in order to govern. Yes, there would have to be some to-ing and fro-ing, and it would force the parties to work together to the benefit of the people of Ontario, unlike now where all the rules are in the back pocket of the government and they can do what they darn well please and at the end of the day there is not much that backbenchers or other members of the Legislature can do.

The Acting Speaker: Comments or questions?

Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Labour): The member for Timmins-James Bay raises an interesting point about improving democracy in terms of proportional representation, but there are other ways you could do it too. I have long advocated that we move to a system that is more akin to Westminster. The process there is that, in essence, every vote in the House is a free vote for all members. The rules of the House are such that if a government bill were to fail, following that there would be an immediate vote of non-confidence and the House would vote on the non-confidence motion. So the bill could fail, but the House would continue. Margaret Thatcher actually brought this through—bills in the House in Britain have fallen, government bills, but the House didn’t fall because they set the rules in such a way that it wouldn’t defeat the House, that it wasn’t an automatic vote of non-confidence. They set the rules so

that after the bill failed, you would have a motion of non-confidence, vote on it, debate it, whatever, and then it would pass or fail accordingly. If you look at these things, it's quite reasonable that that would work also.

You talk about proportional representation. You just want to provide more freedom to the members and allow them to speak their consciences and vote their consciences. I know I've done it, on this side of the House, a few times, but it would be easier if we had it set up permanently. That would be my suggestion.

Mr Marchese: I want to congratulate my friend from Timmins-James Bay for the comments he has made. I would add several comments and say that it's really hard to take this bill seriously, Bill 148, the Emergency Readiness Act. I know my friend from Timmins-James Bay says, "Yes, we support it. There are grounds to support it, but we want more discussion etc." I don't take this bill seriously at all, and I'll tell you why.

When you look at what this government has done in terms of the budget the Attorney General has and what the government has slashed from that ministry and the so-called public safety and security, you say to yourself, when they slash their budgets, "Is that a serious thing that they're doing?" If they're really concerned about public safety and security, would they not want to beef up that ministry a little bit, and give them a few extra resources and money? But if they're proposing to cut \$15 million from the Ministry of the Attorney General and \$73 million from operating at public safety and security, then you say to yourself, "Is this for real, this bill?" Or are they using September 11 as a way of fabricating something? Yes, September 11, as tragic as it was, it becomes now politically expedient and convenient for this government to manufacture something. That's what they're doing. If they were serious, they'd be beefing up those ministries with financial support. When you look at the fact that our courts are backlogged, it means they're not giving support to the courts, they're taking away supports, including allowing our police precious hours fundraising instead of investigating serious crimes. They're after squeegee kids, for God's sake, instead of focusing on real crimes. I don't take this bill seriously.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions? The Chair recognizes the Minister of—

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): Consumer and Business Services.

The Acting Speaker: Consumer and Business Services; my apologies.

Hon Mr Hudak: Certainly, Mr Speaker, I had the pleasure of visiting Perth county as the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation, celebrating things like the Stratford Festival, so you might remember me from my other title. But my new position is in consumer and business services.

To comment on my friend from Timmins-James Bay, whom I enjoyed serving with in my time in northern development, I appreciated his comments with respect to proportional representation. I didn't know it was particularly in the bill, but I guess it's associated with the bill.

Along that line, sometimes I too, like my colleague from Stoney Creek, the Minister of Labour, have concerns about proportional representation. I appreciate the policy point you bring forward. To me, it's absolutely essential for MPPs to be anchored with constituencies. The discipline, when you return to Listowel on the weekend—this weekend attending the Friendship Festival in Fort Erie and celebrations of Canada Day in Port Colborne and Dunnville and Lincoln, the chance to interact with constituents who I think give us discipline and keep us in touch with the realities of day-to-day issues. I worry that in the proportional representation system you'd lose that essential anchor.

We've seen some developments—in fact, the Liberal Party I think has brought forward some proposals to take us more toward an American system in terms of election dates and such. They have some of the European systems. I do like the system we have inherited, the British parliamentary system. I think the member from Stoney Creek makes an excellent point with respect to confidence votes as opposed to bills. But I do appreciate the member's comments as such. Like you, Mr Speaker, looking forward to heading back to beautiful Listowel this particular weekend, I think it's important for us to go back to our constituencies and hear every weekend, as we do, what the voters want us to do.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Timmins-James Bay. You have two minutes to respond.

2030

Mr Bisson: I say to both my colleagues who said they worry about the whole issue of proportional representation to anchor the member to the constituency that I agree with you. That's why I propose there be a system that says you have 103 ridings, as we do now, you have elections in 103 ridings, you put up candidates from the political parties that are going to run, and the first past the post wins. You'd still have 103 members elected here. The only difference would be, if you got 41% in the last election, your number of votes as a governing party, because you got the majority of the seats, would equal 41%. That's all you do.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: No, it's really simple. If you got 41% of the vote and you elected 53 members in the last assembly—I forget what the numbers are—your 53 members would equal 41% of the seats in the House. You then go to the Liberals in opposition and the New Democrats, and if they are under their percentage of vote, they get the rest of their members from lists so that you end up at the end with no more than the percentage of vote you got overall in the election. That's basically how that works.

Quite frankly, there are very few parliamentary democracies that don't have PR. England and Canada are the only holdouts, along with India, who still have a first-past-the-post system that is not proportional representation. Even Wales and Scotland, the Parliaments that were created by Tony Blair, are PR, and they're talking about moving Westminster.

If there was a member voting against the government, then you'd do what Westminster does and bring in the issue of, "We'll have a non-confidence motion." The reality is, most members vote with the government because they believe in what the government's doing. How many times do you guys get up over there and say, "Oh, I really disagree. I'm standing up just to support my Premier"? The reality is, you're all Conservatives and you believe in most of the policies of your government. It's the same thing for everybody else. I argue you should have no more seats in the House than the percentage of votes you had in the last general election.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 148 this evening. Let me say at the outset that I do so somewhat hesitantly, given the fact that this is stemming from a ministry I was minister of not that long ago. Personally, I have a great deal of respect and high regard for all members who perform the functions of a minister, and there's particular importance in the justice ministries for reasons that I think are self-evident. It's been my practice, since I was no longer the minister in 1995, not to speak to justice bills stemming from what is now the Ministry of Public Safety and Security, then the Solicitor General and Ministry of Correctional Services, unless there was something I felt strongly about.

I think that's the right way to go. I wanted to virtually keep my powder dry and not use it up on any of the normal politics of this place and reserve it for times when I really thought there was something that needed to be said. That would give me an opportunity to have perhaps a little more impact, and that's the case this evening.

I don't disagree at all with the fact that the government, and in this case in particular the minister, has taken a look at many of our emergency plans. I really don't care too much whether you call it the Emergency Management Act or the Emergency Plans Act. That's pretty small potatoes. What I do care about are the changes themselves. The fact that there has been a review, the fact that there are changes being made, in and of itself is not problematic. For that matter, other than a couple of items which I will mention, it's not like I have huge problems necessarily with the bill as it's structured, although I have a couple of reservations. It's more a matter of this business of ramming this legislation through with no opportunity for anybody to speak.

I mean, here we go again. It wasn't that long ago there was a bill in front of the House that affected the Planning Act in terms of the building code. Was there anybody involved at the municipal level? By the way, the building code is enforced and used by municipalities, even though we enact it. There was no opportunity for anybody at the municipal level to come forward. Whether it was from the industry side of things, the enforcement side of things, whether it was the academic study side of things, there was nothing, no opportunity whatsoever. I said at that time that I thought that was a real miscarriage of justice and certainly not any form of democracy that I would support.

I have similar feelings about this. For instance, one of the changes is "a new process for obtaining a court order declaring that a person is dead, in circumstances where no physical evidence is available but it is reasonable to presume death." It's not the most pleasant of subjects, but again, given September 11 and other tragedies, it's easy to see and figure in your mind where something like this might come into play.

As far as it goes, I'm fine, but I'm not an expert in this arena. I'm not a lawyer, and I don't have to be to be a lawmaker, a legislator. But what I do need is access to people who are experts, and so does virtually every other member of this place. So to deny the legal profession—perhaps existing coroners, although I doubt Jim would be there, but certainly maybe former coroners or others who were regional coroners might have something to offer to at the very least make it a better bill and, at worst, stop us from making a horrendous mistake, perhaps in all innocence. But we'll never know if things continue the way they're going, because this bill won't go in front of the committee. I don't understand why not. Why don't you want to give experts an opportunity to comment? And don't dare stand up and say it's because this is urgent and you can't afford the time. You introduced this bill last December, on December 6, 2001. If time were of the essence, this would have been on the floor of the Legislature the first day we came back in May. Instead, it comes up—yesterday was the first day—the day before the House rises. So don't tell us you don't have the time or that the issue is dealing with emergencies and therefore we don't have the time. That doesn't wash.

I suspect what happens is more accurately reflected by the minister's comments last night. I haven't seen Hansard, but I've been advised—and if I'm wrong, I'll stand corrected—that he said something to the effect that September 11 will roll around in terms of the anniversary and we won't have done this. All the more reason perhaps to have dealt with it earlier, but certainly not justification for denying the public and other experts an opportunity to comment on a justice bill.

You require municipalities, boards and commissions to bring in emergency management plans; you're going to mandate it. Certainly my hometown of Hamilton is in the forefront. We hold the emergency disaster preparedness conference every year in Hamilton. We're a source of excellence in this regard. Most municipalities have taken proper steps, but there are probably some that haven't. This would be a better province and we would be better prepared for any kind of tragedy that might befall our citizens if they did. So it may be that we have to use the heavy hand of legislation to say this is mandated. Fair enough, but why aren't we at least allowing municipalities a chance to have a say? The Association of Municipalities of Ontario apparently has asked for an opportunity to make sure they can at least express to the minister what this is going to cost municipalities. That makes common sense. The government can choose at the end of the day to either heed the advice they're given or not, and you can determine whether someone's playing

politics or not. But given the nature of this and the importance of it, I think it is so wrong not to afford those municipalities, and in particular AMO, an opportunity to come forward and have their say.

Representative government doesn't mean that we keep everything to ourselves, at least not in any sense that I've interpreted. This is becoming far too frequent.

2040

I see one of the key media people here now. I want to say that I don't think the media makes enough of the fact that there are too many bills that go through here without any kind of hearing time, like a day here and a day there. I know they've got a job to do. But, damn it, it's wrong that there are such key, important issues that affect the health and safety of our citizenry and you're not even giving people a say. That's wrong.

That's why I stand as a former Solicitor General and say that this should go to committee. I've not played politics with that ministry in the seven years since I was the minister and I'm not about to start, but I am going to speak out when I think something's wrong, and this is wrong.

There's an element here of things that the government can decree municipalities must do, that are mandated by law to do. All it says now is that they'll be prescribed by regulation. I wouldn't be the least bit surprised if there is a mayor, or perhaps a lot more than one, who will want to come forward and say, "What have you got in mind exactly so that we can at least have a sense of the scope?" I know it would be ideal to bring in regulations first. I've often advocated for it. It doesn't happen very often. I'm not trying to be unreasonable, but I do think it would be understandable if a representative from AMO or someone else from the municipalities, who are going to have to be the ones to enact what you're mandating them to do to carry it out, that they would have a chance to ask you, "What sort of regulations have you got in mind? At least, what's the framework?" But we won't know now until it happens because there won't be any public hearings. If the government members choose not to comment on that tonight, then boom, that evaporates any chance for anybody in this province to have any kind of say.

Again, I am not one who shied away from the responsibilities and, yes, the powers of the office of Solicitor General. When there are emergencies, decisions need to be made, action needs to be taken. The Premier, the Solicitor General and a number of other ministers—but the lead minister is the Solicitor General; at least it was back in pre-1995 times—have got to be able to exercise authority and power and make things happen now, and I don't shy away from that. This isn't a question of being afraid of putting in strong language that gives a lot of power to someone or some entity in the case of an emergency. But creating those powers, given the fact they are so strong, is all the more reason why people should be given an opportunity to have a say, especially if they've expressed an interest.

My caucus colleagues have already mentioned on a number of occasions a letter from the Ontario Profes-

sional Fire Fighters Association, who have some concerns, some questions and comments they'd like to make. Right now, in the United States, post-September 11, being a firefighter in and of itself is akin to being a hero. Any of us who watched and thought about the courage it took to be going this way into the disaster and helping everybody else go that way will understand why. You talk about wanting to do things: you're going to put a monument up to firefighters; one of your caucus members wants to fly the flags at half-mast if one of the firefighters should die tragically in the course of their duties—all fine and well. All they're asking for now is the respect to let them be heard.

What it does is, it suggests that most of the things you want to do with firefighters are good politics rather than really caring. I'd like to hear a minister—I won't put this on backbenchers—stand up tonight in the two-minute responses after my comments and defend why you want to praise firefighters as heroes, which we all do, and rightfully so, but when they say to you, "Look, we're the ones who have to go into these disasters and tragedies and when everybody else is running for their lives and worrying about themselves and their immediate family and those immediately around them, we're the ones who are rushing into harm's way," you won't even give those same citizens who happen to be firefighters the respect of an opinion. I have to conclude that you really don't care that much about firefighters except as you can use them.

There are at least two ministers in the House. I want one of you to stand up and defend why it's OK to tell firefighters, "You're important except when we're dealing with legislation that defines your job. When you put your life on the line, we're not going to even give you a say." I'm willing to bet quite a bit of money that's not going to happen. They'll just ignore it and hope it goes away.

What got me into that was this is one of the things that's empowered. "The Lieutenant Governor in Council is empowered, on the recommendation of the Attorney General,"—all that means is cabinet; cabinet decides—"to temporarily suspend the operation of a provision of a provincial statute, regulation, rule, bylaw or order to facilitate providing assistance to victims of an emergency or to help the victims and general public deal with the emergency and its aftermath." Again, I'm not a lawyer, but that sounds pretty powerful to me. It may very well be that it's the right thing to do in terms of protecting our citizens. I'm not saying it isn't. All I am saying is that when you're going to suspend legislation by virtue of new legislation, I'd like to have a few experts roll in and advise us exactly what the implications are, what could happen. Is there any possibility of human rights, civil rights, constitutional rights being run over? If not, fine, but if there is, then why doesn't the government want to hear that? I sure want to hear it.

The other thing is, the Solicitor General's going to have the power to "formulate plans respecting other types of emergencies." This is stemming from legislation currently that talks about nuclear emergencies. I've had

those briefings. I know what happens if we have a worst-case scenario at our nuclear plants. I'm not going to go into details; I'm not the minister any more. But let me tell you, what I know tells me we want to be 100% sure exactly what it is we're empowering the Solicitor General to do, how much of it has to be reported back to this Legislature, how much of it has to be gazetted, exactly what we are talking about here.

Again, I'm not saying the sky is falling. I'm saying—
Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: No, I'm not, I say to my friend across the way. I'm not saying that. What I am saying is, I want to be sure there isn't something there we should be worried about, and without giving experts an opportunity to come in, you can't give me that assurance and I can't give that assurance to my constituents when I vote. All of this is not to say that there are huge problems, but why aren't we having at least a few days of public hearings to allow people who are experts to come in and express that point of view so that we can all vote with an educated awareness and the public will know, so again in the course of accountability the public can decide whether we were voting in the public's best interest or in our party's best interest?

That's my concern and that's why I've chosen this to be one of the few times I have risen on a bill emanating from that ministry's office.

Before I sit down, I've talked a lot about process and I want to spend the last three and a half minutes talking about process as it relates both to Bill 148 but also the comments of an earlier speaker, my colleague Marilyn Churley from Toronto-Danforth when she was talking about Bill 3, which is the Safe Drinking Water Act. There isn't one of us in this place who doesn't get a shudder down our spine when we think about Walkerton. I have the budget speech. I thought it was great politics. I also thought it was good governance when Premier Eves said in his budget speech on page 26, "I would like to thank Marilyn Churley, the member for Toronto-Danforth, for her proposed legislation to improve the province's drinking water quality. My colleague Chris Stockwell, Minister of Environment and Energy, will work with her to ensure passage of a Safe Drinking Water Act for Ontario, strengthened by Justice O'Connor's recommendations." I'm not going to deny for a second that that wasn't great political news for my friend and for this caucus. But seriously, overarching all of that was the fact that a very good bill, coming from Ms Churley, was going to be the starting point of a commitment the Premier was prepared to make. It felt good. I thought, "Maybe there's hope." I've been around here 12 years now. This is the first time I can think of—there may be one other occasion, with Dianne Cunningham, when our government supported her private member's bill to provide for safety helmets for kids riding bikes, skateboards and the like. We may have mentioned her name in a throne speech or a budget speech. But beyond that, I can't recall another time when a sitting government mentioned—

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Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: Frances Lankin was mentioned. That was a good co-operative effort, by the way, which is what we thought this would be, and much credit there goes to Brad Clark. I think it had a lot to do with his being promoted to cabinet, because he did an excellent job there. But this is, at the very least, one of the few times that an opposition member has their name mentioned in a good way in the government's budget speech. The last word we have is that this is no longer on.

Mr Murdoch: Hold on, it might be.

Mr Christopherson: I said, "The last word I have." I understand there may be some discussions happening and that why's I'm standing here now reinforcing this a little bit. Because if it's going to die, it's not going to die with a whimper; it's going to die with a bang.

The fact of the matter is that this is the right thing to happen. There was a plan for, I believe, 10 days of public hearings and two days of clause-by-clause. I've got to tell you, with your track record, that's a lot of time. That's really good news.

For some reason, this issue got embroiled in the last-minute negotiations of getting out of this place. As a former House leader of the third party, I know exactly what's going on in those meetings. I also believe passionately it's wrong that the question of safe drinking water in the era of Walkerton should be delayed for any political reason. The government was prepared to move on it. Marilyn Churley is prepared to work with the government. I understand the Liberals are prepared to work co-operatively to bring in the best bill we possibly can. Will we end up there? I don't know. But if we don't agree to sit down and meet and engage the public, we'll never get there, and that also is wrong.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the Minister of—there I go again—Consumer and Business Services.

Hon Mr Hudak: I just can't make an impression on the Speaker tonight, the member for Perth-Middlesex. I will say this so maybe he'll remember me next time: if there is one thing I can say about Listowel, it does produce some very attractive individuals, Mr Speaker, yourself included, and one in particular who may be watching at home even more attractive than you are.

I wanted to say to the member's comments, importantly on an issue such as public safety and security, one issue we have talked about recently—maybe not as much in the House except a little bit during question period, but in the ministry—is the risk of identity theft, especially in today's day and age with more transactions happening remotely. You don't even have to show up at your bank, for example. If somebody assumes your identity by stealing your birth certificate, then getting a driver's licence in your name, a passport, and from there a bank card, the risks of having your life savings drained, of having your credit rating run through the roof, are quite strong, especially in the electronic age. That's why the advice of this ministry has been, under my predecessors and

myself, to make sure that you keep your birth certificate in a safe and secure place. Hopefully you don't carry it around in your wallet or your purse because from time to time we all lose those things and lose our identification. If you lose your birth certificate, you risk losing your identity.

If I can say anything to the folks at home in Listowel, Fort Erie, Wellandport and here in Toronto—keep your birth certificate in a safe and secure place.

Mr Marchese: I'm just wondering what the member from Erie-Lincoln was commenting on. God bless you for being here and participating. That was good, I suppose.

I just want to congratulate my colleague from Hamilton West for his commentary on this bill. It's always sharp. I wanted to complement and add to it. You see, I'm a bit cynical about this bill; I really am. While no one disputes the notion of an emergency management plan, which so many municipalities have in place—yes, but this would mandate it—and while I think it's a good idea, these people are not serious. They don't want this bill to go anywhere. If they did, like the member for Hamilton West, they would do a couple of things. They would certainly make sure that this bill goes to committee over the summer for discussion, but they're not doing that. So you understand, good public who may be watching, why I think they're not serious. What I think they're trying to do is link themselves to September 11 while the memory is still alive, hoping that after this session it will all go away and they'll get back to business. That's what I really think they're doing; I believe that. If they indeed were serious, they would do what the member for Hamilton West was saying earlier. They would be talking to their friends; firefighters are friends of these people—right?—generally speaking. The police association, generally speaking, supports the Tories. Good God, I don't think they support me. But some do, probably. My point is that they would be consulting with firefighters and they would be consulting with the police. They certainly would be consulting with AMO, the association of municipalities. They would, because many of them are their friends, and they're not doing it. And because they're not doing it, they're not serious about this bill.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Hamilton West has two minutes to respond.

Mr Christopherson: I want to thank my colleagues from Erie-Lincoln and Trinity-Spadina for taking the time to listen and comment. I just say to my friend from Erie-Lincoln, obviously you didn't take the challenge. You're a minister of the crown; you're a seasoned minister. I asked for one minister to stand up and defend telling the firefighters that you have no interest in hearing what they have to say. You chose to talk about birth certificates and identity theft, and I'm not saying that's not important, but obviously you needed something to cover a minute and a half because you weren't prepared to comment on that. I hope it made you squirm a little. You should feel embarrassed that you can't defend not giving firefighters an opportunity to have a say.

Let me just take a second to tell you a couple of things they want to talk about: the enforcement, of the mandatory nature; they want to talk about rehearsals of emergencies and how much they're mandated and who pays for them if they are; and about updating the plans and a number of other things. As my friend from Trinity-Spadina has said, they're not coming in to go after you. They're coming in to make it a better bill because it's their job and their lives that they put on the line in the framework of the legislation that you don't want to give them a say on.

My friend from Trinity-Spadina talked about AMO getting a say. I didn't get a chance to mention that you're asking municipalities, once again, just like a lot of other things, to pay for it. They have a right to at least tell you how much it's going to cost and how difficult it is for them to pay for it, given all the other things you've asked them to do. So once again you take the credit and give municipalities the bill.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

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Ms Martel: It's a pleasure to participate in the debate here this evening. It won't be anything like the lively debate that occurred last night when my colleague from Niagara Centre, formerly Welland-Thorold, had a chance to speak. Those who were here last night will recall that he raised some very serious concerns—I don't want to take that away from him for a moment—a number of which I will repeat here tonight. But also it was probably one of the most humorous speeches I've ever heard him make in this House. It was a fine evening for all till midnight again last night.

It's 9 o'clock now and I'm speaking and my colleague from Trinity-Spadina is going to have a chance to speak as well. So we're going to be here for a little bit yet. I think that's a good thing because this bill does have some serious flaws. I know that when it was first introduced, my colleague from Niagara Centre was very clear in putting those concerns on the record. That was when the bill was introduced last fall. He repeated those last night, and that is why we told the government last fall that we were not prepared to deal with this bill on second and third readings with no public hearings, limited debate etc, but wanted a forum, an opportunity for people to come and have their say. In a democratic process, that's what we should be doing when there are bills we have concerns with. It's not only us who have some concerns. I'll talk about the concerns of the firefighters. I'll repeat them because I think it's important for the government to understand that, but I'll do that a little bit later on. Let me just deal, for people who are watching the debate tonight, with some of the concerns we have.

First of all, I think we should point out that municipalities should be required to have plans in place to deal with an emergency, not for what is probably an unlikely event, an attack, but for things that would be far more common in municipalities: an arena roof caving in, for example; the flooding, as we have seen in northwestern Ontario in Kenora-Rainy River, the riding of our leader,

Howard Hampton, in the last couple of weeks; or other natural disasters—fire. You can't help having seen on television in the last couple of weeks the terrible fires that are sweeping across parts of the United States right now. So it is absolutely imperative that municipalities have emergency plans. I think many of them already have. It's true that this bill mandates them to have the same, but I think if you were to talk to a number of municipal leaders, they already had those things in place before September 11. Is it good that the government makes it mandatory? Absolutely. But do we do that only in the context of the unlikely event of an attack? I don't think so. I think it's important for municipalities to have these in place for the other things that are far more likely: those events that I mentioned. If we took a look at it municipality by municipality, we would see that most of those municipalities already had those plans in place a long time ago.

The concern with mandating has to do with what the regulations will be that municipalities are going to be expected to assume. What are the standards with respect to emergency services: fire, police, response times etc? What are their standards going to be? Who is going to set them? Who is going to enforce? Most important, who is going to pay for them? I remain very concerned.

I listened carefully to what the minister had to say last night, and it was good that he was here. I commend him for being here for the carriage of this bill. I listened very carefully to hear what the minister had to say with respect to funding. The minister didn't say anything with respect to this government putting some cash on the table to allow municipalities to be in compliance with new standards that surely will flow from this bill. I think I did hear him say that municipalities cover 90% of these costs already. You know what? That may be fine and dandy, but municipalities are already dealing with a number of additional costs that this government has downloaded on them: public transit, child care, social assistance, public health, assessment services, and the list goes on and on. Even 10% of an additional increase to be in compliance with the regulations that will flow from this, with the standards that will flow, could be a huge financial burden for any number of municipalities, especially the small ones.

I've got a number of communities in my riding right now, two very small ones indeed, that are not in a position to deal with this government's safe drinking water guidelines. They are not in a position to pay for the work that has to be done at their sewer and water plants to be in compliance with this government's Safe Drinking Water Act. You add on to them the burden of some of these other emergency services without any corresponding funding and they will be out of compliance all the time. You may want to charge them, they may be in a position where they are breaking the law, but the sad reality of the day will be that they are not in a position to raise the money locally to pay for some of these things. I worry that this is the road down which this government is taking us with respect to this bill.

Where is the commitment of the government to provide the funding necessary to ensure that police and firefighters and other emergency workers will be in compliance with the standards that will be established, will be in a position to deal with crises? I say that seriously to the government because we already know that most municipalities are not meeting staffing guidelines from the fire marshal's office now with respect to firefighters, and that's a fact. The fire marshal's office now has a staffing guideline of 10 firefighters on the scene in 10 minutes in urban areas. Do you know what? That is just not happening in municipality after municipality. Emergency service workers, firefighters in particular, when they come to lobby us every year, have told us that, year in and year out, the fire marshal's guideline with respect to staffing in urban areas is not being met now.

Who is enforcing that? No one. Are there people worried about that? Well, there should be. Is the government providing funding to municipalities to make sure that the fire marshal's office guideline is enforced? No. So if we can't even have adequate staffing in most urban municipalities for firefighting under current staffing guidelines, how are we ever going to pay for increased staffing to meet with decreased response times that will flow from this bill?

We wouldn't be bringing this bill forward if we weren't trying to do more, trying to do better, trying to improve the situation. So I'm going to assume that improved response times are going to be a part of this. Who is going to pay? What are we going to do? Because we're not meeting current guidelines, at least with respect to firefighting.

The other question that flows from that is: what are the standards that the government will impose? How are they going to be different from the standards that are already in place, many of which municipalities are unable to meet now? How will the government ensure compliance if there isn't funding to help municipalities deal with their existing needs—and we know there isn't—not to mention the needs that might occur in the event of a crisis?

Those funding issues related to what we already know is not happening in too many emergency services are the reason why there should be some public hearings on this bill: so people who are directly involved in emergency services can come and have their say about what is needed, both in terms of staff and in terms of adequate funding to support those staff.

We know, for example, that firefighters have been lobbying for some time now for an improved standard in the province of Ontario with respect to staffing levels and response times. That standard that has been proposed by firefighters in Ontario is 17 firefighters within 10 minutes to the site in an urban setting and 17 firefighters within 20 minutes in a rural setting. That's what firefighters believe and know is necessary for adequate response time—what is needed if they are going to be in a position to deal with a fire, to save lives, to hopefully save property.

Are we anywhere near that now? I know we have a standard that says 10 in 10 minutes. We can't meet that, so how are we going to get to what firefighters tell us is necessary: 17 in 10 minutes; 17 in 20 minutes for the rural area? How are we going to get there? Where is the money going to come from?

These are the kinds of issues that should be dealt with in a full and open hearing process so that people who deliver these services every day, who protect us every day, who put their lives on the line for us every day have an opportunity to come and say to the government, "If you are serious about emergency measures—and we think you are—then you've got to be serious about how we're going to fund that." Because to get to appropriate levels of staffing and appropriate response times now in the province of Ontario would mean a significant increase in funding by municipalities to have the staff available. Municipalities do not have the cash on hand to have that done.

We have some other concerns. We feel very concerned that there are just too many unanswered questions about the role of Emergency Measures Ontario. What is the role? What is the mandate? What will that office use to enforce this legislation? Who will be consulted? Who will be involved? None of that is outlined in the bill. Yet the government was here last night wanting us to pass this—second reading, third reading, right now, let's go—no kind of discussion, no kind of conversation, no opportunity for public input on some issues that demand and deserve public input.

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We are also very concerned about what and who will be involved in setting the standards for emergency management. As it stands right now, it's the Solicitor General who makes regulations to set standards. There is nothing that appears in the bill, there's nothing that appears in regulations that requires that same Solicitor General to have any kind of consultation with essential stakeholders about the setting of standards. So the Solicitor General, on behalf of the government, is under no obligation through this bill to have consultations with municipalities who are going to be paying for the service, consultation with police forces, who are obviously an important part of emergency response, with firefighters, who lobby us every year about important issues—

Mr Kormos: Paramedics.

Ms Martel:—paramedics—thank you, Mr Kormos—and other emergency personnel who of course would be directly involved in those standards. They'd be directly involved in trying to ensure compliance. So—

Mr Kormos: What about the city workers who have to respond to emergencies in sewer systems and other systems?

Ms Martel: Well, the problem, as my colleague from Niagara Centre raises, is that the only person involved in setting important standards, those standards for emergency management, is the Solicitor General; no mechanism, no obligation, no responsibility on his part through this bill to have any kind of consultation whatsoever with

those important stakeholders. They're people who know what is necessary, the people who are going to be called upon to deal with those emergency situations, and we think that's wrong. We think there has to be an obligation in the bill that requires the Solicitor General to have an open and full process of consultation with these important stakeholders around the setting of those standards for emergency management. That is just basic. That's a no-brainer, in my opinion. But it doesn't appear in the bill, and we want it to and we think it should. The only way we're going to get it in the bill is if we have a committee process and some clause-by-clause to allow important amendments like this one to come forward.

I heard the minister last night talk about how important it is for municipalities and for the government to take measures to ensure public safety. I agree. I agree with the minister when he says that it is very important, not only in the case of unlikely terrorist attacks but in the case of roofs falling in, in the case of flooding, in the case of fire; all of those things are really critical, and I agree with him on that point.

What's interesting, though, is that if you look at the estimates that were just tabled recently as a result of the budget being introduced, it's interesting to note that one of the people—

Mr Marchese: On a point of order, Speaker: If you will, could you check for quorum, please?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs Julia Munro): Could we have a check for quorum?

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 (Mr Bert Johnson): Thank you. The Chair recognizes the member for Nickel Belt.

Ms Martel: As I was saying, I listened to the minister last night say how important it was for the government as well. He talked about municipalities, he talked about government to take measures to protect public safety. I note what a contradiction it is for the minister to say that and then to look at the slashing of two important budgets that the government is responsible for to do just that, and that is to ensure public safety.

If you look at the operating budget for the Ministry of the Attorney General, the estimates show a \$15-million cut in the estimates for the Ministry of the Attorney General. Now, this is the Attorney General's office dealing with our court backlog, dealing in some way, shape or form with our police. The Ministry of the Attorney General is pretty much up there in terms of being involved in public safety and security, and that ministry is suffering a 15% cut in its budget.

I thought the more important cut was actually the cut to the ministry that the minister who was here last night was talking about. Here's the minister of public safety and protection and—I'm not sure of the exact name; that's OK, Speaker, you'll know what I'm talking about—he's got a \$73-million cut in his budget in the estimates. This is the same minister who was here last night, yipping and yapping about public safety and how

we have to get this bill passed so we have it in place before the first anniversary of the terrible events of September 11 and it would be on the heads of the NDP if this wasn't passed before then and what a tragedy that would be. I'm looking at the estimates and I'm saying, there's a minister who has a budget cut of \$73 million at the Ministry of Public Safety and Security. How serious is he about public safety and security, with a \$73-million cut to his budget? How serious is the government about public safety and security when they allow a \$73-million cut to this ministry?

How is the government in any position to tell municipalities what they have to do and how they have to ante up the money and they have to get to the table and put cash on it, when this same government has two ministries that are experiencing, in one a very significant cut to a budget, and in one a not-so-significant but significant enough cut on the AG side? What does that say about this government's priorities? What does that say about this government's commitment to this bill? It's pretty hard to go out and bash municipalities over the head and demand they ante up and pony up some cash when, from your own side, two ministries that would be most involved in emergency measures are experiencing cuts to their budgets.

I raise that because I certainly found it a contradiction in the words I heard the minister speak last night in terms of how important this bill was and how important it was for Ontarians, and then looking at the cash behind the bill, which is no commitment to any funding to municipalities to implement this bill and the same government cutting back on its own resources—human and financial—for public safety and security and emergency services.

Let me get to the matter of public hearings because it was, I thought, a bit unacceptable last night for the minister, at the end of his speech, at about the last minute, to go on about how if this bill didn't get passed, it would be on the heads of New Democrats. He indicated that the Liberals were supportive of this bill being passed on second reading, third reading, no committee, done last night, and wanted us to consider doing that as well last night. He went on to say, as I said just a little bit earlier, that it would be such a tragedy—such a tragedy—if this bill was not passed before the first anniversary of the events of September 11. I reminded the minister then and I'll remind members tonight, the real tragedy is that this hasn't been a priority for this government and the real tragedy is that this government hasn't seen fit to bring forward this bill for debate until the 11th hour. I think it's worth reminding people that this bill was introduced by this government on December 6 last year—some fair bit of time after the events of September 11, I should add. It wasn't introduced by this government until December 6 last year. We sat for at least another, I would think, six days after that; we sat at night. We never saw the light of day of that bill. It was such a priority, it was so important, it was so urgent, it was introduced for first reading and then we never saw it again.

This session we've been sitting since, what, May 9. Last night, the government finally brings this bill forward for second reading debate, on the night of June 26, probably at about 8 o'clock last night, the night before the day the House is due to recess. That's how important this bill was for this government. That's how much of a priority it was.

The tragedy is that it wasn't a priority for the government. I feel very uncomfortable with the government pointing—

Ms Churley: On a point of order: Sorry to interrupt the debate. I want to ask for unanimous consent from this House for public hearings to be held on Bill 3, the Safe Drinking Water Act, for 10 days of hearings and two days of clause-by-clause deliberations in September, the exact dates to be determined by the members from the three parties at a later date.

The Acting Speaker: Is there consent? There is not consent.

Questions and comments?

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Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): Being the representative from Nipissing, I can tell you that people from northern Ontario appreciate individuals who are hard-working, and they can appreciate all the hard-working members on this side of the Legislature who are here at 9:20, working hard for the people of Ontario.

The reason I stand up to speak to this bill is that the other thing the people of Nipissing and of northern Ontario fully understand, including the member for Timmins-James Bay, is that individuals in northern Ontario appreciate members or individuals or leaders who make decisions, who don't just talk and talk. They want clear leadership. They want individuals to stand up and say, "This is what's good for the people of Ontario. Let's move forward," instead of just talking around the issue.

Interjections.

Mr McDonald: I understand it's your job to stand here and criticize everything the government does, but I can tell you the people of northern Ontario appreciate leadership; they appreciate individuals who can stand by decisions and move forward. All I hear over here is how bad everything is, day in and day out.

When I talk to the people from North Bay or Mattawa or Trout Creek, they appreciate individuals who stand up, and they say, "Do you know what? He or she made a decision and stuck by it. That shows leadership." The people of northern Ontario appreciate leaders who make decisions and don't sit around all day talking about it.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. It's 9:20. Get a hold of yourselves; keep yourselves in order.

Mr Kormos: Member from Nipissing, don't go away now. You took the floor for your two minutes. You're going to have a chance to show your constituents up there in North Bay how hard-working you are. The member for Nickel Belt has exhausted her 20 minutes of debating time, and the folks in North Bay want to see

their member from Nipissing stand on his feet and explain why he supports Bill 148.

The folks up in North Bay want to see their newest MPP stand up and reveal to them, disclose to them, make it obvious to them that, yes, you've read the bill, you understand the elements of the bill, you understand section 1, section 2, section 3, section 4. The residents of North Bay want to see representation in this Legislature. They want to know why, during this debate on Bill 148, not a single Conservative has been participating by way of a contribution to the exchange.

The people from North Bay are liable to say, "What's going on? We elected our member to come down here and, by God, tell it the way it is, bill to bill, to stand up." Now's your chance. You've got 20 minutes, member for Nipissing, from North Bay up there in northern Ontario. You've got 20 minutes to explain to the folks back home what you're doing here at 9:25 tonight, to tell them why you're going to be supporting Bill 148, if indeed you are. They want to know; they have a right to know. It's with great pleasure that I'm here, prepared, along with my colleagues, to debate this bill. Let's find out why you're here.

Mr Wood: I'd like to refer briefly to one aspect of the speech the member made. She argued the case for committee hearings, and that's a perfectly legitimate point of view. I would like to point out, however, that the bill has been on the order paper for some six months, and during that period the ministry has certainly received a large number of excellent submissions, suggestions and comments. So the public certainly has had a considerable opportunity to offer comment and has exercised it.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Further questions and comments?

Mr Bisson: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker—
Interjection.

Mr Bisson: You snooze, you lose, Shelley. I needed you to get up; it's really simple.

In all seriousness, we have been here in the last hour or so urging the government House leader to come, sit down and have some discussions with our House leader and me as the whip in order to try to deal with this issue of Bill 3. My colleagues Mr Christopherson, Ms Martel and Ms Churley and I have said tonight that quite frankly we think the government made a commitment in the budget speech that they wanted to take that bill, do the right thing and get it out to committee. We just want to let the House leader know we are here, because we've sent all kinds of notes, we've talked to his staff, talked to the whip, and they're nowhere to be seen. I know the government House leader and the whip must be watching this on TV in their offices as they debate the strategy of what they're going to do. We're just saying, "Hey, we're running out of time. We've got one more speaker. After that, it's all she wrote."

Mr Marchese: Who is it?

Mr Bisson: Mr Marchese, so stay tuned. Mr Marchese is going to be speaking in about two minutes from now.

So everybody out there, tune up your sets and go get your popcorn.

Ms Churley: Do you know I asked for unanimous consent and the government said no?

Mr Bisson: Exactly. So I'm saying to the government House leader and to the whip, come. We're here; we're prepared to talk. We're interested in getting Bill 3 to committee. In fact, my good friend Marilyn Churley rose on a point of order to ask for unanimous consent to get Bill 3 to committee for 10 days, with two days of clause-by-clause. It was the government members who said no; the opposition parties said yes. If you're really serious and you want to get this bill done, we're here; we're ready to business. We're encouraging the government House leader and the whip to get back, to try to figure out a way of being able to do this. We're more than open. We're here; we're telling you to come along. We want to make a deal.

Mr Murdoch: If they are pretty serious on the other side, I was just wondering, when I'm done with my two-minute speech, if we could have all-party consent to pass my bill, Bill 74, the marriage commissioners act. Maybe we could start something going here. If we did, maybe it will show some camaraderie, togetherness or whatever we want to call it. I have two minutes, and then I can ask that question. I don't think I can ask it in my two minutes. I'm not sure of that, but I'll wait. Maybe we'll try that: when I'm done, I'll ask for all-party consent, with no debate, that they pass my bill for third reading. All three parties have agreed. It was at committee. It had two days of committee hearings and we had clause-by-clause. As I say, all three parties supported the marriage commissioners act. It will certainly serve all three parties. Northern Ontario certainly needs it, as well as rural Ontario, and I'm sure down here in Toronto we could use some marriage commissioners.

So before I'm done, I would like to ask for all-party consent to pass my bill, Bill 74, without any debate for third reading so we can get on with the business of the day.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? No, I heard some noes.

I apologize. Apparently there was one extra in the rotation. The hand-off between the previous Speaker and myself didn't go quite as clearly as we had anticipated and there was an extra one. I apologize for that.

Response?

Ms Martel: I want to thank all the members who contributed. I guess I should just focus on the comments made by the member for Nipissing. I'm going to paraphrase him; he'll correct me if I'm wrong. I think he said, "The people in my riding want someone who shows leadership." I think the firefighters in his riding want someone who would listen to what their concerns are. I've got to tell you, brother, that we got this letter from the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association on December 8, 2001. It was addressed to David Turnbull. I think he forgot to share it with Mr Runciman. That

certainly seemed to be the case last night. But here is what the folks say:

"I am writing to you today with respect to the legislation you introduced in the Legislature on ... December 6, 2001. Bill 148, the Emergency Readiness Act, 2001, is a good first step and opportunity toward making the citizens of Ontario safer....

"However, my disappointment lies in the fact that this legislation is lacking in enforcement mechanisms for municipalities that do not comply. As well there is no authority given to a 'body' of the government such as Emergency Measures Ontario to obligate a municipality to have minimum response requirements, given their risk assessments."

Here's the final paragraph:

"On behalf of the 9,000 members of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association I respectfully request that you submit Bill 148 for extensive public consultations and hearings. This will allow for proper dialogue and input to occur from the emergency response agencies responsible for delivering these services and from the citizens we are protecting.

"I ... await your reply."

Well, they got their reply last night, didn't they? They got their reply. They got the minister in here saying, "Second reading. Third reading. Shut this down. No public hearings. We don't want to hear from the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association."

You know what? If you're going to show some real leadership, I say to the government and the member for Nipissing, then have some public hearings as has been requested by the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association. Show some leadership. Have some hearings.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bisson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I want Mr AL McDonald to show leadership and speak on this bill. Therefore, I'm asking him to stand up and speak on this bill and show some leadership.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Marchese: What I want to say to the government is, if ever there was an issue of public safety and public health, it would be the issue of the Safe Drinking Water Act that Marilyn Churley, our colleague from Toronto-Danforth, wants to bring forward. That's a public health, public safety—

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: Boys, you're too loud. Quiet down. I don't want to shout over you. Please, Minister of Labour, I want you to hear me.

Hon Mr Clark: Enlighten me.

Mr Marchese: So my point is this: Marilyn Churley, member for Toronto-Danforth, had introduced a bill, the Safe Drinking Water Act, something that you folks mentioned in your budget speech. We were obviously waiting for you to negotiate something with the rest of us. You didn't even have to negotiate; you could have done whatever you wanted. But bring it forth for debate, for hearings. We considered it a public health, public

safety issue. We assumed you did too. If ever there was an issue of safety and public health, that was one of them. It was within your grasp; it was in your budget speech. You wanted to do—what, Minister of Labour?

Hon Mr Clark: I don't need this any more. You're loud enough.

Mr Marchese: I'll whisper for you. You be a little more attentive and I'll whisper.

So we're saying that if you put it in your budget bill and it was important, Minister of Labour, to have put it there, surely it would be important to bring it forth today before the session is over.

Hon Mr Clark: Speak to your House leader.

Mr Marchese: I'm not speaking to my House leader; I'm speaking to you. You're here. I'm speaking to you. I'm saying to you, that's a safety matter, something that we could all agree with, that I thought we agreed with, and even there we don't have agreement to do it. So you see, I have no trust in what you people are doing. This is a game for me, at least as I see it. As I see it, this is a game. Because if you were serious about this bill, the Emergency Readiness Act, you would have acted a little differently. You would have been a little more ready to deal with this issue had you done several things. I'm going to mention some and get through the whole list to show you good citizens, those of you who are still awake—it's 9:35, Thursday night, the last day of this session. For those of you who are listening, the government has done the following:

While this government talks about how important it is for municipalities and governments to take measures to protect public safety, they slashed the budgets of the Attorney General and the so-called Minister of Public Safety and Security.

Hon David Young (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): No, no, no.

Mr Marchese: How could you do that? The minister—

Hon Mr Young: It's called one-time payments for arbitration awards and Walkerton.

Mr Marchese: The Attorney General is going to stand up and do two minutes very soon, I can tell, if not a speech. I can tell it's coming.

There is a proposed spending cut of \$15 million in the Ministry of the Attorney General; he will explain in two minutes why he's cutting \$15 million from his budget. He's got a whole pile of stuff there and in two minutes he's going to summarize it, synthesize it and give you, the public, the reasons he's doing that.

Hon Mr Young: The Walkerton inquiry was in all the papers. I'm sure you read about it. It's over now.

Mr Marchese: Attorney General, you've got more than two minutes; you've got 20 minutes. I'm making a speech and he's talking to me. I'm saying to him, look, you've got 20 minutes of your own time, where I will not interrupt you, to explain to the public what you want, what I'm saying, how you might want to contradict me.

Hon Mr Young: I thought I'd use facts.

Mr Marchese: And that's exactly what we want you to do. Attorney General, what I want you to do in 20 minutes of your personal time is—this camera, by the way, is for you, this one right here—tell the people in 20 minutes all the wonderful facts you've got about this particular issue.

Hon Mr Young: Sit down. I'll do it now.

Mr Marchese: No, I've got 15 minutes. You see, New Democrats here have a whole lot of time. We want to use up our time. Unlike Tories and, dare I say, unlike the Liberals, who for some reason don't want to speak either, we have lots to say.

Hon Mr Young: My parents love watching you, but it's late.

Mr Marchese: David, I appreciate that your parents like to watch me.

Hon Mr Young: And my brother.

Mr Marchese: I want to say hello to the parents who are watching, and to brother Errol, a good friend of mine. Minister of Labour, I don't know your family too well but I do know Errol Young.

To continue and to stay on topic—don't distract me—there is also another proposed cut of \$73 million.

Ms Martel: To whom?

Mr Marchese: Alas, to an operation to that new ministry called the Ministry of Public Safety and Security.

Ms Martel: He's the one bringing forward this bill.

Mr Marchese: The very person bringing forward this bill—proposed cuts of \$73 million in this ministry called the Ministry of Public Safety and Security. I don't get it. Do you not want to invest more for public health, public safety, or do you want to cut, as you did in the Ministry of the Environment? They are so proud; they're still smiling. They were so proud a couple of years ago when they cut in the Ministry of the Environment, before they suffered Walkerton. You don't see them smiling any more about that, do you? It was tragic.

So when you slash \$73 million in the public safety and security section that this minister is in control of, what does it tell you? I wouldn't be laughing, just like I wouldn't be laughing when the Minister of Energy says about our leader, "He's wrong about rates," blah, blah, blah.

I'm telling you, Minister of Labour, this summer is going to be hot, a scorcher, and the rates are going to go "bloop." I suspect there are going to be more peaks than valleys, and those peaks will go oops, like that, where you have to "oops," those kinds of peaks, and they're going to hurt. I'm waiting for the Minister of Energy to say, "I shouldn't have said that. I shouldn't have said the rates are not going to go up. I know I told the leader, Howard Hampton, that he's wrong." If I were the Minister of Energy, I would have zipped my little lips and I would have said very little on the matter. I would have waited for the summer to pass, see how it goes, and then decide, "Maybe we should pipe down a little bit and not say very much about this whole issue of deregulation and

privatization of Hydro One and the operating plants." I wouldn't say a thing.

But no one could be a little more arrogant than my buddy there, Chris Stockwell, right?

Hon Mr Clark: Let's not get personal.

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Mr Marchese: Arrogance is something that people display, sometimes willingly, sometimes not, but it does have a way of manifesting itself, and he does do it. I would say to Chris, be careful. I want to caution him on that.

When you cut, have cut and are proposing to cut some more in those very ministries that presumably are designed to protect our public interest, I'm saying to you I'm worried about that. When you do this in a good economy, there's no excuse for it. Sorry. In a bad economy you might say, "Holy cow. How do we find the money?" Right? But when they've got money rolling in, because the economy has been so good to them, and they make these cuts, there's no reason. There's no justification for it.

When the courts are backlogged, David Young, Attorney General, when our courts are backlogged, lineups from here to who knows where—

Hon Mr Young: Rosario, that's a speech from 1994.

Mr Marchese: But the speech is still alive. It's current still. They are backlogged. Part of the problem is plata, pecunia. It's moolah. They don't have enough. You talk about how great this economy has been and all the money that's rolling in, but our courts are still backlogged. But I'm waiting for David to correct me on the facts, because he's got that whole pile. I'm waiting. I know two minutes won't do it, David. You're going to have to use some more time, please. In order to correct me, I urge you to use more than two minutes of your time.

And look at the poor police. The poor police are out there fundraising.

Ms Martel: That's sad.

Mr Marchese: It is sad. They're supposed to be doing their job. What are they doing these days? Chasing squeegee kids, for God's sake—fundraising and chasing squeegee kids to protect us from those ruffians out there, those criminals washing those windshields, real criminals, tough criminals all. We've got to go after them. They tell me we've got to go with the might of the state. We can find money for that.

The seniors, suffering serious crime out there, can't get enough police to take care of them, to deal with those serious issues, because we've got them chasing squeegee kids and we've got them fundraising to collect a couple of bucks to do what they've got to do. Imagine policemen and policewomen fundraising, having little parties—not drinking too much, I hope—to raise a couple of bucks.

Ms Martel: I'm with you.

Mr Marchese: The public is with me on this, Joe. I'm confiding very closely with Shelley so the camera can focus on us both.

Our firefighters are understaffed and underresourced, and so too are our police—understaffed and under-

resourced in a good economy. Explain how in a good economy, where the money has been rolling in, you guys cut back in those very areas that are supposed to provide public health and safety. How do you do it? How do you justify that? How? I don't get it.

You guys are not serious about this bill. I know you're not serious for the following reasons. If you were, you would have sent this to committee for the summer. It's enough evidence for me to say that you're not serious about the bill. It's all fluff; it's all politics; it's all image; it's all, "What can we do before we end this session to talk about something serious? Ah, September 11."

You're connecting to September 11 in a very wilful, sinister way which I find reprehensible, Minister of Labour.

Hon Mr Clark: Who, me?

Mr Marchese: Yes, I'm waiting for you, Minister of Labour, to do your 20 minutes. I do find it reprehensible.

If you were serious, you would be doing something else with this bill. You would make it happen. You would send it to committee. By not sending it to committee, what you're saying to people is, "This is not serious," except for political image. You're using September 11 for political gain. You are, and it's sad; it's pitiful. I tell you, when you come back here in September—if we do, because I'm not sure whether it'll be September or October—this bill won't go anywhere. This bill, I suspect, will not make the legislative agenda. It will not be important by then. It will have disappeared. It will, because by next September it will have gone. If it were important, you would have introduced it so that when the next September comes, you would have an anniversary to celebrate. It's sad to celebrate tragedies, but you would have been able to do that, had you done it, and make the link back to September 11. But because you're not serious, this means nothing. And while most of the members in our caucus who have spoken said, "We support the bill, under some conditions," I'm telling you they're not serious enough. I am telling you, the way most of our members have said, you're downloading yet another responsibility of emergency management plans down to the city level, where they don't have the money—and you know that.

Chris Hodgson was a municipal politician before, wasn't he?

Brad Clark, was he a municipal politician?

Hon Mr Clark: Who, me?

Mr Marchese: Yes.

Hon Mr Clark: No.

Mr Marchese: You weren't, either? OK. I thought you were. No big deal.

The problem is that the city of Toronto is saying, "Look, if you introduce this scheme"—no, it's unfair to call it a scheme—"this plan," because it could be good. The city of Toronto puts a price tag on their enhanced emergency preparedness plan of a \$60-million hit. Can you imagine the city of Toronto being stuck with a \$60-million hit to prepare themselves for an emergency plan mandated by this government, yet given very few

resources to put it into effect? It's dumb. It's reprehensible. It's inexcusable for them to do dumb things like that. But they're doing it. It's all fluff, it's all PR, it's all meaningless pap. It's all linking to a tragedy in a very sinister way. They are.

They are not consulting with the very people who are their friends. And I said—

Mr Kormos: Well—

Mr Marchese: Municipalities? No, I've got to tell you, the AMO folks, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, all these little communities out there, that's where these people come from. They—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: No, they are. With some exceptions—OK, I grant you that. With some exceptions, here and there and everywhere. But by and large, it's their friends. They're all Tories out there in them little towns. They are.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: Yes, they are. And I tell you, they probably know that this is not going to go anywhere. That may be why some of them are not fighting. But the association is saying, "We want to be consulted. We want to be part of those plans," and the firefighters are saying, "You're not listening to us." Do you remember, we think we heard the minister saying, "Gee, we never got that letter"? I think we heard that. Possibly—but I'm not sure. We hear it said that he may not have received the letter from the firefighters, but it doesn't matter, because this bill wasn't designed to go anywhere. It wasn't. If it were designed to go somewhere, it would be in committee for the summer. It would be. Thus I say it's designed to go nowhere—it's designed to go nowhere. If they were serious, don't you think they would be talking to the police? I know Peter Kormos has a lot of friends from the police force. It's true. And I think some other members do too from their communities. But generally speaking, the police association—

Mr Kormos: I make my friends with the police the hard way.

Mr Marchese: You work for it, I understand. But the police association endorses Tories, generally. But do you think they would do something that would affect the police in a very negative way?

Mr Kormos: They're doing it.

Mr Marchese: They're doing it, but they're not doing it; that's my point. It's designed to go nowhere. If it was designed to go somewhere, they would have been consulting the police. They would have; I believe that.

Mr Kormos: Now I capiche.

Mr Marchese: That's it. That's exactly the point.

Ms Martel: I get it.

Mr Marchese: Well, that's my point. If I've got friends and I don't consult them, they'd be pissed, wouldn't they?

Mr Kormos: They'd be what?

Mr Marchese: They would be upset, wouldn't they?

Mr Kormos: What did you say? Spell that for Hansard.

Mr Marchese: He can't hear. That's my point, right? I wouldn't do anything that would hurt in a way that my friends would say—

Ms Martel: Especially politically.

Mr Marchese: Especially in any which way, but politically it's even worse because you rely on them for your votes. So this isn't going anywhere. They're not consulting experts. They're not consulting civil libertarians, surely, because that's one group they don't consult.

Ms Martel: They're a special interest, right?

Mr Marchese: Yes, that would be a special interest group. But police and firefighters are another interest group of sorts, and of course they support them, but they're not consulting them. This bill is designed to go nowhere.

I tell you, we've got a lot of public disasters on our hands. Homelessness is a national public disaster. Are they doing anything about that? No, they're not. When we talk about the Safe Drinking Water Act that Marilyn Churley from Toronto-Danforth introduced in this place and is trying to send to committee, which involves us—public health, public safety—why don't they do it? It was in their budget.

Ms Martel: They promised.

Mr Kormos: Promise made, promise broken.

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Mr Marchese: Clearly it wasn't a promise they wanted to keep. But it's an issue of public health, public safety: water. Homelessness, housing: there's no strategy to deal with that national disaster. These people have nothing here; they've got nothing whatsoever. What they're doing means nothing. I suspect that once my speech is over—they don't want to deal with anything; they just can't wait for most of these speeches to end so they can go back home.

We're waiting for Chris Stockwell to come and negotiate on the Safe Drinking Water Act, and I haven't seen him for the last couple of hours. Someone has been saying, "We're trying to negotiate." Peter Kormos, our House leader, is right here ready to negotiate. Chris Stockwell is nowhere near this place to negotiate some kind of deal on this issue of public safety, the Safe Drinking Water Act.

They're not serious. You can't take them seriously.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Hon Mr Young: I appreciate having an opportunity to comment on the member from Trinity-Spadina's 20 minutes of entertainment. It was indeed that, as always; he is a fine orator. He is an individual who clearly enjoys being in this Legislative Assembly and is very effective in many respects. Unfortunately, tonight he referenced a number of issues, and I know he will want to have the matters clarified. That's why I appreciate having this opportunity.

In relation to the decrease in spending that he suggested occurred in my ministry, the Attorney General's office, I would point out to him that while there was a decrease in some areas, those were areas that related to one-time arbitration settlements relating to the judiciary.

Unlike the NDP when they were in power, when we make those one-time payments we don't necessarily spend the money the subsequent year; we take that money off the books and ensure that it remains in the taxpayer's pocket.

Similarly, he referenced a decrease in relation to the same area regarding victims. There was some decrease, and that was because the Walkerton inquiry concluded. And while a considerable amount of money was spent on that very important proceeding, we didn't think it was necessary to continue to spend money on a judicial inquiry that had ended. Once again, unlike the NDP, we thought that when the matter had concluded we could conclude the spending.

In relation to the backlog problem that did indeed exist in this province for a considerable period of time, I thought for a moment that he was reading a speech from 1994 when the NDP was in power, when this was a very serious problem. We still have some challenges in that regard, but I will say to you quite proudly that we have made great strides. We have made great improvements, and we will do more.

Mr Bisson: Great strides? You've been going backwards at about 100 miles an hour. I just want to say to the Attorney General that your record when it comes to legal aid and the way you guys don't fund legal aid in this province is abysmal. I meet with my legal aid board and with the lawyers who do legal aid. We're at the point now where 30% or 35%—I don't remember the exact figure—of people who are appearing before the courts today are unrepresented because you, Attorney General, will not fund legal aid programs to the extent you need to.

I just had a constituent call me today, Armand Massicotte, who told me of a friend of his who is trying to get before the courts on a variance on an order and is not able to get into the courts because he can't get a ticket through the legal aid system because the Attorney General has reduced the budget of legal aid over the past number of years, not only this Attorney General but those before him.

As I meet with the people who run legal aid in my communities, they're telling me there are fewer and fewer lawyers who are willing to take up legal aid work. So now we've got fewer lawyers who are willing to do it because they find it doesn't pay enough and, second, people are going before the courts who are unrepresented. So don't come into this House and talk about the steps forward that you've made. It didn't happen under our watch, as Mr Christopherson pointed out; it's happening under your watch.

How an Attorney General can stand in this House and say what he just has and allow 30% to 35% of those people going before the courts to be unrepresented, I think is a really bad thing.

Again, to the government House leader and the government whip: we're here. You've still got a few minutes. Get into the House if you want to do something, to pass some of these bills along. We're here, ready to make a deal. We're just waiting for you to be here.

Mr Wood: I would like to comment briefly on some of the comments that were made about the effectiveness of the judicial system and our police enforcement. I would invite members to take a look at the net result of what has happened in the last few years. From 1995 to 1999, reported crime in Ontario dropped 28%. That is real, meaningful progress, and that is the net result of the policies of this government.

Mr Duncan: The clock is ticking away tonight, and I would like to add my voice to those asking the government House leader and chief whip to come back to negotiate Bill 3, the select committee on health and the environment, Mr Murdoch's bill, Mr Wettlaufer's bill, Mr O'Toole's bill on Irish culture. There have been negotiations. I believe there's some room to move at this late hour. I've offered a proposal that I think can break the log-jam.

It would be a shame for this House to break and have the government in a position where it has to renege on a commitment in its budget, where it forces all of us in effect to leave here without creating opportunities that I think would serve all caucuses well.

With that, I'll move adjournment of the House to give the government another half hour to come back in.

The Speaker: I'm afraid you can't do that. You don't have the floor. But I appreciate that anyway.

Response?

Mr Marchese: First of all, I want to say that I like the Attorney General. I also want to say hello to his parents and Errol, his brother, who I know very well.

Hon Mr Young: You like Errol better.

Mr Marchese: Well, he's closer to me politically, right?

I want to say hello to Molinari's mom—the member from Thornhill.

Interjection: Say hi to Paula.

Mr Marchese: Paula?

Hon Mr Clark: She likes you.

Mr Marchese: Well, I'm glad. Hello, Paula.

I just want to thank the Attorney General for mentioning that he did make some spending reductions. That was a good fact to have revealed. I want to thank him for revealing as well that he has made great strides in speeding up the backlogs; that was helpful. But you had a good economy. We should never have had one. You should never have had one.

Hon Mr Young: Had what?

Mr Marchese: A backlog in the first place. Because in a good economy, you're supposed to put money back in, not take money out. Now that you're putting back a couple of bucks, you're saying, "Oh, we're speeding up the backlog."

But with respect to this bill, the Emergency Readiness Act was not designed to see the light of day; it was not. It's not designed to go anywhere. It's just public relations. That's all this bill is about. If you wanted to make it work, you would have done something different. You

would have sent it to committee. You would have consulted with major stakeholders like the firefighters, police, municipalities, civil libertarians and the like.

Ms Martel: Paramedics.

Mr Marchese: Paramedics as well. You're not serious. This bill was not seriously intended to see the light of day. All I wanted to do was to tell the public that for their gratification.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Seeing none, Mr Runciman has moved second reading of Bill 148.

Mr Duncan: I'd like to speak.

The Speaker: I'm afraid we've already moved it.

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

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Mr Wood: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to ask for unanimous consent for an immediate vote on the second reading of Bill 56, An Act to proclaim Genocide Memorial Week in Ontario.

The Speaker: Before we do that, I have to ask the question, shall the bill be ordered for third reading? Agreed.

The chief government whip?

Hon Mr Baird: Committee on general government.

The Speaker: Committee on general government.

I apologize; the member for London West on a point of order.

Mr Wood: I'd like to ask for unanimous consent of the House for immediate second reading of Bill 56, An Act to proclaim Genocide Memorial Week in Ontario.

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

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to ask the House for unanimous consent to move a motion respecting the standing committee on justice and social policy and my Bill 30, An Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997, in order to protect the employment of volunteer firefighters, and that the question on the motion be put immediately without debate or amendment.

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

Orders of the day?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I move adjournment of the House.

The Speaker: Mr Stockwell has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

This House stands adjourned until September 23 at 1:30 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 2201.

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