

No. 69B



N° 69B

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly  
of Ontario

Third Session, 37<sup>th</sup> Parliament

Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario

Troisième session, 37<sup>e</sup> législature

**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Monday 9 December 2002**

**Lundi 9 décembre 2002**

Speaker  
Honourable Gary Carr

Président  
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier  
Claude L. DesRosiers

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF ONTARIO**

Monday 9 December 2002

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
DE L'ONTARIO**

Lundi 9 décembre 2002

*The House met at 1845.*

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

**TORONTO WATERFRONT  
REVITALIZATION  
CORPORATION ACT, 2002  
LOI DE 2002 SUR LA SOCIÉTÉ  
DE REVITALISATION DU SECTEUR  
RIVERAIN DE TORONTO**

Mr Stockwell, on behalf of Mrs Ecker, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 151, An Act respecting the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation / Projet de loi 151, Loi concernant la Société de revitalisation du secteur riverain de Toronto.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson):** Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 16 of this year, I am now required to put the question. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

Those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

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

**SUSTAINABLE WATER AND  
SEWAGE SYSTEMS ACT, 2002**

**LOI DE 2002 SUR LA DURABILITÉ  
DES RÉSEAUX D'EAU ET D'ÉGOUTS**

Mr Stockwell moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 175, An Act respecting the cost of water and waste water services / Projet de loi 175, Loi concernant le coût des services d'approvisionnement en eau et des services relatifs aux eaux usées.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson):** Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 4 of this year, I am now required to put the question. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

Those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

I have received the official deferral. The vote will be deferred until December 10, tomorrow afternoon.

**CONSUMER PROTECTION STATUTE  
LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2002**

**LOI DE 2002 MODIFIANT DES LOIS  
EN CE QUI CONCERNE  
LA PROTECTION DU CONSOMMATEUR**

Mr Stockwell, on behalf of Mr Hudak, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 180, An Act to enact, amend or revise various Acts related to consumer protection / Projet de loi 180, Loi édictant, modifiant ou révisant diverses lois portant sur la protection du consommateur.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson):** Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 19 of this year, I am now required to put the question. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

Those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Pursuant to standing order 28(h), we will stand down the vote until tomorrow.

**SAFE DRINKING WATER ACT, 2002**

**LOI DE 2002 SUR LA SALUBRITÉ  
DE L'EAU POTABLE**

Mr Stockwell moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 195, An Act respecting safe drinking water / Projet de loi 195, Loi ayant trait à la salubrité de l'eau potable.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson):** Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 6 of this year, I am now required to put the question. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please indicate by saying "aye."

Those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Again from the government House leader, a deferral of the vote until tomorrow.

FUNERAL, BURIAL AND  
CREMATION SERVICES ACT, 2002

LOI DE 2002  
SUR LES SERVICES FUNÉRAIRES  
ET LES SERVICES D'ENTERREMENT  
ET DE CRÉMATION

Mr Stockwell, on behalf of Mr Hudak, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 209, An Act respecting funerals, burials, cremations and related services and providing for the amendment of other statutes / Projet de loi 209, Loi traitant des funérailles, des enterrements, des crémations et des services connexes et prévoyant la modification d'autres lois.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson):** Again, pursuant to the order of the House dated December 4 of this year, I am now required to put the question. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please indicate by saying "aye."

Those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Again a deferral slip has been provided from the government House leader, and that will be voted tomorrow.

1850

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS  
EMPLOYMENT PROTECTION ACT, 2002

LOI DE 2002 SUR LA PROTECTION  
DE L'EMPLOI DES POMPIERS  
VOLONTAIRES

Mr Arnott moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 30, An Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 in order to protect the employment of volunteer firefighters / Projet de loi 30, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la prévention et la protection contre l'incendie afin de protéger l'emploi des pompiers volontaires.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson):** The honourable member now has the floor for, I believe, a 20-minute leadoff speech.

**Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington):** It's an honour to move third reading of my private member's Bill 30, the Volunteer Firefighters Employment Protection Act.

While it's considered a rare instance that a private member's bill is moved forward to this point, a look at the past seven months should explain not only why we are still debating Bill 30, but why we must see that it's passed into law. Bill 30 is intended to stop tactics of harassment and intimidation used by the firefighters' union leadership to threaten their members who also serve as volunteers in their home communities. The

damage is done as these double-hatters succumb to threats and are forced to quit their volunteer posts.

I would like to remind the House about Tim Lee. Mr Lee is a full-time firefighter who works in Whitby and volunteers in Kawartha Lakes. He was recently convicted by his union for the so-called offence of volunteering. He has been expelled from his union. Although he is appealing their decision, his future employment remains uncertain. You may know, Mr Speaker, that most of the collective agreements involving professional firefighters include a clause that states that you must be a member in good standing of your union if you wish to remain employed. So in a very real sense, when Mr Lee says he stands to lose his job, his fears are not unfounded.

This is nothing short of outrageous. How can this House remain silent when volunteerism is assaulted in this manner? Surely everyone has the right to volunteer in their community and on their own free time, and in the discipline in which they are trained and skilled. Mr Lee's courage is an inspiration. He isn't quitting. Every member of this House should agree that Tim Lee and hundreds like him should have the right to volunteer on their own free time. Bill 30 would preserve that right.

The fire marshal has stated that legislation of this type is needed to avoid putting public safety at risk. Bill 30 had two days of public hearings before the standing committee on justice and social policy, on October 15 and 21. I was very encouraged when the fire marshal appeared to express support for the principle of the bill. Members may know that the primary function of the office of the fire marshal is to minimize the loss of life and property from fire by assisting municipalities and fire departments to improve fire protection and fire prevention services. The Ontario fire marshal also advises the provincial government on standards and legislative developments that relate to fire protection and fire prevention. Fire marshal Bernard Moyle is an experienced, dedicated public servant who is non-political, and his voice is relevant—indeed, it is central—to this debate. He said the following when he spoke of the discussions that have taken place involving the firefighters' union and AMO:

"There simply was no common ground for agreement on a non-legislated solution.

"For the reasons stated above, it is our opinion that an enforceable and sustainable non-legislated solution to the two-hatter issue is not achievable.

"... It is my understanding that the" Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association "committed to the moratorium as long as constructive dialogue was taking place. This is no longer the case, so the moratorium was lifted. This is not intended as a criticism of the" Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, "as they have a legal right to enforce their constitution. However, the lifting of the moratorium by the" Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association "will likely exacerbate the existing tension and uncertainty in both the fire service and municipal communities, and it is unclear to what

extent and degree this action will impact on existing two-hatters.

“The sudden or phased withdrawal of two-hatters from communities dependent on volunteer fire departments could significantly impact on their ability to provide an adequate level of fire protection and may in some cases pose a potential serious threat to public safety for the following reasons.

“There would be a loss of experience, leadership and expertise in some communities. In fact, for that very reason, even a single two-hatter can make a significant difference in a small rural community. For example, some two-hatters serve as senior officers and captains and have fire prevention and training responsibilities, which are key functions in any fire department.

“There may be a reduced capacity for providing adequate emergency responses during weekdays, when two-hatters are more readily available due to their shift schedules.

“Increased response times may occur, at least until replacements can be recruited and adequately trained, if in fact replacements are available within the community. There may be an increased time in which to assemble an adequate fire attack team and a potential short-term reduction in fire ground effectiveness, resulting in greater fire losses.

“The time required to recruit and train full-time, part-time or volunteer firefighters could be extensive, creating short-term delivery difficulties. In some” small “communities there may not be a pool of potential candidates available to become volunteer firefighters and a community may not be able to afford hiring full-time firefighters, creating a potential public safety issue.

“In a” small “number of communities that have a heavy reliance on two-hatters, the sudden withdrawal of their services could create a potential serious threat to public safety.

“In conclusion, there is a provincial and public interest in protecting two-hatters who wish to serve as volunteer firefighters. We do not believe that a non-legislated solution is achievable or enforceable. As a result, without a legislated solution, the existing tensions and uncertainty in the” volunteer fire service “will continue, and the high potential for two-hatters to resign as a result of” the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association’s “constitutional enforcement activities could well result in significant public safety concerns arising. It is my understanding that such protection is not uncommon in most jurisdictions in Canada and the United States” of America.

“In closing, my office recognizes the importance of balancing interests where possible, but supports first and foremost the need to develop a legislated solution that clearly protects the interests of public safety. It is important that career firefighters who wish to serve as part-time or volunteer firefighters in their home communities are permitted to do so without fear of loss of employment.”

I remind the members that this is not just me talking over here. That was the presentation of the fire marshal to

the standing committee on justice and social policy while the committee was discussing and deliberating Bill 30 on October 21.

I’ve been encouraged by the support of many of the interested groups who are concerned about this issue. The Association of Municipalities of Ontario has been steadfast in their support since I introduced the bill in May. They have repeatedly lobbied every member of this House.

I was also very encouraged when I received the resolution passed by LUMCO, the Large Urban Mayors’ Caucus of Ontario, in August. This resolution, which was signed by LUMCO chair Hazel McCallion, is significant because it underlines the fact that this bill does not pertain only to the interests of rural Ontario but to urban Ontario as well. MPPs who represent largely urban constituencies need to understand this when they consider their position on my bill.

Thanks in large part to AMO’s help in getting the word out, some 79 municipal councils have passed resolutions in support of the principles embodied in Bill 30.

I want to especially say thank you to the region of Waterloo council and the council of the county of Wellington, as well as the local municipalities who offered their support in Waterloo-Wellington.

The Fire Fighters Association of Ontario, which as you know is the organization representing the volunteer fire departments in the province, is just as strong in their support of Bill 30 as is AMO. In fact, one of their executive members, Fire Chief Doug Smith of Puslinch township, was actually the first person to bring this problem to my attention on March 18, 2002, earlier this year, when he came to my constituency office to express his concern that double-hatters in the province were being threatened by the union leadership. My recollection is that he told me that up to one third of his firefighters are double-hatters at the Puslinch fire department. He expressed concern that without his double-hatters, their ability to respond to emergencies would be seriously compromised. I think I should add that the Puslinch township fire department is one of the busiest fire departments in the province of Ontario and that they cover part of Highway 401, which means they’re the first emergency response when there’s a traffic accident on the 401 through Puslinch township. They are very busy, and they need their double-hatters.

#### 1900

It was at that point that I began to investigate the possibility of doing a private member’s bill that led to Bill 30. At that time I knew I had a private member’s ballot item coming up and that I would need an issue. In looking at the issues I had before me, I thought this was a good one to bring forward. I was assisted by the member for Ottawa-Vanier, in terms of her willingness to trade her private member’s ballot item with mine so that mine could be debated in June.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** Not a Liberal.

**Mr Arnott:** An independent, as a matter of fact.

Recently, I was pleased to receive the support of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs. They called a special general meeting of Ontario's fire chiefs on November 20 to discuss my bill. They concluded that, "It is the position of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs that Bill 30, as amended, protects those full-time firefighters who provide emergency services in their communities as volunteer firefighters." They went on to say: "Bill 30 also minimizes the impact on a firefighter association's right to discipline their members, and maintains the right of an affected firefighter to fire service employment and fair representation. It is time for this legislation to be fully supported by all MPPs and to work toward ensuring a vibrant and community-minded framework for fire and emergency services across the province."

At this time, I want to say a special word of thanks to a number of my colleagues who supported Bill 30 at second reading, in some cases taking considerable political risk by taking a stand in favour of what I believe is just and right. I want to thank John Baird, Marcel Beaubien, Claudette Boyer, Tony Clement, Brian Coburn, Sean Conway, Dianne Cunningham, Carl DeFaria, Garfield Dunlop, Doug Galt, Steve Gilchrist, Raminder Gill, Ernie Hardeman, John Hastings, Chris Hodgson, Tim Hudak, Frank Klees, Margaret Marland, Bart Maves, Ted McMeekin, Norm Miller, Tina Molinari, Julia Munro, Dan Newman, John O'Toole, Richard Patten, Rob Sampson, Joe Spina, Norm Sterling, Gary Stewart and David Turnbull.

**Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader):** What about me?

**Mr Arnott:** You weren't here, but I'm counting on your vote at third reading.

Lastly, I want to express my appreciation to the Premier for the interest he's shown on this issue. Not many days ago, in response to a question he received from the member for Toronto-Danforth, if I'm not mistaken, he said, "The member for Waterloo-Wellington has a bill that I believe should go forward and be acted upon." The Premier was, of course, referring to Bill 30. His statement led to an article that appeared in the National Post on November 28, with a headline that said, "Premier throws support behind 'double-hatters': Backs private member's bill, giving unionized firefighters more freedom." I very much appreciated that article as well.

I also need to thank my constituents in Waterloo-Wellington. In the fall I sent out a newsletter about Bill 30 to all the homes, farms and businesses in my riding. I included in this newsletter the verbatim Hansard of what was discussed at second reading. As well, I included a postcard. I asked people to send it back to me if they agreed with me and supported my bill. I was heartened and encouraged by the response. I received more than 400 postcards back, and I'm continuing to receive them through my Web site.

I thank my constituents who have supported my efforts on this and so many other issues during the last 12 years that I've been privileged to serve, representing first the riding of Wellington and now Waterloo-Wellington. I also want to thank my executive assistant, Andrew Juby,

who worked with me for the last couple of hours to organize my thoughts in a way that we could present to the House, having just been informed this afternoon that this debate would take place at 6:45 tonight.

Most of us have the opportunity to vote on private members' bills according to our own beliefs, the opinion in our constituency and, most importantly, according to our own consciences. I believe that private members' business is an important opportunity for MPPs to bring forward important issues. I believe very strongly that private members' bills, when supported by the House, should be considered for final passage into law. I was very pleased to be part of a process on the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly which recently has brought forward a report to this Legislature to try to enhance the role of the backbencher. It included a number of suggestions with respect to private members' bills.

For example, the member for Toronto-Danforth has a bill which I know she sincerely wants to see passed into law for the right reasons. I intend to support her bill at third reading if it is called for a vote, and I say that her bill should be called for vote. There are other bills that should be voted on at third reading.

At third reading, we have to be conscious of the fact that with this vote a bill may very well pass into law. I would say especially to our cabinet ministers, whom I work with every day and respect very much, that each of you needs to consider your position on this bill very carefully. I understand for many of you it's very difficult, especially at this point in the electoral cycle. If you think you are opposed to my bill, I'm asking that you examine your own conscience, thinking of why you are opposed to this bill. Perhaps it is a good reason. Honourable members will disagree on public issues; that's the nature of this place. That is why we have this Legislature: to debate and then decide. I hope your reasons are not primarily based on political expediency. As a cabinet minister, is it not your responsibility to think of the interests of the whole province, not just of some of the special interests in your riding?

In conclusion, I want to state again that I have the deepest respect for all our firefighters in the province of Ontario, full-time and volunteer. I appreciate their dedication—I gather some of them are in the gallery, and we welcome them here tonight—their professionalism, their courage and their valour. I especially appreciate the work done by the double-hatters, who are prepared to apply their dedication, their courage and their valour to enhance the protection of their home communities. Bill 30 is a tribute to them, and I ask all members of this House to support its final passage into law.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

**The Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson):** Before I move on to the next speaker, I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His

Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in his office.

**Deputy Clerk (Ms Deborah Deller):** The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 191, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to ensure the safety of emergency vehicles stopped on a highway and people who are outside a stopped emergency vehicle / Projet de loi 191, Loi modifiant le Code de la route afin de garantir la sécurité des véhicules de secours arrêtés sur une voie publique et celle des personnes qui se trouvent à l'extérieur de tels véhicules;

Bill 198, An Act to implement Budget measures and other initiatives of the Government / Projet de loi 198, Loi mettant en oeuvre certaines mesures budgétaires et d'autres initiatives du gouvernement;

Bill 210, An Act to amend various Acts in respect of the pricing, conservation and supply of electricity and in respect of other matters related to electricity / Projet de loi 210, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l'établissement du prix de l'électricité, la conservation de l'électricité et l'approvisionnement en électricité et traitant d'autres questions liées à l'électricité;

Bill 213, An Act to improve access to justice by amending the Solicitors Act to permit contingency fees in certain circumstances, to modernize and reform the law as it relates to limitation periods by enacting a new Limitations Act and making related amendments to other statutes, and to make changes with respect to the governance of the public accounting profession by amending the Public Accountancy Act / Projet de loi 213, Loi visant à améliorer l'accès à la justice en modifiant la Loi sur les procureurs pour autoriser les honoraires conditionnels dans certaines circonstances, à moderniser et à réviser le droit portant sur les délais de prescription en édictant la nouvelle Loi sur la prescription des actions et en apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois, et à modifier les règles qui régissent la profession de comptable public en modifiant la Loi sur la comptabilité publique.

1910

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS  
EMPLOYMENT PROTECTION ACT, 2002  
(continued)

LOI DE 2002 SUR LA PROTECTION  
DE L'EMPLOI DES POMPIERS  
VOLONTAIRES  
(suite)

**The Acting Speaker:** The floor is now open for further debate.

**Mr Dave Levac (Brant):** I appreciate the opportunity in third reading to debate private member's Bill 30, An Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997. The first thing I want to do, though, is make sure that people understand that in 1999, when I was elected, I was assigned the critic's portfolio of Solicitor General, and since that time, with the evolution of that particular

portfolio, I still continue to be the critic for Public Safety and Security, which includes the Solicitor General portfolio and, by its nature, corrections.

I have been going around the province, and in my own riding, discussing with many people, including three or four previous ministers, this portfolio and this particular issue that has been put to the table for us to debate, and also for us to consider the rights and privileges of our firefighters, along with the protection of our citizens, Bill 30.

It probably has been quite divisive to communities. People have been saying that it's a debate about urban-rural. They've been saying that it's a debate about political interests. They've been saying that it's a debate about money. They've been saying that it's a debate about intimidation. Quite frankly, I've been trying to look at it in a larger scope rather than, as some people have been trying to portray it, as simply letting somebody volunteer in their community. That portrayal is not the only issue that needs to be debated here. We need to put on the table some important points that need to be raised.

As part of my own personal background in terms of firefighting, I'd like to point out to the House that before being elected I volunteered as a chair and I created a group called Friends of the Firefighters. There was a need in my community for some equipment. After doing a little bit of educating, because some friends I went to high school with are firefighters—to them I always tip my hat and say, obviously on a personal note, I wish for their safety and security and also for that of their families.

We needed a thermal imager. It's probably seen as one of the most innovative pieces of equipment for firefighting since the Scott Pak. The reality is that up until the thermal imager, firefighters had to go into buildings in a fire—not as glamorous as they make out in the movies or TV—completely blind. The old expression, "You can't see your hand in front of your face," is actually true. They put me in a smokehouse and explained to me what I would be going through. I could not see my hand in front of my face. I grabbed the thermal imager that was provided to us as a sample and I not only could see my hand, I could see right across the room, and I could see where they had hidden the dummies. I could see everything.

Before they had this machinery, they would have had to do a pat-down. What they would do is get on all fours and feel their way around a room. It would take about two to three minutes to clear a room and, as far as a house is concerned, it would take them far too long. We know what the consequences are of not being able to do that. Because of their training and because of their experience, they would be able to find bodies quickly but, unfortunately far too often, not fast enough.

Why am I bringing this up? I am bringing this up to bring to everyone's attention that we're not talking about doing a little electrical work on the side. We're not talking about digging a hole for a swimming pool. We're talking about somebody who risks their life in terms of

doing firefighting, and that's being done by both volunteers and professional firefighters whenever they fight a fire. I want to make it perfectly clear that I understand, admire and respect immensely in all senses the firefighters.

I am proud to say that our committee was able to raise enough money to buy three thermal imagers for the city of Brantford and three more for the county inside of its volunteer force. So now we have six thermal imagers in my riding alone because of fundraising and because the people of that riding felt so compelled to make sure that their firefighters were properly equipped.

That brings up another question that I'm going to put out and maybe a comment about that because it has something to do with this bill, when I brought up amendments to the bill that were defeated. All three were defeated quite handily by the four members on the other side.

I want to refer us to the official Hansard of the debates of Monday, October 21, and Tuesday, October 22. I would refer people to those statements and those questions. When the member for Waterloo-Wellington brought up the fire marshal, I'm awfully glad that he did, because there are some differences of opinion as to what was said by the fire marshal. My interpretation of the letter from the fire marshal, and I did ask him a couple of questions, was that he had one meeting of the stakeholders to debate and discuss this bill. He made a few phone calls and he said he had a deputation given to him. So he as a negotiator decided, after one meeting of the stakeholders, that we were no longer going to be able to do that.

My own personal experience has brought me to this place after teaching and being in education for over 24 years. For eight of those years, I was a negotiator for the teachers' side on the teacher-board negotiations, and the first thing I learned was that one meeting did not make a negotiation. As a matter of fact, in one meeting, the first meeting, we usually ended up having some pretty ridiculous proposals from both sides put on the table, and we knew—we knew—that was going to change. We knew that when you put the positions out, you did a little give-and-take, and that when you negotiated, you understood that this was going to be your best foot forward and then see where you could find the middle. But in this case, the fire marshal decided after one meeting, "It's impasse." Impasse doesn't even declare improper negotiations; impasse gets declared by an arbitrator, another person in a task force, shall we say.

That brings me to my amendments. This is the amendment I offered to this particular committee, which, by the way, after the third meeting, clause-by-clause, had three brand new Conservatives, three brand new people who hadn't gone through the process. They ended up being subbed in at the end of the meeting. I wanted to point that out, just for your curiosity.

"Commencement

"... Subject to subsection (2), this act comes into force on a day to be named by proclamation of the Lieutenant Governor.

"... comes into force on the day this act receives royal assent."

What I was asking for was a delay, that the bill could pass but didn't get proclaimed for six months. Why did I ask for that? I asked for the proclamation not to do it because commencing on the first day of the month that it receives royal assent and ending on the last day of six months after the Volunteer Firefighters Protection Act receives royal assent, "the fire marshal shall ensure that the issue of salaried firefighters who also work as volunteer firefighters be subject to no less than twice monthly meetings in order to resolve issues relating to and arising from salaried firefighters also working as volunteer firefighters."

Participants at meetings: the fire marshal shall be responsible for calling all these meetings and shall include representatives from AMO and other organizations representing firefighters, volunteer firefighters, trade unions representing salaried firefighters, representatives from the fire marshal's office and any other such parties that the fire marshal thinks have an interest in the issues.

They report no later than the first day of the seventh month after the Volunteer Firefighters Employment Protection Act receives royal assent. "The fire marshal shall report to the minister on the progress that is made at the meetings in resolving the issues relating to and arising from salaried firefighters also working as volunteer firefighters."

Basically, in a nutshell, what I asked in this amendment was to make sure that we had a really decent kick at the can, so we had an opportunity to debate fully and to come to consensus and possibly bring all the people in to negotiate, to try to find some ground in there that we could present to the minister as, "Maybe we've got a solution here." But we only had one meeting and, quite frankly, that's not good enough.

Another thing that happened: I also asked in one of my amendments:

"Provincial review of funding for volunteer firefighters

"... The minister shall annually review on a province-wide basis expenditures made on volunteer firefighters and the affordability of the use of volunteer firefighters to ensure that appropriate funding is provided to support the volunteer firefighters."

That amendment was deep-sixed as well. Why? Because it made the province accountable to make sure they found out if they were providing any funding to those municipalities. Almost every single deputation made indicated that we can't afford this. We've got to have the bill. Why? Because if one double-hatter leaves, we can't afford it.

Another issue that comes as a result of that is the one that was used—and as a matter of fact, I received a phone call from the volunteer fire service in my riding that actually took offence to an awful lot of the deputations that kept saying that we need those professional firefighters in our force in order to have it a better force. They said that they were trained and as professional as



anyone else and they resented the fact that they were continually almost made to look smaller. So that puts a little bit of a kibosh on the whole idea that without the professional firefighters, municipalities wouldn't have good fire services.

I had phone calls from some of the chiefs of those small towns, who said, "Don't count me in on the logic that's being thrown on this bill, because what's happening is that they're lumping us in with all those people who proclaim, some of them municipalities, we can't afford this." We had an amendment that took care of that. Then we had an amendment that took care of whether or not the training and the professional hiring being done by the municipalities or the province provided them with opportunity to put the money in. That ruled out that whole argument, and now we've got municipalities and some fire services stepping forward, particularly fire services, and fire chiefs saying, "Wait a minute. Don't lump us in with some of the statements people are making here. Our fire service is second to none. Don't make us part of your argument to say that if we remove double-hatters, it's all gone."

#### 1920

The fire marshal himself did not say that the province is going to hell in a handbasket with this issue. What the fire marshal did say is that if all at once every double-hatter were removed, which he is supposed to comment on, not the affordability—is whether or not it's safe. His implication was that if all of them were removed, then there would be a safety and security issue of concern, not just simply holus-bolus. Well, that's not what OPFFA was asking for. The OPFFA wanted to come to the table to offer different variations, as did the chiefs.

So I'm saying to you, Speaker, that we never had an opportunity to get to the table to talk about these options, to actually negotiate those. That's why I was discouraged by it. So as soon as they defeated those amendments, I came back and I wrote a letter to the minister: "I've attached the amendments I offered to Bill 30 during the committee hearings that were defeated. I would urge you to give Bill 30 careful consideration. It may have such a large impact on so many groups in Ontario. The mood surrounding this bill is explosive on all sides, and I have serious concerns if this bill should be passed.

"I would offer you my suggestions for a conciliatory resolution to the double-hatter issue. Firstly, I would suggest an all-party committee to monitor this situation and ensure that the appropriate consultation process is in place between all stakeholders.

"Secondly, I would suggest, if that's not doable, a task force be struck by a third person that would assist all parties to come to an equitable solution that satisfies all involved.

"I look forward to discussing my ideas further with you in detail and I am hopeful that you will appreciate the seriousness of the situation."

No response yet, but that was only November 21. I have to give the minister respect in terms of his ability to respond as quickly as I would like.

But, Speaker, I would suggest to you that this issue is strong enough that a task force should be seriously considered.

I'd like to mention that the mayor of Mississauga was brought into the debate in terms of the support for the bill.

"Dear members of Parliament"—by the way, during a press conference that was held, one of the mayor's quotes was, "Nobody can afford this any more. We can't do this. Where is the money coming from?" Well, I suggest very respectfully that maybe she should have turned her wrath on to the government for not giving 50-cent dollars to fire services like they do for police officers. Maybe that's another issue that should be considered.

Here's the letter Hazel McCallion, the mayor of Mississauga, wrote:

"Dear members of Parliament:

"I asked Tim Hudak to send me a list of the caucus members that voted against his bill regarding the double-hatter issue.

"I asked for the list so that I could write a letter emphasizing the necessity for you to vote in favour of the bill.

"If this bill is not approved, the financial impact on the rural areas will be enormous and I can only assume that those who vote against the bill are prepared to set aside a huge amount of money to finance the rural municipalities that depend completely on volunteers to run their fire department."

Well, if they had accepted my amendment, we might not have had to be worried about that, Hazel.

"There is no way that the property taxes in a rural area can sustain a full-time fire department and I am pleading with you to support Tim Hudak's bill.

"All professions volunteer to help communities and the professional firefighter should not be deprived of this opportunity and privilege to serve as a volunteer in the community in which they live.

"I ask for your support of this bill."

Well, Mayor McCallion, the writer, whoever it was, sent the letter to Tim Hudak and not Ted Arnott, and also cc'd a copy to Tim Hudak, the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. So I would hope she would rewrite the letter and send it back out again, and send one to Mr Runciman and along with it one of my amendments that would have taken care of what Hazel McCallion and many, many other people had said was their major concern, which was financing.

I have about seven or eight different items I could go through. The one I will bring mention to is amalgamation in terms of those people who had to suffer through that. I want to reiterate this as a bigger-picture issue as opposed to specifically Bill 30, and that is that amalgamation created an awful lot of this headache.

Amalgamation was not thought out by this government whatsoever. If it had thought it out, it probably would have been able to come to grips with the reality that they were creating a very large problem for those municipalities that had to face this issue. I am told by

many people in the professional firefighter association groups, and firefighters across the province are saying, "You know what? The province didn't know what they were doing. They didn't even have a clue about the problems they were creating in firefighting and other services."

There are a couple of other points. I will bring them to our attention. The first one is that of emergency first-response teams. I would respectfully suggest that we haven't looked far enough into the future about what we're going to do with our fire services. Our fire services are slowly becoming more than simply fire services, although their primary focus is suppression, which it should be. On another side of the bill, it says that you're supposed to be an educator to make sure that we do fire prevention, which I fully support. But in terms of suppression, we want to talk to the government side and simply say to them, "You're really dropping the ball on this one."

These teams are now evolving themselves into emergency first-response teams. If that volunteer is going to be a member of that emergency first-response team, that person is going to be on duty immediately and is going to be expected to be there until the emergency is suppressed. We're going to go beyond suppression of fires; we're going to be talking about an emergency first-response team, that's a whole new beast. This bill is going to create more problems for that issue. We're not looking forward. I would ask the government and all the members who are going to vote for this bill to be quite sure that you know what you're asking for when these things are going to evolve into a first-response team. It's a lot different from suppression. You must be aware of that. I ask you to look carefully into what you're creating when you're asking volunteers to do that.

There are regulations in the act already that say you're only supposed to give 48 hours of service in a week. I would ask, how many people are going beyond 48? Is somebody keeping track of that time? Is somebody going to say, "Oops, you're on your 48th hour; you've got to stop. Put that hose down. Don't save that kid. Get out of here; you're on your 48th"? I want to make people understand that we're talking about multi-layered problems here that are not getting dealt with, I would rather say, with a linear-thinking bill.

The other issue I bring to everyone's attention of why I can't support this bill—and I would suggest to you that we have to do this—is to review the fire marshal's office and its actions. We've got to take a look at what's going on here. We've got some really weird things happening. In one case, in Sudbury we're looking at situations where one person is allowed on a truck and we're calling into question some of the things that are happening. Fifteen to 20 different municipalities are put on a list to say, "We're just going to let you know there are some safety issues that could be happening here." Yet, on the other hand, he's supporting a bill that could create that same problem.

So I'm not sure whether or not the fire marshal's office holistically is understanding the depth at which

they're making this decision. I'm not questioning the individual; I'm questioning whether or not there's consistency in the decisions being made in the fire marshal's office, because I asked him. The OFM's concern was that these actions had a potential—he used the word carefully—to result in a sudden withdrawal of services of two-hatters throughout the province. So now we're talking about what might happen if the bill doesn't pass or what might happen if the bill does pass. All of a sudden what he's saying now is that if all those double-hatters are removed, then yes, there may be some potential for difficulties.

That got brought up by several of the municipalities. What they said was, "We can't afford this action. We can't train them. We can't do that." That's what my amendment was trying to say. My amendment was saying to the municipalities of the province to sit down at the table and make sure that you're providing enough funds and supervision. The same fire marshal who says 10 in 10—the expectation of the standard of 10 in 10 is just a guideline now for those rural communities that are complaining that they can't afford it. So maybe it's just a guideline. There's so much inconsistency there.

It's time for us to take a good, hard look at what we're providing in terms of fire service in this province. If the one thing that's happened as a result of this bill is that we take a good, hard, linear look at what's going on, then I've got to tell you, we're in trouble. We're in deep trouble if we're not going to analyze what's happening inside our house. And if we think that the one bill is going to solve that problem, I will repeat myself time and time again. This is going underground, if you think this is going to be solved. It's going to rear its ugly head again. Get the stakeholders to the table to discuss that issue, and I'm sure that we can come up with a reputable example for all of us in the province.

**1930**

**Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre):** Speaker, let me indicate at the onset of this brief amount of time that I have to speak to this bill on third reading that New Democrats do not support this legislation. New Democrats oppose this legislation. New Democrats do it without weaving and bobbing. New Democrats oppose this legislation head-on.

New Democrats, as a party of labour, stand firmly with, in this instance, the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, or it could be the IBEW or OPSEU or any other number of unions and associations of workers. We believe they have the right to set their own constitution, to set standards for their members. If there is to be a change to that constitution or to those standards, that change has to come from within that organization, from the floor of a convention, whether it's a national convention here in Canada or an international convention in the United States of America, plain and simple. Make no mistake about it: we are unapologetic and far from embarrassed about our united support for firefighters around this issue. Make no mistake about that.

This has been a regrettable debate. One would have thought that firefighters across this province would have

recognized the significant dangers that firefighters have been confronted with by virtue of this government's policy of downloading and underfunding municipalities and municipal services, firefighting services among them. I believe that firefighters' time would have been far better spent over the course of the last months lobbying this government aggressively to ensure that municipalities across this province have adequate resources to develop (1) effective professional firefighting services where they are warranted, and (2) where the communities are such that a volunteer service is consistent with the size and location of the community, aggressively lobby for adequate support for volunteer firefighting services to be properly trained and properly resourced so that they can do the job that indeed we and the professional firefighters understand volunteers do.

This issue is not an anti-volunteer firefighting issue. I have spent enough time with members of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association to say, and I believe this firmly, that it is not an issue of volunteers when it comes to the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association either. The OPFFA has indicated over and over and over again on the record that they understand there are communities that are not sufficient in size and that are so dispersed and have so modest a tax base that it would be unrealistic to expect that community and its taxpayers to develop an exclusive professional firefighting service or, in the case of many, even a composite firefighting service.

The issue has been very clear, and I refer back to the hearings that were held around this bill. I attended those hearings, throughout the course of the hearings, on behalf of the New Democratic Party. I want to indicate that I was concerned because over the course of those hearings, when a number of witnesses came forward, I saw the government bench at those hearings have members shifted in and out. Some of my concern around that was because it was my suspicion that at least one, perhaps two of the government members sitting in that committee were making it quite clear by virtue of the questions they were asking and the comments they were posing that they indeed opposed Bill 30 as well. I found it an abuse of the committee process of some significance to discover that a government member who may well have been persuaded, as it appears some of them were, of the legitimacy of the position of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, rather than being allowed to express their view by way of a vote, simply being shuffled out of that committee and subbed with somebody who was going to follow marching orders, who hadn't had an opportunity to hear the evidence that had been presented, or participated in, never mind listening to, any of the debate that occurred in that committee. Needless to say, that was a peculiar thing in its own right.

There's not a single member of this Legislature who ever has—and, I'm confident, ever will—stood up and spoken with anything other than praise for firefighters. So I'm not going to spend a whole lot of time on platitudes about how much we love firefighters. But we

don't trust them to form their own association and create their own constitution, and we don't respect them enough to allow them to determine their own internal affairs within that association. Oh yes, we love firefighters, but we don't love you enough to write your own constitution. We respect firefighters, but we don't respect you enough for you to set standards within your own organization. Sorry, friends, you're either with firefighters or you're against them. And if you're not with them, I regret to tell you you're against them. There's no halfway point here. One either understands how a professional association or trade union works and why it exists, or one doesn't.

I understand that there are members in this Legislature who don't have regard for workers, be they industrial workers, be they farm workers or be they firefighters. I understand there are people in this Legislature who don't have as much regard for them as some others might. I believe as well that there are some in this Legislature who have no regard whatsoever for professional associations or trade unions. There are people in this assembly who have made it quite clear, in act and in deed, that they don't like trade unions and professional associations. They don't think there should be free, collective bargaining.

Indeed, we've seen from this government some efforts—regrettably, some of them successful—to impose arbitration standards on associations and groups of workers that are the most uneven, biased, unfair and predictable arbitration standards that have ever been imposed on any body that had to rely upon arbitration, with its long, noble history and tradition of fairness that has been all but erased, more often than not by this government. And when it hasn't been all but erased, it's only because of the opposition, and New Democrats will take some credit for having been involved in some of those struggles—we have—ensuring that when arbitration has been imposed upon workers, that arbitration, the mandate of the arbitrator, the terms of the arbitration and the selection of the arbitrator are fair and indeed permit some expectation of justice on the part of both parties, workers as well as their employers.

I understand full well that my caucus, my colleagues in the New Democrat Party here at Queen's Park—Howard Hampton from away far north, through to other parts of the north, through to Toronto and all the way down through Hamilton and into Niagara—find ourselves perplexed by some of the contradictions. During the committee hearings I heard one witness who was advocating on behalf of the legislation saying it wasn't about money. Then, remarkably, that witness was followed by one who said everything had to do with money.

I was amazed that municipalities that employ, train and maintain professional firefighters—not all of them, but some—appeared unconcerned about the fact that their trained full-time firefighters were being used by other municipalities, sometimes neighbouring municipalities, as volunteers. Down where I come from, we have, in the largest part, composite fire departments. I know the

volunteers well, and I know the full-time firefighters well. I know why young women and men join volunteer fire services. Down where I come from, all of them have an eagerness and desire to serve their community. Most have a very specific interest in firefighting and the skill and training involved in it. More than a few have a desire to use their experience as volunteers to demonstrate to the chiefs of full-time firefighting services that they've got what it takes to be a firefighter.

#### 1940

I'm proud to see a whole lot of the full-time firefighters, a whole lot of the OPFFA, members of the communities that are part of Niagara Centre, having, if you will, cut their teeth in the volunteer services. I don't think they should make any apologies about the fact that they use volunteer services as a stepping stone, as a way to prove their stuff to get hired when there's a vacancy in the full-time firefighting service. But I say to you that I haven't met one yet who, as resources for volunteer companies and composite communities become scarcer and scarcer, thinks it's fair that somebody who's already a full-time firefighter in, let's say, a neighbouring municipality should bump them from a shorter and shorter list because of the pressures on communities flowing directly from this government's policies. Even in composite communities, the pressure is on to reduce the number of volunteer firefighters.

I also accept that the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association has a mandate that's inherent in its very *raison d'être* to not only advance the interests of its members as they exist at any given point in time, but also to develop standards for professionalism across the province. That's why New Democrats have advocated, have embraced and continue to fight, along with professional firefighters, for minimum staffing and response times. Again, if we had had our wish, I believe the debate tonight would have been far more productive were it about this province providing resources to give effect to the minimum response times and minimum staffing requirements that are universal and are clearly the minimum standards, one for urban settings and one for rural and remote settings and volunteer firefighters—a far better use of this chamber's time, far more productive, far more meaningful to the people of this province who rely upon firefighters day in and day out, 24/7, whether it's for fire suppression or for a medical response or for a motor vehicle accident—single-car, two-car or, as we saw tragically on the highway at Barrie over the weekend, a 40-car accident—or when it's one of those catastrophes. And since September 11, we no longer have to use our imaginations to conjure up a worst-case scenario. It exists in vivid reality for all of us, etched in our memories. Whether it's an arena roof collapsing, whether it's an industrial explosion, whether it's a natural catastrophe, it's firefighters, and I respect those firefighters. New Democrats respect those firefighters. If they're good enough to put our lives in their hands, then surely the structure of their very own constitution should be in their hands as well.

During the course of committee hearings and during the course of some of the debate that percolated throughout the province around this Bill 30, I heard a whole lot of talk about Bill 30 somehow being contrary to the charter or “contrary to my rights.” I understand—we all understand—that Bill 30 is considered by some of the double-hatters to be effectively an impediment to their double-hatting. I understand that. But during the course of the public hearings, we received not one legal opinion to suggest there was even anything remotely contrary to the so-called Charter of Rights and Freedoms about article 15 of the IAFF's constitution. I put to the House that it's not for the Legislature to conduct those types of legal interpretations. There was no suggestion that there was any sort of *prima facie* violation of the charter. If some people think there is, then it's incumbent upon those people and the people who support them to utilize the courts to determine whether or not that's the case. New Democrats see that as a rather plain, simple and obvious proposition as well.

Will there be financial hardship? Will there be immediate difficulties to those municipalities which currently use full-time firefighters, OPFFA members, in their volunteer firefighting services? Of course. That's why the OPFFA has been eager to engage in a process of negotiation with municipalities and volunteer fire companies across this province to develop a phase-out to avoid that immediate hardship which would flow from the immediate removal of professional firefighters from volunteer company services.

New Democrats were disappointed when we saw the provincial fire marshal appear at the committee after, as we understand it, but one meeting with the parties involved to indicate that somehow this process had been deemed, by him at least, a failure, and not only that he had rejected it now and wasn't prepared to pursue it any further, but that he had adopted what I consider to be a regrettable partisan position which may well make it difficult for our fire marshal and his office to maintain the trust of firefighters across this province. I regret that.

That's why New Democrats join with firefighters across Ontario in demanding that there be an audit of the fire marshal's office to determine whether or not that office has fulfilled its mandated responsibilities in a way that's responsible or meaningful, particularly around adequacy of firefighting services in municipality after municipality.

That's why New Democrats, time after time and as often as we've had the opportunity, have stood in this Legislature to indicate that it's not enough to extend platitudes to firefighters. We all wish them well. We all mourn and regret any injury to any firefighter, never mind the tragedy of a death. But we've also made it quite clear that platitudes don't cut it, nor quite frankly does this divisive issue, because this issue doesn't improve the lot of firefighting one bit here in Ontario.

New Democrats have been consistent in calling upon this government to stand up and be counted, that if this government really believes in its firefighters, this gov-

ernment will make sure that municipalities across this province, be they a big city like Toronto or Mississauga or be they smaller towns like the cities of Welland, Thorold, Pelham and St Catharines or be they small, small towns like the cities my colleagues Howard Hampton, Shelley Martel, Gilles Bisson and Tony Martin represent in the north, have the cash resources. That's what it comes down to: the cash resources to make sure their firefighters, be they volunteer or full-time, have the tools and the staffing to do the job they're called upon to do, to do it as safely as possible, to do it as effectively as possible.

Earlier today, medals of bravery were given downstairs, here in this assembly building, to amongst others firefighters. The tributes paid to those firefighters, who truly are courageous—and the firefighters who were receiving those medals here today are merely representative of so many of their sisters and brothers across this province—become meaningless if we don't pay tribute to them by respecting their right to conduct their own affairs in the way that they see fit.

This isn't an issue of US versus Canada. It's not an issue even of volunteer versus full-time. It's very much an issue of this province's underfunding of municipalities, of the downloading on to municipalities and the reduction in transfer payments. It's very much about this government setting standards for municipalities, then refusing to fund those municipalities when it comes to fulfilling or meeting those standards. It's very much about an anti-union mentality, an anti-union sentiment, an anti-union bias that permeates so many sectors here in this chamber.

New Democrats oppose this legislation. New Democrats stand with firefighters and New Democrats stand with the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association. We are a party of labour. We stand with those women and men, in this instance firefighters, amongst the most courageous of our population, amongst those most ready to sacrifice. Let's give them their due.

1950

**Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough):** It's my pleasure to stand and chat about Bill 30 for a few moments. To me, it's a shame that we have to be debating a bill like this in this House, a bill that has to protect the rights of individuals. I heard the member from Thorold—sorry if I'm wrong—

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Niagara Centre.

**Mr Stewart:** —Niagara Centre—say that they were a party of the worker, of the unionist. We are a party of the people, and these people want to make sure they can serve the people in their particular communities. I believe we have a right to protect them.

I heard some comments from the member from Brant a little while ago about how, first of all, they were in favour of unionizing the family farm, and now it appears they're in favour of unionizing volunteers. I have difficulty with that; I have a great deal of difficulty with it. I keep constantly—

**Mr Bisson:** Say the word.

**The Acting Speaker:** Order. Take your seat, please. Stop the clock. This is a controversial issue. I've ordered the member over here to be quiet and I'm going to ask you to do the same. We're going to get through this. We're going to do it civilized and everybody's rights are going to be upheld.

Sorry for the interruption. The member for Peterborough may continue.

**Mr Stewart:** We've certainly heard comments about funding, cash, cash-strapped and so on and so forth. This issue is not about funding. I had the pleasure of serving on the township of Otonabee council for 13 years and we had there two volunteer fire associations, two fire halls that, let me tell you this, were the finest individuals that I ever ran across. They offered protection and, in my own case, one fairly cool winter's night I had a fire in my home. I was about 10 minutes away from the fire hall and these people came and assisted me on a volunteer basis at about 11 to 12 o'clock at night, without worrying about compensation, without worrying about being an association, without worrying about funding, without worrying about anything other than volunteering to help me put out a fire in my house. Let me assure you, I have often thought about that particular evening since. My family was there; we could have been burnt, the house could have been burnt down. But these volunteers put their lives on the line to come up and assist me in getting that fire out.

These were a cross-section of farmers, mechanics, teachers—one happened to be a minister, who handed me some water because I was up in this loft area just as they arrived and I had a light bulb in my hand, which I said a couple of very derogatory words about to the minister. Anyway, he stayed around and helped fight the fire. But they were a cross-section of people from the entire community. Not only were they volunteers for the local fire department, but they were also volunteers in many things in the community. Whether it was for Santa Claus parades or food banks or teaching in the schools or whatever, they believed in assisting their community. I believe that's what this bill is about.

I don't want to use the term "double-hatters." I want to use the term "professional firefighters." In my mind, it doesn't matter to me whether you belong to an association or you're a volunteer; you are a professional firefighter. I have some good friends, both those who belong to associations and are also volunteers, and some who are just volunteers, and I commend them for that.

If you look in my particular riding, we have about seven or eight volunteer fire departments as well as Peterborough. This problem that has arisen throughout a lot of Ontario is not a problem in my riding. It hasn't been and I don't think will be because they all get along. I have difficulty when they say, "If you don't belong to our association, you can't volunteer." I would have hated it on that particular night when there was a fire in my house, that the chap that lives over the hill on the next farm to me would have said, "I can't go out and help Mr Stewart try to get his fire out in his home because I'm not allowed to do that." I have real difficulty with that.

If you talk about people doing double things, we have professional firefighters in this province who do plumbing, who do electrical work, who do carpentry, who build homes, who do all of these things, and do they have to become a member of those associations? No; they go out and do it two or three times during the week.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Stewart:** Well, it may be classed as that. I wouldn't want to get into that debate. All I'm saying is that they indeed do things that other people should do.

I want to support the member. I also support all the professional firefighters in this province, including the ones who are members of the association of Peterborough. They are all professional people and they also should be supported. But nobody has the right to say, "Unless you belong to my association, thou shalt not work at something else," the same as these guys doing these other extracurricular jobs.

I support the member and I support all firefighters in this province.

**Mr Mario Sergio (York West):** I want to add my comments to Bill 30. I hope that I can make it as interesting as possible for my colleague on the other side of the House when he said that he will be appreciating my comments. I hope not to disappoint him. Perhaps I should refer to the comments of my colleague the member from Brampton, who is extremely familiar with the issue and has done excellent work on behalf of both the professional full-timers and part-timers. It is very unfortunate that the House doesn't work in this particular way, that sometimes those people who are closer to the action, who are closer to the real knowledge of the issue, are not allowed to bring to the House that particular knowledge.

We are dealing with Bill 30 because the government says we have to deal with it because it is in front of us, it is in front of the people, and we have some of our forces in the House overseeing how the action really will be taking place in the House.

Let me try and address the best I can, in the brief time that I have, this very important piece of legislation. I should say at the outset, why are we dealing with this particular piece of legislation at this very—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** I'm listening carefully. I'm finding it difficult to do so. I would ask members of the third party, please, if you're going to have discussions like that, that get loud, if you could take them outside, otherwise keep it down, and the government benches over here. I don't think anyone's trying to interrupt on purpose, but that's the effect you're having. I'm asking you to please keep it a little quieter so that I and the others can hear the member. Sorry for the interruption; please continue.

**Mr Sergio:** Perhaps it's the time and the hour. The midnight sittings just may have an effect on the members. Let me continue on the subject of Bill 30, which deals with our volunteer firefighters. They are all firefighters. They are all professionals and I am sure that all of them want to offer the best of their profession. I

believe we have a number of agencies that have an interest in this, let alone our own forces. The firefighters have this bill and the interest of the bill at heart.

We have the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, which leads the way. We have the volunteer fire departments, we have the fire marshal's office, we have the Ontario fire chiefs, we have the Ontario municipalities and everything that encompasses the various servicing problems with municipalities, and now we have Bill 30. So you can see that you have so many parties, so many agencies involved in this one issue, and it's a very important issue.

**2000**

I have to say, from what I have seen out of the House and in this House in the debate on both sides, that it has become, if my knowledge of the issue allows me to say this, very unnecessary to bring this divisive issue to the House.

My colleague the member for Brant mentioned before that this was dealt with at some length at the committee level. The member for Brant suggested a number of amendments to the bill. The member for Brant said that none of his amendments were accepted by the government members, amendments, I should say, that indeed not only would have improved the quality of the bill but would have given an opportunity to deal with this issue out of this place without creating a further, more complicated, more divisive situation.

I believe that if my colleague had the time, he would have continued saying that an opportunity was offered to both sides to delve into the real issues and deal with them. Failing that, my colleague from Brant said that maybe we should have a task force and make sure that whatever separates the two sides is dealt with very openly and in a fashion that at the end would benefit both sides.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Sergio:** It doesn't. I appreciate the comments from my colleague on the other side, but it doesn't address the issues on both sides, the way this bill is being presented, the way the government wants to have the bill dealt with by this House. There are some serious issues, and now I have to say that it doesn't really matter which way we go; we will be upsetting one or the other side.

The unfortunate thing is that it's not we in this House who are caught in the middle. When we go home to our own areas, joining the people out there, those are the people who ultimately will be affected, the people in the various communities.

Why are we having difficulties with this bill? Why do the members of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association have a problem with this bill? It is because of the way the bill has been introduced and pushed through the various committee stages, and now the way it is in front of us. It is a comprehensive piece of legislation and it does not have any regard for how it affects the various municipalities throughout Ontario, large and small. Indeed there are municipalities that, especially on this important issue, meaning fire protection, should have

dealt with it on their own, on a one-to-one basis, on an individual basis. Unfortunately the passage of this bill would not allow that. Sure, the government always reserves the right to say, "We will deal at some point in time with a regulation that we may change," and so forth. Why do we continue to push ahead with incomplete, unacceptable legislation when we had the time and the venue to do it right?

Are they different people, the ones who have the 48-hour-a-week professional firefighter jobs and those who are called to serve on a part-time basis, on a pay-as-you-go basis, if you will? They are all professionals. But there is more to it than that. Those who are called to serve in the smaller communities cannot, not because they don't want to, offer the quality of training, because often they are called to train other people in smaller communities or they are not up to date with either equipment, new facilities, new instructions, new programs that are not available to a full-time force. It's a 40-hour-per-week job. It's in the act that any other time after the 40 hours should not be dedicated to the work of providing fire service protection. I guess that is the main issue of Bill 30: firefighters' protection for those people.

As I was saying before, why are we here? Again, it's because of the downloading of this government on the various municipalities; not only the amalgamation of a number of municipalities, but then the downloading on top of that of other services on the local municipalities. What happens? Small municipalities don't have the resources. Please, don't let me hear from the other side, "Oh, yes they do." Let me tell you, if the small municipalities had the resources, most assuredly, Walkerton would have never happened. I cannot buy that the problem was a long-standing problem. Perhaps it was, but when you start to chop 40% off a particular budget and fire some 30% or 40% of the professional staff, don't tell me, don't let me hear from the other side, that they have all the professional equipment and training. They cannot have that.

I believe that today the government has an opportunity to say, "Well, if there is something wrong, then let's try to correct it," so that we would have a piece of legislation that ultimately would be offering every municipality in Ontario, indeed every community, the protection that they deserve.

The other thing is, I believe this government, the provincial government, has a very direct responsibility to make sure that indeed every municipality in Ontario, every community, has the same protection as any other. When we allow this particular situation to continue, I believe we will create two things: one, that many communities will not have the same protection; two, we also put in jeopardy the health and safety of our professional people and firefighters.

Why, for example, do we have an act that says, "Forty hours per week, and you cannot do any other fire protection work in other municipalities"? It becomes redundant, because they have a responsibility, health-wise, with injuries or possible death. It's considered a dangerous job almost at the same level, if not the same,

as our police forces. If we're to allow, let's say, the police forces to start moonlighting here and there—we cannot call them volunteers, because they get paid as well. They do get paid; not as much—\$10, \$15, \$20 or \$30 per hour—but they do get paid, so they are not really volunteers. Are we saying that now we will start allowing our police forces to go and do volunteer work here and there at the expense of other areas? I don't think so.

I think the government must be aware of the situation they have created. Our professional firefighters didn't create this situation. We have some 10,000 professional firefighters and some 20,000, I believe if my mind serves me well, volunteers. I think the legislation affects maybe some 600, 700 or 800. It's a small portion, if you will. So why couldn't this have been corrected in time? Now we have the legislation that is a hindrance to those negotiations that should have taken place or should have continued to take place. But now we have, in the middle, a piece of legislation that has stopped every possibility of getting those sides together.

#### 2010

I believe the government has also seriously failed to recognize the importance of the issue when it comes to fire protection. They should have acted quite some time ago and more forcefully to get the two sides to come together. If they couldn't, then you get an intermediary, you get a task force and make sure. Since when is the government choosing sides and forcing one side against the other? Only when it suits the government.

I think the bill was introduced by Mr Arnott with some good intentions. Maybe he had some good intentions when this bill was introduced. But their mistake was that when the bill went through the motions of various committee levels, they didn't hear the professional people and they didn't hear the opposition with good, sound amendments. That is why the bill is here today the way it is.

It may be too late. But our provincial government must assume a lot of the responsibility for allowing another incomplete bill to be brought to this House, to this floor, especially dealing with such an important service.

We have said on this side of the House that if we have these problems it's because of the cuts, because of the lack of resources. Our leader, Dalton McGuinty, has said that is an area where indeed we have to help. We have to provide the service, the quality, the training and the equipment. That is why we have said that one of our priorities, as my colleague the member from Brant said, is to provide more thermal imaging equipment, and not only to provide better service but also to ensure the safety of our professional firefighters and to save lives faster, when it is required.

Municipalities can't afford that. They don't have the resources. If the government will be pushing the bill as it is, we will do nothing more than compound the problem as it is and it will get worse. The division will continue and they both will suffer. The sad thing is that, ultimately, the people will be the ones to bear the brunt of this incomplete legislation.

Those agencies that have a stake have been told, "That's it. There are no more negotiations. There is no more time to talk. There are no more possibilities of getting the sides together." Negotiations have come to an abrupt end because the government is now willing to pass this legislation and let the chips fall where they may.

It is too bad that when the government chooses to interfere it does it in the most delicate and important areas like, in this case here, providing protection to our various communities. Municipalities not only don't have the training, they don't have the resources, they don't have the manpower and they don't have the skills. They are looking to the provincial government for assistance. Is the provincial government willing to say, "Yes, we have made so many cuts, but now we are willing to put in a few million dollars toward that area," instead of absolutely wasting hundreds of millions of dollars on consultants without any benefit to the people of Ontario? I don't think they understand the difference between giving another contract to another consultant and putting some money where it is needed. Let the municipality make sure that indeed they will hire the necessary number of professional firefighters, well qualified and well trained, so they can offer to serve us in other municipalities. In many cases, when small municipalities are calling on these professional firefighters, they are not there solely to provide a fire service. They are there to train other people as well. Under what terms do they provide those particular services?

So I'm saying to the government and to the member, who I think with all good intentions has introduced this bill that has come this far, that I believe there are enough members on this side of the House to say, "Maybe we should have a second sober thought on this particular bill and get it right." This is not the first time we've told the government, "Take a breather. Take your time and get it right." Look, we said it here a couple of years ago with the amalgamation of Metro, let alone other municipalities. We said, "What's the rush? Take some time and do it right."

Folks, ministers on the government side, we are dealing with providing fire protection to the people of Ontario. This is a very serious issue. I hope the government, before going through with this bill, maybe tomorrow, will indeed have some second thoughts, come back and say, "All right, let's give these guys here a second chance. Let them get together and see if they can work things out so that indeed we can provide that quality of service and protection that the people of Ontario deserve." With that, I thank you for the time.

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre):** As usual, I've listened to the members opposite debate this bill. Thinking specifically now of the Liberals who have spoken, the member for Brant and the member for York West, as usual we've been treated to a dose of Liberal doublespeak, where they want their cake and want to eat it too. They take both sides of the issue. I think the NDP and ourselves are sitting here wondering which way they're going to vote. They probably won't make up their

minds until the day the vote is called. Then they may change their minds momentarily.

I know where the NDP is coming from; we always do. They've taken the position that the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association is a union, in spite of the fact that the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association does not view itself as a union.

While I will sort of compliment the member for Waterloo-Wellington for bringing the bill forward, because I know he believes very strongly in it, I am unalterably opposed to the bill and I will vote against it. I feel very strongly.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Wettlaufer:** I'm not like the Liberals. I'm saying what I mean right now. I will be here to vote against it, unlike you, some of whom probably won't even show up for the vote.

**Mr Sergio:** Didn't you hear what we said? Come on.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** I heard what you said, but I heard both sides of what you said, and so did everybody else, I say to the member for York West.

This is a situation where we know the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association is professionally trained. We know that. We also know that they are professionally trained primarily in municipalities. That's where their experience is.

Not too many years ago, I was an inspector for an insurance company. Not that many years ago, I used to go into the rural areas of this province and talk to the people who were volunteer firefighters. They used to pride themselves on the fact that they were trained as well. But they were trained to go into rural dwellings; they were trained to go into barns or rural businesses. I don't think too many professional firefighters primarily trained in urban areas know too much about fighting a fire in a barn or know the risks entailed in fighting a fire in a barn. They may know the risks of fighting a fire in a chemical institution or in urban areas where there are chemicals stored that are combustible, and even then, even with all their professional training, unfortunately sometimes they are overcome.

**2020**

A friend of mine whom I went to high school with, played basketball with, played football with, died in one of those fires. He was a professional firefighter in the city of Kitchener. He was trained professionally, he was trained adequately, but he died in spite of all the best precautions. And now, because one of those firefighters thinks that he or she would like to make a few dollars extra in a rural municipality, fighting a barn fire—we want to allow him to do so? We want to subject that firefighter to the rural risk in which he or she has no exposure, no training? Are we fools?

The rural members on all three sides here are probably saying, "Well, they are trained." They may have some initial training, and it may be professional training, but they don't keep it up through constant exposure to that type of fire. The risks are far too serious. My experience in the insurance business will guarantee it. I know from



personal experience that the risk is too great for those firefighters, and I do not want to subject them to it.

I am not speaking from some ideological perspective, like the NDP might. I am not speaking from a right-wing perspective. I am speaking because I have a genuine concern for those firefighters, those firefighters from Kitchener who have come in and talked to me, explained their concerns. We have different equipment in the urban municipalities than in the rural municipalities. We have different risks.

I cannot support this bill, and I know a number of members in the government caucus will not support this bill. The Liberals—I don't think anybody knows where they're coming from at any given time, on any given subject, and certainly tonight is one of those. I saw some of the NDP scratching their heads when the Liberals were standing up, and we felt the same way on this side of the House. Some on this side of the House have some very definite opinions contrary to mine, but I know that others on this side of the House have some very definite opinions which agree with mine. But none of us knows where the Liberals are going, and I don't think they know where they're going on this particular issue. I think it's time that you guys stand up and be counted and take a position.

**Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge):** Where do you stand, Ted? Are you for it or against it?

**Mr Wettlaufer:** We ask the members as they're speaking, from time to time, Speaker, as you know—there's a fair amount of heckling going on. Most often it's quite good-natured. But we often say to the Liberals, "Take a position. What are you going to do on this?" They always ignore us because they haven't made up their own minds on this.

**Mr Martiniuk:** Ted McMeekin refused to say.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Yes, Ted McMeekin, the member from that alphabet-soup riding, Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot, refuses to say. The member for York West refused to say when he was standing. It's a very simple request. Take a position: which way are you going to vote? See, they don't even want to hear that.

**Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot):** You stay in the House long enough, you'll hear it.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** I can't stay in the House long enough to hear what you have to say.

Anyway, Speaker, I want to thank you for allowing me these few moments to speak. I have to say that I'm very much opposed to this bill. While some may view it as an urban versus rural split and others may feel it's a very worthy piece of legislation, I feel it's wrong. I personally would like to see more consultation. The president of the firefighters association, Fred LeBlanc, has requested that there be a task force struck. Consult, take a longer period of time, find out exactly what the problems are, arrive at solutions and make some recommendations on which the government could act. Personally, I see no problem with that at all. As a result, I do have to vote against this piece of legislation. I think it's being forced

in this House much too quickly, and I definitely want to see a task force and further review.

**Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings):** I think this bill proves it is possible to have a bad bill for a number of reasons; it's a bad bill not just for one reason. I certainly will not be voting for this bill but will be present and voting against it.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** You took a stand. Good.

**Mr Parsons:** As the other members did when they spoke. But I appreciate that you're listening to me, when you didn't listen to my colleagues. Maybe this is a role model.

This is very clearly not an anti-volunteer bill. I myself live in a rural community. I had the misfortune to have had a fire, at about 12:35 one morning; I read that time in the newspaper the next day. I phoned the volunteer fire department. I continue to be impressed that after making the phone call, I had not yet got everyone out of our house when the first volunteer firefighter came in the door. I will never forget how good Doug Detlor looked that day when he arrived to assist us with the fire.

It is a reflection that this government really likes confrontation. I know this is a private member's bill, but I also know, even though I've only been here one term, that this bill would not have got this far if the leadership of this government did not like this bill. It would have disappeared. It is clearly here, clearly a select private member's bill, because the government itself philosophically supports it.

Interestingly, they don't terrifically support volunteer firefighters. I can remember when I put forward a private member's bill that would have assisted volunteer firefighters in my community and every other community in Ontario. When volunteer firefighters raise money for something such as a fire training house—it's happened in my community. Volunteer firefighters in my community raised \$50,000 for a fire safety training house to use in the community to educate school children, adults and everyone, and even to use as a command centre in a major fire. The provincial government thanked them by slapping provincial sales tax on it and forced them to go back out on the streets to doors to raise the money for provincial sales tax for it.

It didn't require a private member's bill. The Minister of Finance could have defined the fire safety house as a fire vehicle, but he refused. I brought a private member's bill here to exempt the volunteer firefighters from having to do fundraising to pay sales tax on something that was clearly for the benefit of the community. A significant number of government members voted against it.

So to say they're supportive of volunteer firefighters—actions speak louder than words. I do wish that this government demonstrated the same interest in firefighters that it has in police officers. There is an amazing number of parallels in their jobs but an amazing lack of parallels in the way the government treats the two different groups of professionals.

This government likes confrontation. When given an opportunity to negotiate, everything I've studied on the

professional firefighters' side has showed that they were prepared to talk about it. They weren't going to say that every double-hatter had to quit volunteering effective today or tomorrow. They wanted to meet at a table to discuss and negotiate it. This bill curtails that; this brings in immediate action now.

I remember a couple of years ago when our leader, Dalton McGuinty, said that when the only tool you have in the toolbox is a hammer, pretty soon every problem looks like a nail. That's been your approach to every issue that has come before you: to hammer some group for it, blame someone else for it, solve it immediately and then come back next month or the month after that and fix your fix. We looked at some of the tax amendments; you've had to bring in corrections, and in fact you've had to repeal some of the bills or portions of the bills you've rammed through under time closure.

So this government would be well advised, on not just this issue but most issues, to make haste slowly. There's nothing wrong with getting it right the first time. I know you don't get as much publicity, but there's no shame in doing it right the first time. I'd like to recommend that to you.

#### 2030

Firefighting is hard work. There's no other way to describe it. It is hard work physically and it is hard work psychologically. I've spoken to firefighters who have described for me the trauma they have experienced, after being at some fires, after being at some motor vehicle accidents, at seeing things that have burned images into their minds that they have had to take home. Firefighters work long hours and do an extremely difficult job. I'm ashamed to say that I and many others did not realize the challenge of their profession until after 9/11. That has been an eye-opener for me, and it has caused me to find opportunities to talk to professional firefighters.

The job is brutal. There is no professional firefighter who says, "I'm going to get into this career because I'm going to make big money at it." It is a mission; it is a calling. I have said before and will say again that they become heroes, not for what they do at fires and not for what they do at accidents, but they become heroes the day they join the fire department and say, "I am prepared to put my life on the line." And the reward we're going to give them is to interfere in an operation that really wasn't broken.

Professional firefighters need some time off from firefighting. It may be a time-worn axiom to say that change is as good as a rest. Remarks have been made that there is nothing to prevent a professional firefighter from digging swimming pools in their off-hours or doing any number of jobs, but not doing professional firefighting at that time. I believe they need the ability to have some breaks. When they serve as a volunteer firefighter after having served a full shift as a full-time firefighter, it is more than just digging a swimming pool; it is taking on additional responsibilities and risks. Firefighters expose themselves to risk whether as a paid professional or as a volunteer, and there is a very real question for them and

their families as to who is responsible. Firefighting presents risks that have nothing to do with digging swimming pools, with due respect to those who do.

The Belleville fire department lost a professional firefighter a couple of weeks ago, Tom Nobles, an absolutely superb individual. They did not know what was wrong with Tom. Tom was off work for about five years. Ultimately, after his death, they were able to confirm that Tom's problem and Tom's death were the result of breathing fumes in a specific chemical fire he had entered. He didn't hesitate; he went in and looked for people trapped inside there, and he paid the ultimate price for that. That took over five years to determine, and it required examination after Tom's death to confirm it. Who's liable for that? It was very clear: it was done in his line of duty while fighting a fire for the Belleville fire department.

But when dealing with the WSIB, if a case is pretty simple and clear-cut, they're still a very difficult organization to deal with. Add the complication of an individual working for two different departments and watch them try to duck responsibility. All of you on both sides of this House have staff who devote a considerable number of hours every week to trying to get answers out of WSIB. This would complicate it tremendously, and it's not comparable at all to digging a swimming pool, as was remarked earlier.

I said that I wished this government cared as much about professional firefighters as it does about police officers. I'd like to read something to you that came out as a result of an item that arose at the standing committee on justice and social policy. The research officer was asked to investigate, and there were two questions. But the question I was fascinated by was, "May a member of a police force work for another force at the same time?" I would suggest that's really the question we're dealing with here tonight, and the answer is:

"The Police Services Act deals with secondary activity in section 49, which reads, in part, as follows:

"A member of a police force shall not engage in any activity,

"(a) that interferes with or influences adversely the performance of his or her duties as a member of a police force, or is likely to do so" I would suggest that we substitute "professional firefighter" for "police officer." A professional firefighter who has worked as a volunteer and been up all night at a fire in another community—their work would adversely influence their performance.

"(b) that places him or her in a position of conflict of interest, or is likely to do so." I don't think that one particularly applies.

"(c) that would otherwise constitute full-time employment for another person; or

"(d) in which he or she has an advantage derived from employment as a member of a police force."

A professional firefighter has had access to a great deal of training, which in fact gives them an advantage over someone else wishing to volunteer in another community.

“(2) Clause (1)(d) does not prohibit a member of a police force from performing, in a private capacity, services that have been arranged through the police force.”

So police officers don't have the latitude of working as police officers during the day in one community and then working as police officers in another or working as auxiliary constables or volunteers, because I think this police act recognized that police service work is long hours, that it is dangerous, that it is important that each police officer be at their very best to assist other police officers when they respond to a call and that the community is best protected when this professional officer—and this is legislation this government has—works only as a police officer in one community.

Well, fellow members, I will tell you that being a professional firefighter involves long hours, the work is dangerous, it is vital that they be well trained, it is vital that they be well rested to assist other firefighters on the job and to assist citizens. It is in the best interests of every community that professional firefighters adhere to the standards they have now. If it's good enough for the police—and I support this for the police—then it's good enough for our firefighters.

Why a double standard? We're talking about double-hatters. We're talking about double standards. It may be tempting on your part to drive by a fire station and see a fire truck parked there and say, “Well, they're not doing anything. That's not really work.” But that would be similar to saying, on passing a police car stopped at the side of the road, “They're not doing any work.” Firefighters are there on long shifts. Let's recognize them as the professionals they are.

I am bothered by the decision on the part of this private member's bill to interfere in the constitution of a specific group. It is strange that they picked this specific group, because this is a group of professionals who say, “We believe it's in the best interests of our members and it's in the best interests of the public.” I've said it earlier—

**Mr Bisson:** You're voting against it.

**Mr Parsons:** Well, if you were listening earlier, I said I would be voting against the bill. That's a clue that I will be voting against the bill.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** That's assuming he doesn't change his mind.

**Mr Parsons:** Well, please don't judge me by your standards. Please don't do that.

There's a constitution that the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association has. I know that every individual who becomes a full-time professional firefighter has access to and is aware of that constitution. If they don't agree with it, I would suggest the route is not to run to some outside body. Work within your organization if you don't like it. But you know the conditions when you take the employment, and everything has a reason. There's a reason for it being there. The reason it's there wasn't to be mean and nasty; the reason was because the professional firefighters believe the public is safest, and their

members are safest and most productive, when they are focusing on just one department, one relationship among the crews, and they are working a controlled number of hours rather than responding to calls at any time of the day or night outside their regular hours. And they work long shifts.

We're doing long hours here. I would suggest for some of you the hours have been too long and you're not thinking as clearly as you could be. That's ample proof that we need to limit and control the hours.

2040

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands):** They don't tell us the truth about that.

**Mr Parsons:** Well, I'm sorry, member from Kingston and the Islands.

We have other professional bodies that set their standards because they believe it's in the best interests of the public and their members. We have the medical association, which says that even if you're trained as a doctor in another area, you can't come in and do this and do that. Do we have volunteer doctors in Ontario? I don't think so. I think we've caught and convicted those who have done it, probably. But we don't allow that. There are conditions to be a lawyer in Ontario—great conditions; I couldn't be more supportive of them. But we allow the other professional groups to determine what is in the best interests of the public and their members.

For people who are professional firefighters, it's not a hobby, it's not a game. They don't like driving the big, red trucks for fun. They have taken on a mission, and we need to respect the experience that they've had from it. We need to respect their advice, and their advice is, “Our members need to follow these guidelines, need to follow our constitution, in order to be truly effective.”

So the government doesn't belong in this. There is always a role for government in mediation and negotiation. I know that the professional firefighters don't necessarily view themselves as union, but if it at all looks like a union to this government, the attack dogs come out, unfortunately. That's fundamentally wrong.

I believe that no one would disagree if I say we have been phenomenally well served in this province by our firefighters, but we have not served them back anywhere near as well. This government should be ashamed of the money that they put into training firefighters; they should be ashamed. It's an afterthought or it's nothing. We recognize the importance of having excellent training for our police officers. We need that same excellent training, we need a number of things, to be provided for our firefighters. We need to put in place a mechanism for every firefighter that will ensure that when they arrive at a plant, they know exactly what's in there. They need to know if there are chemicals, and they need to know what those chemicals are. There is an absolute right to know. There needs to be more money going to our firefighters. Municipalities have to staff and equip fire departments with the constant downloading of this government. The quality of fire protection should not depend on the local tax base.

I am intrigued that in the last budget this government is somewhat proud, in fact I would say very proud, of the fact that if you exclude education and health, they have reduced expenditures in this province by 30% per citizen. That's not my number; that's in their budget. With some pride, they decreased spending by 30%. But I don't think the cost of fire training equipment has gone down by 30%; I don't think the cost of fire trucks has gone down. In some communities that do not have strong industrial bases, it is a great hardship for municipalities to equip and to pay fire departments. It shouldn't be. There should be an equalization that provides the funding for them.

In conclusion, this bill is simply a bad bill for a whole lot of reasons. It is a government interfering in a process that they need not have. The government actually stopped negotiations. When the member for Brant, our critic for this area, put forward amendments that would allow the parties to at least sit and meet and talk, they were voted down. This is a private member's bill that seems to have tremendous significance because it has the ability to once again use a big hammer and show the power. It is a lack of respect for our professional firefighters, not just for the association but for each and every member.

I will not be able in any way, shape or form to support this bill. I would urge the government that the thing to do is, don't put it forward and have it defeated; simply revoke it. Allow the parties to talk if they need to talk. There are solutions that can be worked out other than with your big hammer approach. Just—

*Interjections.*

**Mr Parsons:** I apologize for being fascinated by the discussion. I understand there is going to be a free vote on this bill, the House leader says. It doesn't change the fact that it's a bad bill. It should be withdrawn.

**The Acting Speaker:** The Chair will recognize the member for Timmins-James Bay.

**Mr Bisson:** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I thought you'd enjoy that little bit of humour.

First of all, I want to say, along with all of my colleagues in the NDP caucus, we will be voting in opposition to this bill. There will not be one New Democrat who will stand in favour, because we believe as a caucus that working people have the right to determine certain items through their associations or unions and that, quite frankly, the long arm of government doesn't have any place in the union hall or being able to determine what the rules are as to how unions deal with what are basically internal matters.

Let me put this in a bit of perspective. I'm a Steelworker. I come out of the mining industry of northeastern Ontario, predominantly out of Timmins. I want to propose this to you. Where I come from, people who work in the mining industry understand that when you go to work in the morning you expect to be paid for the hours of work that you're there during the course of the day. I want to propose to the government, what would happen if I as a Steelworker were to go to work eight hours a day for one employer, then all of a sudden decide I'm going to volunteer overtime, or I'm going to volunteer to work

for the mine down the street? I would argue that my union, rightfully so, would probably sanction me. By workers doing that, in our view, as a union movement, it would basically take away from the ability to negotiate decent wages and would undermine the whole purpose of a collective agreement. The emphasis is on the word "collective."

I understand full well the position that Mr Arnott wants to take on this particular bill. He wants to give professional firefighters the ability to volunteer in other fire departments that are temporary or volunteer. I just want to take it from the other perspective, because I believe that workers in a full-time job should not be in a position of having to volunteer for another employer when it comes to doing the same line of work that they're paid for. That's just the basic thing about this whole bill. For the government to try to hide behind the word—and particularly for Mr Arnott to say, "This is all about protecting volunteerism," I want to say, as a Steelworker, I don't want my members volunteering for the boss at free time. When they work, I expect them to be paid, and if they work more than 40-some-odd hours a week, depending on the collective agreement, I expect them to get time and a half. Why? Because we are all about trying to negotiate contracts to the benefit of our members. If we have people stepping outside the collective agreement, it undermines the group. It's a very simple process.

So I don't accept for one second the argument that the member puts forward, that this is all about empowering volunteerism, because it has nothing to do with that. It's about undermining the collective agreement and undermining the collective of workers who work for professional fire departments.

Is that to say that volunteers in this province don't play a key role in our fire services? No. But I want to bring another point. Yes, they volunteer a fair amount of time but they do get paid a stipend. To say that they're strictly volunteers—now, I agree that most of the work they do, they do out of love for the job, but strictly speaking, they're not volunteers from the perspective of the stipend they get. For the member to say that we've got to get into this debate because somehow or other we've got to protect volunteerism in this province—I think volunteerism is alive and well. That's most of the communities in my riding, except for Timmins, have volunteer fire departments. Even in the city of Timmins we have three volunteer firefighting halls and one professional. This bill, in my view, is not going to do anything to build the kind of relationships that we have to build within fire halls across northeastern Ontario.

So the first point I would make is that volunteerism is not dead. People will still come up to the plate in communities like Kapuskasing, Opasatika, Smooth Rock Falls or wherever it might be, and where there are volunteer fire halls people will still come forward and be willing volunteers. But to somehow bring this debate forward as this is the saving of volunteerism, I think it's a bit of a stretch. I see this as a very simple issue. We have

to allow these types of arrangements, as far as the ability of full-time firefighters to volunteer in volunteer fire halls, to be dealt with in their own associations or unions. It's as simple as that. I wanted to put that, first of all, on the record.

**2050**

The other thing that I said at the beginning I wanted to put on the record is that all of us as New Democrats will be standing up squarely behind the professional firefighters in this case and saying, "We're not going to vote for this legislation," for the reasons I have set out. This is unlike what we are unfortunately seeing with the Liberal caucus and the Tory caucus, which is a bit of a split. I've seen some Liberal members get up and support this bill. I've seen other members get up and speak against this bill. I want to say as a New Democrat that I'm proud to stand firmly on this bill, to take a position and clearly let the public know where we're coming from.

I want to say again that it doesn't take away from volunteerism. Volunteers are a key part of our fire-fighting services in Ontario. I think we all understand that. Volunteers will still step forward in those communities where there are volunteer fire halls. This bill in no way, shape or form is going to enhance what is going to happen with volunteers as far as what happens in those volunteer fire halls is concerned. That's the first point I would like to make.

The other thing is that the member who sponsored this bill took great pains in his opening comments to talk about the consultation he had. I listened very intently about some of the people he consulted with. He consulted with the Ontario municipal association, not exactly big union supporters, I would say, not exactly the proponents—

**Mr Kormos:** Not likely.

**Mr Bisson:** Not likely, as my good friend over here says. The Ontario municipal association represents a certain view, and that view happens to be one of trying to deliver services for the cheapest cost possible. If that means they can enhance more volunteers within a system, that is one way they're able to get to that cost. So he went out and consulted with the Ontario municipal association. Then he consulted with mayors. How likely are mayors not to want this bill passed?

**Mr Kormos:** The mayor of Welland.

**Mr Bisson:** There are mayors who don't support this. I forget the name of the mayor of Welland.

**Mr Kormos:** Cindy Forster.

**Mr Bisson:** Cindy Forster. I've met with her on a number of occasions and I know she doesn't support this bill. But a certain number of the mayors you've met with, Mr Arnott, I would say are people who support this bill.

Then he says, "I went out and spoke to councillors and to many municipalities that like this bill." I understand that. It's like my saying, "I'm going to go out and consult. I'm just going to consult with the unions on the bill. I know I'm going to get basically one view and not listen to the other." If you're going to consult, at least take the time to speak to the professional firefighters so you

understand their point. You may not agree with it, but at the end of the day, bring it into the debate. To say that you only consulted with a certain group of people vis-à-vis this bill I thought was a little bit disappointing.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Bisson:** Yes, he spoke to a couple of firefighters, the ones who want to be volunteer firefighters. You spoke to the two-hatter professional firefighters. I understand that. What I'm saying is that when you stand up and purport that you've consulted and say, "I've consulted widely and everybody agrees with me," it's a bit of a stretch.

I've had debate on this bill in my riding and other parts of northeastern Ontario. There are some people who have supported it, namely, the fire chief, Lester Cudmore, in the city of Timmins. I like Les a lot, but on this one, he and I disagree. A few other people with the municipal council talked to me about this bill, saying, "This is not a bad thing," but by and large, everybody else was opposed.

I spoke not only to full-time firefighters, but to volunteers in South Porcupine-Whitney, and a number of the volunteers I spoke to didn't like this bill and saw this bill for what it was. I think the story is that if you go out and actually do some consulting on this, you'd find out that it's probably not supported as strongly and as widely as you would purport it to be.

I ask myself one other question: what is it that this government doesn't like about firefighters? That's just a question I ask myself. Because over the last number of years since this government was elected back in 1995, there have been numerous occasions when this government has brought in legislation that has been to the detriment of professional firefighters. I would have thought that a Conservative government, with a person like Mr Runciman who puts himself out as a proponent of—

**Mr Kormos:** Where is he tonight?

**Mr Bisson:** I was coming to that point—I would have thought as a proponent of professional firefighters, volunteer firefighters, emergency workers and police he would have been in here defending the fight that's going on here today. I think it's interesting and I ask myself the question, to come back to the original point, why is it that this government keeps on fighting firefighters on all kinds of issues? I would have thought this government, which purports to be the friend of firefighters, would try to bring in legislation that firefighters are able to support. We find ourselves yet again—I think this is the second or third bill in so many years that basically has been an attack on firefighters. I just say, where are you guys coming from? I thought you were their friends. If you're friends of the professional firefighters, I have to say to you that you have a very funny way of showing it.

The other point that I wanted to make is in regard to the approach this bill takes. I think we'd be better off to try to get the associations and the unions themselves to come up with what they think is an appropriate measure for the whole double-hatter issue. I know that the

member across the way and those who support this bill are going to say, "No, that's why we need legislation, because they won't allow it." But I come back to my first point, and that is that the whole purpose of collective bargaining and forming a union is in order to protect workers from the excesses of the employer and, number two, to negotiate a fair contract when it comes to wages and benefits for its members.

This bill allows the utilization of full-time firefighters in volunteer fire halls. The effect of that is that it makes full-time firefighters less and less needed. That really is undermining the whole benefit of having a collective agreement. I would say to the member across the way that we'd be a lot better off, in my view, leaving this item in the hands of the union itself and not bringing the strong arm of government into what is basically the collective agreement.

It's interesting that we're not doing that anywhere else. We're not going in to tell, let's say, the United Steelworkers of America, and neither should we, to use volunteers for overtime or volunteers to work in the competitor's plant. We're not doing it to CAW workers, OPSEU workers, police officers, doctors or lawyers, but we're picking on firefighters. That is just a little bit disappointing, where the government is going.

I also want to say, and I raise it in the context of this particular debate, that when it comes to workers' rights and their right to bargain by way of the collective agreement, this government has used every opportunity they've had to attack those rights. If you remember, Mr Speaker, about three years ago, I believe it was, or two years ago, the government brought in amendments to the Employment Standards Act. When they brought forward those amendments, one of the amendments they were making was for greater utilization by employers in the process of overtime and being able to force employees to work overtime as much as possible.

I raise that in the context of this debate only to make a point. When the government introduced the Employment Standards Act changes that they did—I think it was a couple of years ago—they put an amendment in the legislation that basically said that an employer would be able to have a freer hand to force employees to work overtime. New Democrats here in the Legislature—I know my good friend Shelley Martel, my leader, Howard Hampton, and certainly our critic of the day, Mr Christopherson, and our current critic, Mr Kormos—said, "Don't make those kinds of changes, because employers will utilize that for their own devices. They will force workers to work overtime when they don't want to work." When we raised that a couple of years ago, the then Minister of Labour Chris Stockwell, the now House leader, said, "You guys don't know what you're talking about. You're fearmongering. You don't know what you're talking about. No, no, no, it'll never happen. Employers will never take advantage of this legislation."

Well, it's pertinent to this debate, because exactly what we said was going to happen did happen. That's in the case of Toyota. Toyota now has basically done two

things. They've said that any new hires since the Employment Standards Act was changed must sign an employment contract. Within the employment contract is a clause that says, "You shall work two hours of overtime per day." There are no ifs, ands or buts about it. If a person doesn't want a new job at Toyota, all you have to do is say no to that question and you don't get the job. So the employer is utilizing, by way of the intimidation of an employment contract for new hires, its ability to get them to work longer hours and work overtime hours against their will by way of changes the government made to the Employment Standards Act.

The point I want to make is that we're saying in this bill that we're going to be lessening the reliance on full-time firefighters in Ontario. I and my colleagues don't think that's a good idea. I raise the Employment Standards Act debate in this as a comparison to say that two years ago we told you this was a bad thing. The then Minister of Labour got up and said we didn't know what we were talking about. Now we see that Toyota of Canada has basically, by way of employment contracts, rubber-stamped exactly what the government has put into the bill into its employment contracts and has said, "Employees shall work overtime, and you have no choice about it."

*Interjection.*

**Mr Bisson:** Well, this is the second part. The interesting part, and my good friend Marilyn Churley raises the point, is that in this particular case the government won't interfere. It is not willing to go to the employer and say, "Hey, listen. This is not allowed. We don't allow employers to be able to force overtime."

**2100**

The Minister of Labour got up today, and it was pretty interesting. When he answered his question, he tried to mix a few things. He tried to mix what happened to employees that were there prior to the employment contracts and said, "Oh yes, but they went to the appeal board." Basically, now what we've got is an appeal of the original decision from employees who were affected prior to the employment standard changes who are not signing these employment contracts. They were two different things. What's clear is, in this case, it has happened. I'm saying, in this particular case, if we allow this bill to go forward, what we're going to see over a period of time are more and more fire chiefs across this province encouraging their full-time firefighters to give of their time to be able to volunteer within fire halls.

Let me put that in the context of the community I come from. The city of Timmins has full-time firefighters. They're situated in downtown Timmins. We have the Mount Joy, Connaught, South Porcupine, Whitney and Schumacher firefighter volunteer systems. Those are all volunteer fire halls. I originally said there were three, but it's actually five. We have five volunteer fire halls within the city of Timmins and one full-time fire hall.

Now, imagine if I was the fire chief, I had this legislation and a new hire walking in the door getting a

job as a full-time firefighter in the city of Timmins. One of the questions the fire chiefs ask you as you're going through the employment process is, "By the way, if I hire you as a full-time firefighter, will you be willing to volunteer some of your time in one of the volunteer fire halls so that you can use some of your experience for the volunteer firefighters?" What do you think that new, possible employee is going to say to the fire chief when he or she is going through the job interview process? He or she is going to say, just like the Toyota employees, "Yes, of course I'm willing to volunteer. Yes, Mr Fire Chief, because I want the job." As a result, what we're going to see over a period of time is that it will become almost a condition of employment in volunteer fire halls like we have in the city of Timmins where, to become a full-time firefighter, they're going to ask you: "Are you willing to volunteer?"

I'm putting on the record today that, if we allow this bill to pass, what we will see in the city of Timmins is what we're seeing in the Toyota plant here in Ontario. It will become a condition of employment. The fire chief will sit down in interviews with new, potential full-time firefighters and ask that question. The question will be, "Are you prepared to volunteer in one of our volunteer fire halls?" If the answer is no, I don't think that person's going to get hired. If the answer is yes, they probably will get hired. What we're going to have, quite frankly, is the employer utilizing full-time firefighters almost for free because they get a stipend as volunteers inside the volunteer fire halls.

I say if you want to protect volunteerism, don't allow that to happen, because what you're going to end up with I think is the worst possible scenario in both cases. As we saw in the Toyota plant, where Toyota has put inside their employment contracts a stipulation that the only way you get a job there is if you agree to work overtime, you will see within full-time firefighter halls, as in the city of Timmins, the employer putting inside the contract the very simple stipulation that, "You should volunteer in one of our volunteer fire halls."

That is one of a number of reasons why we, as New Democrats, will not vote in favour of this legislation. We think this is the wrong way to do business. We think that, quite frankly, we should have a separation between full-time and volunteer firefighters when it comes to the duties they carry out. If you want to support volunteerism, I say as a government, fund them. Give them the money they need to be able to provide all the training that is necessary to be a volunteer firefighter. Make sure they've got the equipment in the communities to do their jobs, and make sure you've got the training officers in place in order to do the kind of training that you need in order to keep their skills up. If you really want to support volunteerism, that's the way you're going to do it, not by creating as a condition of employment for full-time firefighters to go work as a volunteer. Mark my words, that's exactly what's going to happen out of this legislation.

Again, I just want to say that all of my colleagues, I'm proud to say, within the New Democratic caucus here we

will be voting in opposition to this bill—all nine of us. We feel strongly that this bill is a bad piece of legislation, and I'm not looking forward to the day that we vote because I suspect there are enough Liberals and Conservatives to allow this bill to pass. I think that is really a sad thing.

To the Liberal caucus, I wish you would be more on side with our line. I think it's wrong-headed to take the position of supporting this legislation. This is nothing short of union-busting. I'm just pleading to my Liberal colleagues to vote with us in order to be able to defeat this bill clearly and categorically. I welcome those few Conservative members who will vote along with us.

With that, Mr Speaker, I'd like to thank you for this time of debate.

**Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Transportation):** I represent now the riding of Lanark-Carleton. I have represented ridings which have included both part of now the city of Ottawa and exterior parts of the city of Ottawa, the ring around the city of Ottawa, being the other parts of eastern Ontario. This particular issue has significance to a riding like Lanark-Carleton or a riding like Grenville-Carleton, which I once represented, which was, again, part of now the city of Ottawa and Grenville county. It was another area where you had two different kinds of factors playing into an issue like this particular issue.

I have no hesitation in supporting this bill as it now stands, because it is carefully drafted in a form which can in fact be put in place. Mr Arnott was careful in making certain that the bill, as drafted, could be proclaimed sometime in the future when it was feasible to do so, when people were ready for it to be proclaimed, and therefore those who would try to dodge the issue by arguing about the details of the bill quite frankly I think are going to have difficulty explaining that to their constituents.

I quite frankly think this will be a significant issue in the next general election; I really do. I think it'll be a significant issue because there is huge, huge support in the rural areas for this bill.

I want to tell you, in terms of the area I represent, how this bill means much more to the areas that are closer to the centre of Ottawa than those that are farther out from Parliament Hill. The area of West Carleton is the largest area, a former township, one of the 11 municipalities that became part of the city of Ottawa, the largest geographic area in all of the city of Ottawa. It was an amalgam of three rural townships, and that happened way back in 1974, when those three townships—Fitzroy, Huntley and Torbolton—were brought together. This particular area has a very, very strong volunteer firefighting force, but it is buttressed very, very much by double-hatters, under the definition that Mr Arnott puts forward.

As you go farther out from the centre of the city of Ottawa, the problem becomes less and less relevant to the people because there are fewer and fewer double-hatters as you go farther out because of course they're going farther away from their professional place of employment

as firefighters. Perhaps the closest area to West Carleton where there would be a significant number of firefighters would be in the former city of Kanata.

Many of those firefighters are not only stationed in Kanata, but some of them are stationed in the former city of Nepean and even farther into the city of Ottawa. They have chosen to live out in the country area and have made a significant contribution. They and their families have made a significant contribution to their community through helping out the other volunteer members in the fire department. They were able to bring those skills they learned downtown out to the rural area.

The fellow who ran against me in the last provincial election, Mr—

**Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke):** Dwight Eastman.

**Hon Mr Sterling:** —Dwight Eastman, for the Liberals, who was the mayor of West Carleton, made this particular issue very, very important to him in the last city election, when he was elected as a city councillor for that area. He was asking the provincial government to bring forward this very bill on behalf of his constituents in the area of West Carleton because he recognized how important this particular function was.

**Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex):** Why didn't he win?

2110

**Hon Mr Sterling:** Well, I had no trouble supporting what he was talking about at that time and continue to support it in terms of this bill.

Some of the people who have spoken from the opposition benches have somehow put forward the notion that this is a government initiative. I can assure the members opposite that that's not the case. This is an initiative of Ted Arnott because he feels strongly on the issue, and as you've heard, there are diverse opinions on this side of the floor.

One of the things we haven't talked about tonight is the whole role of the volunteer firefighters, be they in an area where you have double-hatters or in an area where they don't have double-hatters. This is a significant part of rural society in Ontario. When you are attacking the rural firefighter community, when you are saying to somebody who wants to be a double-hatter and wants to help out his or her rural community by being a double-hatter, you are attacking a significant part of the social fabric of our rural communities.

In all the time I've been elected, and that's been some 25 years, representing in large part about half urban and half rural concerns, I have observed of course the various different institutions that are there in the community and are supported by the community. I don't think there's any one institution which has established such a high degree of public acceptance as the rural volunteer firefighters in each and every municipality we have across eastern Ontario.

The bill doesn't say to a professional firefighter, "You're omitted from doing anything else." One of the anomalies I have with regard to this bill is the fact that if the rationale behind opposing this bill is that a firefighter

who was out on a volunteer fire, or in most cases a lot of their duties relate to going out to Highway 7 or Highway 17 or 417 in eastern Ontario, Highway 15 going from Smiths Falls to Carleton Place, going out to these horrendous crashes that take place and providing first response in terms of medical care as well as taking care of any incidents that result from a fire out of a car or whatever, part of the rationale is that a double-hatter who went out at 2 o'clock or 3 o'clock in the morning would be too tired to do his job the next day. Well, I think each and every one of us faces those kinds of employment issues and has to make those kinds of adjustments in terms of where we go the next day. It is more serious, probably, in terms of what a firefighter must do or potentially might do the next day. I'm certain firefighting departments can make that adjustment. Of course, if somebody is sick, they have to call in somebody else. So in the case of an emergency, where a firefighter who is a double-hatter is going out on a volunteer basis in another jurisdiction, why can't the professional unit make an adjustment? I don't understand why that can't be done. I expect that in fact it probably is done today in terms of trying to make certain that a firefighter who is on duty is ready and able to perform his or her functions as they go forward.

I also am concerned with what I have heard with regard to this union coming down hard on double-hatters and trying to control their private life in terms of what they choose to do outside of their working hours. I think that's an infringement on their freedom: freedom of association, freedom to do what they choose.

In the case of Ottawa and the area of West Carleton, I am suspicious of the motives. I think the motives are not pure. I think the motives are to drive the West Carleton area out of a volunteer firefighting service and into a professional firefighting service, even though it is a rural area. If that happens, the firefighting in that area will suffer, because the city will not be able to afford the level of service that is now provided by the volunteer sector and the community will lose those volunteer institutions, which are part and parcel of being in a rural community.

So it's a double loss: it's a loss in terms of the level of service that those communities now receive, and it will be a loss in terms of the loss of a group of individuals who gather together not only to fight fires, go to emergencies and perform very valuable functions as the first response, but it will also be a huge loss with regard to the social function, the cement this group provides in a community.

I really believe that Mr Arnott has done an excellent job in putting together a rational and reasonable bill to meet this challenge. A couple of speakers from the opposite side said, "Well, let them negotiate longer, let them talk longer about what is going on." I understand that the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association has backed off at the present time, but they've backed off for one reason, and I'll tell you what the reason is. It's right there in writing. They've backed off because Ted Arnott has raised the profile of this issue in front of this Legislature, so they're in retreat at the present time.



They're saying, "Maybe we were a little too rough before, and therefore we should modify our position."

It's not always nice to come to conclusions, where parties aren't able to get together and act in a reasonable and rational way. In this case, it does very, very strongly attack a centre of rural life. For that reason, as I said before, I support Bill 30 totally and have no problem with it.

The debate on this bill is presently in the third reading stage. This debate is supposed to be, of course, on the amendments to the bill. That's normally what third reading debate, after second reading, is. As you know, there have been no amendments put to this bill, and therefore I move that the question now be put.

2120

**The Acting Speaker:** I hear a point of order from the chief whip of the third party. I'll recognize it.

**Mr Bisson:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We have a number of members in our caucus who want to speak to this particular issue. There has not been all that much debate. We have had but one hour of debate at second reading, and we're now into maybe two hours at third reading. I would put to you that there are still members who want to speak to this. It is not a long time that we've been debating this, and I would ask you to take that into consideration.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Mr Speaker, with respect to you, on the same point of order: This bill has been through second reading. It went to committee. As I understand, they heard deputations at committee; a number of people came to two days of committee hearings. Now we've had third reading debate on a private member's bill. Quite frankly, it's unprecedented to have third reading debate on a private member's bill. It has been vetted and it went through the process. Also, third reading debate is generally dealing with amendments to the bill. As I understand it, there were no amendments put.

**Mr Arnott:** There was an amendment at committee.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** There was an amendment, sorry. They were speaking to that specific amendment to the bill.

As I said, it's a private member's bill. It had fulsome debate at second reading. It had committee time. It had two days, and it has had an unprecedented amount of third reading debate. I think it's reasonable to expect that you can move forward.

**Mr Levac:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It was mentioned by one of the members on the other side that it wasn't amended. Quite frankly, Speaker, for your information, the amendment was so large that it actually changed the entire bill. That would give the precedent that's being asked for in terms of the amount of time being given to debate. The reality is that the first bill in question may even have been challenged under the Charter of Rights and the Constitution; that's how large it was. And the fact is that the amendment created such a change in the whole bill that it changed the whole direction. Giving the time in this debate right now is very necessary so that every member of this House has an

opportunity to discuss that amended bill. I thank you for your time.

**The Acting Speaker:** It looks like there are going to be quite a few points of order. I want to give everybody a chance to make sure the points are made. I also want to give the sponsoring member of the bill an opportunity to say a word, but I am going to recognize at least one other representative from each of the three caucuses in addition to the sponsoring member. With that, the House leader for the third party now has the floor.

**Mr Kormos:** Thank you kindly, Speaker. First, Speaker, I'd ask you to note that there has not yet been even three hours of third reading debate. That's number one.

Number two, this is a private member's bill. That means it was allowed a maximum, as the standing orders provide, of one hour for second reading debate. I want to emphasize that. If the Speaker—if you, sir—were disposed to put the question to the chamber, notwithstanding the points of order, it's my submission, first, that the Speaker would be opening the floodgates for a process whereby governments could introduce what in effect are really government bills via private members' avenue—it would open the doors; it would open the floodgates—which means that there would be but one hour of debate on what could be a government bill wherein the government utilizes one of its backbenchers via private members' public business. One hour of second reading debate? They wouldn't need time allocation. To then accede to a request to put the question after not even three hours I submit would open the door to all sorts of abuse.

Second, I put to you this: this bill clearly, unlike others that have been before this chamber, I acknowledge, has not only generated different views from the NDP versus the other two parties, but clearly, even on the basis of the speakers during this brief period of time, there is disagreement within those two other parties. I put to you that the nature of the debate, not just the length but the nature of the debate, and the degree of intensity of debate—I'm not just talking about polarization but about the exchange of views—should also be taken into consideration.

(1) There's the prospect of opening the doors to an abuse of process by the government if this is granted, if the question is put; that it would identify private members' public business as being a very speedy conduit for the government agenda. (2) Having listened to the debate to date, I point out that it's not inappropriate that the leader of the third party, the leader of the New Democratic Party—he's here. I want to tell you, he does plan to speak to it and we expect him to be able to speak to it on the next rotation. I submit that under those circumstances, precedent is not applicable, because here we are dealing with but one hour of debate on second reading; in most other cases, you've heard at least, oh, three days of debate on second reading before time allocation is permitted. Certainly the period during which such a question could be put on second reading debate

would not happen after one hour, as it is in private members' public business where the question is put by virtue of the standing orders.

So I'm suggesting two very sound bases here upon which to accede to the point of order and permit further debate. You may well have the call for the question further in the debate. You'd have to reconsider the matter then. But I think you have two very important areas of consideration.

**The Acting Speaker:** I recognize the member for London West.

**Mr Bob Wood (London West):** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Because the government House leader has very commendably called a controversial private member's public bill for third reading, the decision you have to make tonight is something more than an ordinary decision. This is going to set something of a precedent for what I hope will be a number of controversial private members' public bills that come before this House.

I personally am opposed to the bill. I hope in due course I'll have an opportunity to speak on third reading. As you consider this, which I would submit to you is very important—and I know my friend the government House leader is going to call more controversial private members' public bills; that's good, that's democracy, and it's going to work. As you consider this rather important decision, there are two things I think you should keep in mind in particular. One is that because it's a private member's public bill, it's only had one hour's debate on second reading, and that's as it should be, and that's a good standing order of the House. However, taking that into consideration, that orients, I think, toward more time for debate on third reading on the floor of the House.

The second thing I think you should take into consideration is that there were quite substantial amendments made in committee. This is a significantly different bill, although the same in principle, as was before the House on second reading. I think that orients toward more time for debate.

So as you consider this very important question, which I think is setting something of a precedent, I hope you'll take those two factors into serious consideration. Whatever decision you make on that point will commend itself as a consideration to Speakers in the future when they have to make what I hope are many similar decisions, because the government House leader is absolutely right in bringing this bill forward. I commend him for that. I invite you to consider the importance of what you're about to decide.

**The Acting Speaker:** I recognize the member for Essex.

**Mr Crozier:** In addition to the points that have been made, I make the point that we are prepared to debate this bill till midnight tonight. I thought—and I could stand to be corrected—that there was agreement that this bill would be debated—

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** No.

**Mr Crozier:** The House leader said there was no agreement. It was my understanding that there would be

no vote on this bill tonight. We have four speakers who still want to stand and speak to this bill. If you, Speaker, feel that the weight of this bill, the importance of this bill, deserves that kind of consideration, and in fact if the proponent of this bill, the member who introduced this bill, who's going to be given the opportunity to speak, feels this bill is that important, I suggest that we should continue debate on this bill until the clock runs out this evening. There is lots to be said. There are views on all sides of the issue to be heard. I think it's important enough, Speaker, that we should continue debate on this bill.

**2130**

**The Acting Speaker:** I appreciate the input from all the caucuses. I'll give the last word to the sponsoring member, the honourable member from Waterloo-Wellington.

**Mr Arnott:** I've listened with interest to the debate that's taken place in this House. I think we've now debated this for about two and a half hours at third reading. As some of the members on our side have said, it has been an interesting debate. I've heard previously many of the comments that members who oppose my bill have brought forward tonight in the two meetings I had with firefighters' union representatives, one shortly after the bill was introduced for first reading, if my memory is correct, before second reading debate took place, and also when the professional firefighters had their lobby day.

I did listen to the two days of public hearings we held at the standing committee on justice and social policy. In fact, at the subcommittee meeting I proposed that three days of public hearings take place. I recall that the member for Niagara Centre did not support me in that request. He thought two days were sufficient. So we had two days of hearings.

**Mr Kormos:** You've got the majority on the committee, Ted.

**Mr Arnott:** Well, I was looking to you for support, and I was surprised you didn't support a third day of public hearings, because I was for public hearings. I was certainly prepared to have groups that were opposed to the bill come forward and speak to it, and I wanted to—

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Order. I want to say to the House leader of the third party that I made sure this House was dead silent when you spoke, given the importance. Now you're going to do the same thing for this honourable member. Please keep your remarks—no, you don't have a point of order. Take your seat.

**Mr Kormos:** I apologize.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you for responding in that fashion. I know I won't have to get up again. Sorry for the interruption.

**Mr Arnott:** It is correct that there was an amendment when we did clause-by-clause on the bill. The amendment was in order in the sense that it was entirely consistent with the purpose, the thrust and the general principle of the bill. It captured the very same end result,

which is what I'm trying to do, which is to provide employment protection for double-hatter firefighters, those being full-time professional firefighters who also wish to provide their volunteer services, in most cases typically in a small town in which they live nearby.

I would submit to you, Mr Speaker, that there has been considerable debate here, two and a half hours of debate. I think all three parties have had an opportunity to engage in that debate. We've heard from members of our caucus who don't support the bill. I certainly haven't stood in the way of their desire and interest to have the chance to speak to the issue. My good friend the member for Kitchener Centre spoke to the issue and said he kind of complimented me. I really appreciated that, because that is better than no compliment at all.

The member for London Centre has at least had the opportunity to speak to this. He has an interest in speaking to the bill, but he wants to be in a situation where he can perhaps register his vote. That's what we're working toward at this point: getting to the point where there will be a vote. I think perhaps it's time. I'm not sure what more I can add to this, but I'm certainly prepared to vote on this bill, as I have been since the beginning of the night.

The other point I should add is that the bill is two pages, if you include the English and the French translation—two pages. It's pretty straightforward, and I think all the members have had a fair chance to take a look at it and understand its contents.

**The Acting Speaker:** Unless you have something urgently new and earth-shattering for me to consider, which of course you would think it is—what a silly way for me to put it. I'll give you a moment to make the point.

**Mr Crozier:** And I'll be very brief.

You know, I thought there was honour in this place. I may be naive, but I really did believe we were going to debate this through the rest of the evening. It's 9:30 in the evening. There are members of this House who are all over this city, God knows where, and all of a sudden the minister calls a vote on this. Frankly, I think the honour in this place has gone down a notch if that's what we're going to deal with tonight.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Order, please. I know emotions are running strong, but this place is going to operate the way it should.

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Order, please. It's my understanding—

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Do you know what? If you say one more word, you're leaving.

It's my understanding that there is not a lot of precedent with regard to this kind of motion as it affects private members. I take the point that the member from London West has made that there may be a little more weight than usual to this particular ruling. Giving due regard to that, I would like to take a 10-minute recess to review the points that have been made, and I will return

with a ruling. Therefore this House will recess for 10 minutes.

*The House recessed from 2135 to 2147.*

**The Acting Speaker:** First of all, let me thank all the members for their interest and providing me with their thoughts.

I realize that the rules don't really provide for whether or not there's a free vote. Technically and philosophically, every vote in this place is a free vote, but it has been declared as such. We haven't done that an awful lot. I've allowed that to weigh in my decision to some degree.

The test is meant to be whether or not the rights of the minority are being denied in allowing such a motion to be put. The difficulty in this case is that because it's a free vote, we not only have division of opinion and thinking from all caucuses but from within all of the caucuses and, quite frankly, it's virtually impossible to identify where the majority is, to then be able to determine who is the minority and whether or not their rights are being infringed or not.

I also take into account the fact that this is an extremely controversial issue. There have been a little less than three hours and only nine out of 103 members have yet had a chance to speak.

Therefore, at this point it is my ruling that the motion will not be put and I'm going to rule it out of order. Debate will continue. The floor is now open.

**Mr McMeekin:** Mr Speaker, let me first of all compliment you on your ruling. I'm pleased to have an opportunity to speak to this bill.

At the outset, notwithstanding what happens to the bill, I want to applaud all members of this House who from time to time bring private members' business here, and in this case particularly my colleague opposite from Waterloo-Wellington.

I want to make it clear also from the outset that I'm not here to demonize or to blame anyone. I'm certainly not here to cast any bad light on full-time professional brothers and sisters, nor part-time professional volunteers, nor the fire marshal, nor municipalities. In fact, I want to say that I respect the training and the expertise and the courage and the commitment that all firefighters display every single day as they put themselves in harm's way.

That said, as a former mayor of a great municipality that experienced, unfortunately, the rigors of an all too anxious government wanting to move forward on amalgamation, I wish it hadn't come to this. This wasn't a problem before amalgamation occurred, and it's become a significant problem, as my colleague from Brant indicated, since.

I want to say also that while no one is particularly guilty, everybody is responsible for the mess that we're in. I also want to say, by way of backdrop, that I appreciate the fact that in the two years I've been here, this is probably the first issue that we've had any real debate on. We use closure so often around this place, one would almost be led to the belief that everyone has sort of sanitized views on everything.

This is a complex, emotional issue. I know that when I was growing up mom used to always say that “decisions between good and evil are easy” and I suppose in today’s context, were she still here, she might say—if I can get my own colleagues’ attention, that will be helpful—that except for the Oklahoma bomber, we all want to be on the side of the angels. She always went on to say that it’s decisions between competing goods that are difficult, and in this case perhaps competing rights.

This issue involves public safety, it involves individual rights, it involves union rights and, I suppose, potential changes to the way labour relations are done in this province.

Historically, volunteer firefighters have played a vital role in the delivery of fire protection services in Ontario, especially in rural areas. In fact, I don’t know if you know this, Mr Speaker, but 95% of Ontario fire departments are either volunteer departments or have a volunteer component. So it pains me somewhat personally, having served as the mayor of the wonderful town of Flamborough and having seen full-timers, two-hatters, whatever you want to call them, and committed people, along with committed volunteers, working so well together, to see this sort of thing happen.

You know, we in the town of Flamborough had a wonderful situation going. I can tell you that when we did the task force on comparative municipal taxation, we looked at nine different municipalities in our area and 16 different services. I’m disappointed to say that the city of Hamilton and those who were pushing amalgamation might want to just make a note of this: in every single case, the city of Hamilton, as I recall, had the highest per capita cost for each and every one of those services except one, and that service was firefighting in the wonderful town of Flamborough, which scored the least cost per capita, and I would argue the best investment any municipality of the nine had made.

I suppose when all is said and done there’s no service that’s more important to municipal ratepayers than the assurance—and I think my colleague from Ottawa spoke to this quite eloquently a few moments ago—the assurance that their homes, their property and their loved ones are properly protected. In Flamborough that wasn’t a problem. We had a nice arrangement. In urban areas that were growing fast we brought in a full-time complement, and in rural areas we had the composite department, which included some of the two-hatters. We never, ever wanted to put ourselves in the position where somebody with the training and the expertise would have to stand at the end of a neighbour’s driveway and say, “I’m sorry I can’t help put out that fire or save somebody in that house because I’ve got a union problem.” You know? That didn’t happen as long as we were on our own.

I’ve heard a lot of arguments here. It’s almost like pointing the finger at who to blame. You know, blame municipalities, blame the fire marshal, what have you. I want to say for the record that some of us have been working at trying to get this issue resolved for well over a year without success. I’m not surprised that the fire

marshal, who had a lot to say about this, had difficulty getting it resolved. By the way, for the record, the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs also noted that they didn’t think there was a resolution. The firefighters’ association said they didn’t think there was a resolution. The Association of Municipalities of Ontario also joined in saying that this was a non-resolvable issue that required a legislative response. The honourable member opposite who is sponsoring this bill has heard that and brought that properly forward.

This issue of rights keeps coming up. I believe that unions have certain rights. Mr Speaker, we’ve grown up together in that wonderful labour town of Hamilton. I don’t have a problem with that, but I do have a difficulty with the idea that in every case there’s a sacrosanct right as contrasted with other rights. I think individuals have rights. John Stewart Mill, the father of ancient and modern-day liberalism, spoke and wrote eloquently about individuals having certain inalienable rights. The right to make choices would have been one of those. So I would point that out to some of my colleagues.

Municipalities have rights. They have collective rights. I want to suggest that virtually every group in this province that represents municipalities, from AMO to ROMA, the Rural Ontario Municipal Association, to OSUM, Ontario Small Urban Municipalities, have all come out very strongly in favour of this bill, as have the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, which, I want to note, represents the full-time composite and volunteer administrative levels of the Ontario fire service from the fire protection and prevention education management perspective. Currently, the OAFIC has approximately 600 members representing over 400 fire service organizations across the province. Their membership is comprised of full-time departments protecting some 55% of Ontario’s population; composite fire department—a combination of full-time and volunteer members, protecting some 30% of the population; and solely volunteer fire departments, representing approximately 15% of the population.

The Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs was one of the stakeholders looking seriously at the issues that came forward, and this includes big city chiefs, little city chiefs—big chief, little chief, right?—from all over the province. Their board was unanimous in support of Bill 30. To their credit, they didn’t feel it went far enough. They felt that this was such an important issue that they actually called a general membership meeting, which occurred recently, because they were so concerned about the public safety aspect related to this bill. Let there be no mistake: there are significant public safety aspects here. They had a vote, and the vote was—and I confirmed this today after speaking to the president of the group—126 to 4 in favour of moving forward with this bill. Some of the fire chiefs who voted in favour of this represent the city of Toronto, the city of Mississauga and, I understand, the city of Hamilton. I stand to be corrected if that’s not the case, but I’m told it is.

**2200**

I think the concern centred to a large extent on the fact that two-hatters, who play such a significant role particu-

larly in smaller communities, aren't just people who pour water on fires, as important as that is; they're people who, because of their training and expertise, have a very special role to play as people involved in trying to make a difference in their own communities with being training officers and, if I dare say it, confidence builders for some of the others out there who maybe are just wanting to get the training so they can be full-time firefighting professionals some day; I don't know.

But I know that in our municipality they were always people who, until recently, were looked up to and revered. That was a mutual feeling between the full-timers or so-called two-hatters and those dedicated other volunteers who serve.

The association of fire chiefs is one—the Association of Municipalities of Ontario strongly support Bill 30. I spoke with Pat Vianni this afternoon about this, particularly with respect to the rural communities that they and ROMA represent. I was told today—I didn't know this. Maybe the member from Waterloo-Wellington didn't know it either; I don't know. There's not much he doesn't know about this; apparently there are four times as many volunteer firefighters in the province as there are full-time professional firefighters—four times as many.

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario see this very much as a right-to-work issue; they pointed that out. They've said, "You know, we've had promises, promises, promises about working this issue out and we just haven't seen the results." If we don't get it resolved, they believe, in this legislative framework that has been presented, very soon we're "going to have a much, much bigger problem on our hands." That's from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.

For those who are standing up and quoting all this stuff about municipalities, you might want to bear in mind that AMO, virtually without any opposition, supports this, as does ROMA. Jean-Marc, you know all about the ROMA group.

The Ontario Small Urban Municipalities association feel that this particular bill is actually critical to municipalities, taxpayers and residents. They lament profoundly the resignations that they feel have been forced from many of the two-hatters, and they note with some real concern that the lifting of the moratorium on charges by the IAFF really didn't help matters. They suggest in a letter that was sent, I believe, to all members of this Legislative Assembly that it could literally cost millions of dollars to replace the expertise that will be lost unless we get this issue handled. They fear, I think quite legitimately, that public safety will be compromised if well-trained and experienced professional firefighters who want to make a difference in their own local communities don't have a chance to do that. I share that concern. We've received letters from some of the groups that I've mentioned.

In addition to that, the Ontario fire marshal, who is the chief fire officer for the province of Ontario, as I understand it, and who is responsible for ensuring that things are in place to protect communities and lives, has

spoken out very, very strongly, as it turns out, in favour of Bill 30. He notes in his presentation to the committee which reviewed this that there was a long and very complicated consultation process. Yes, there was one official meeting that brought all the stakeholders together, but there was a lot of consultation before that with respect to prohibiting career firefighters from serving as volunteer firefighters. He noted that he didn't feel a negotiated settlement of the dispute was going to happen. In fact, I would say as an aside, obviously the professional association must have felt the same way, because they lifted their moratorium on charges. If you want to negotiate for an official negotiating task force of some sort to resolve it, the best way to show that isn't to go out and lay a whole bunch of charges. He notes that, and he notes a number of other things. He suggested in his presentation that no mechanism currently exists to allow any of the parties to bind their membership. AMO said this. They said, "We could make an undertaking, but we can't bind individual municipalities." The Ontario association of professional firefighters said the same thing: "We could make an undertaking, but we can't bind our locals." They couldn't guarantee their members would adhere to any particular arrangement.

He noted that things were very polarized and that there was no common ground—his words—for a non-legislated solution. He concludes, and my colleague from Brant made some passing reference to this, "The sudden or phased withdrawal of two-hatters from communities dependent on volunteer fire departments could significantly impact on their ability to provide an adequate level of fire protection and may in some cases pose a potential serious threat to public safety...."

Why? He pointed out several reasons. "There would be a loss of experience, leadership and expertise...." He noted, as the member for Wellington noted, that even one two-hatter can often make a difference in a small rural community. "There may be a reduced capacity for providing adequate emergency responses...." Potentially it would require increased response time, including the time to recruit and train either full-time or part-time new firefighters.

He noted that if this bill were to fail, not only would it "create a potential serious threat to public safety," but, he said, "There is a provincial and public interest in protecting two-hatters who wish to serve as volunteer firefighters. We do not believe that a non-legislated solution is achievable or enforceable. As a result, without a legislated solution, the existing tensions and uncertainty in the fire service community will continue, and the high potential for two-hatters to resign as a result of OPFFA constitutional enforcement activities could well result in significant public safety concerns arising."

This is our fire marshal. He says it's his "understanding that such protection is not uncommon in most jurisdictions in Canada and the United States," another interesting tidbit of information that I think we should remember. He says in closing that he supports "first and foremost the need to develop a legislated solution"—I'm

assuming because of his previous statement about the impossibility of finding a resolution to the presenting problems—"that clearly protects the interests of public safety. It is important that career firefighters who wish to serve as part-time or volunteer firefighters in their home communities are permitted to do so without fear of loss of employment."

In conclusion, I've had a great deal of difficulty finding a lot of people, other than a few union leaders, who actually oppose this bill. AMO supports it, ROMA supports it, OSUM supports it, the Ontario association of police chiefs supports it, the Ontario fire marshal supports it and most of the public I speak to in my riding support it. Both local newspapers—the Hamilton Spectator and the Brabant chain—have written editorials in support of it. As I've spoken to full-time firefighters in the various departments in my riding, many of them shook their heads. So I intend to support this bill and do so—

**Mr Kormos:** How come Mr Levac doesn't support it?

**Mr McMeekin:** You'll have to ask Mr Levac that. I intend to support the bill and I do so because of a long tradition of standing in affirmation of individual human rights and the Constitution we have in this country.

2210

**Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Tourism and Recreation):** I'm pleased to participate in this debate. I want to say at the outset that I too regret the fact that we're debating this bill, because I certainly would have preferred to see a negotiated resolution of this. I am fully convinced that had the matter been handled differently from the outset we wouldn't be here today talking about a piece of legislation that effectively is going to force the rights of individuals in this province to prevail, and that is to do with one's own time what one chooses. In this particular case, it's to serve a community as a firefighter.

I think where the matter went wrong was when letters started to go to people in my riding who were serving in the capacity of a volunteer firefighter. When these letters were brought to my attention, I was shocked. I could not believe that in the province of Ontario individuals were being threatened with the loss of their permanent employment because of an activity they chose to participate in, in their community, as volunteer firefighters. I just could not believe that in Ontario we would have people worried about their livelihood, that they would lose sleep, that their families would be upset that the breadwinner of that home would perhaps lose their job or have to resign from something they feel compelled to do to serve their community.

I first saw those letters before I ever heard from my colleague with regard to this bill. I took the matter up with Bob Runciman, the Solicitor General at the time. I said to him, "Something is very wrong. I can't believe this is really happening. Is it happening? Tell me, is this happening elsewhere?"

Eventually I found out that in fact this was a province-wide concern. My immediate reaction was that there has to be something wrong here, that we must already have

something in legislation in this province that would prevent this from happening. I could not believe there wasn't already some form of legislative protection in regard to this kind of intimidation taking place.

What I found out was that every other profession in the province indeed does have that kind of protection, but firefighters don't. So once again I thought, how could previous legislation not have covered this off?

I continue to get calls from constituents. My riding takes in Richmond Hill, the town of Whitchurch-Stouffville and part of the town of Markham. We have a unique situation in that community, where Whitchurch-Stouffville is largely dependent on volunteer firefighters. Interestingly enough, the town of Markham at one time was fully looked after by volunteer firefighters as well. As the town of Markham grew, as the tax base expanded, there was a need for full-time firefighters, and the town of Markham is now fully full-time firefighters.

I think there's a natural evolution that is taking place in our province and it's taking place in most of our communities, and that is, as the community grows, as the tax base expands, as there is the economic ability to put in place permanent and full-time firefighters, the municipalities do so, and they do so because they know it's the right thing, the responsible thing to do.

I think what's happened in this particular situation is that the association has somehow got ahead of that natural evolution that is taking place, and for their own reasons, which I frankly believe are misguided, have taken it upon themselves to try to accelerate that natural process that allows municipalities to put in place a full-time firefighting unit. I believe that we have a responsibility in this Legislature to take a time-out here and say, "Wait a minute. We're not going to allow this to happen to people in our province, to men and women who want to make a choice to participate, to support, to help their communities through their part-time activities." For that reason, I will be supporting this legislation.

When the firefighters were here, two weeks ago now—we have many of them here, and I'm glad they are, because I think it's important that they hear this debate. I think it's important that they understand what motivates some of us, and I trust at the end of the day the majority of us, to vote for this legislation. In the discussion that I had with the firefighters who came to see me I explained to them that I'd prefer that this happen some other way, that there would have been a more appropriate way of dealing with this, but I also explained to them at the time that there's still room, I believe, for this matter to be resolved. I hope that we can.

A proposal that I put forward at the time was that if in fact the bill comes to the House, I will vote for it, and if it does get passed, which I believe it will, there is still an opportunity for our government to deal with this negotiating process that is being suggested. My advice was not to proclaim the bill and allow for some time for the parties to come back to the table to work out a resolution. If in fact that doesn't happen, and if we can see that there is a standoff, that for some reason the matter can't be

resolved that way, then the government has the ability to proclaim the bill and legislate the resolution.

From that standpoint, I'm saying I will vote for this bill, because I don't believe that we as legislators can stand by and have individuals in our communities in any way threatened. I've seen the letters, and so for someone to say that this isn't about threatening—I'm sorry, it's in black and white. I don't believe that as legislators we have the right to allow that to happen. I will support the bill, but again I say that I think there's some opportunity here for the parties to come to a resolution. I think it's important that they see that this government will not allow the kind of intimidation to continue. That's a signal: get on with doing the job of negotiating an appropriate settlement. But in the context of that settlement, what we have to understand is the rights of individuals, is the need of communities across the province. Honourable members have made reference to that, that not every community in this province can afford to take on full-time firefighters and that there is a role that individuals can play.

With regard to some of the rationale, some of the reasons that have been given me as to why firefighters shouldn't be performing volunteer work—that they're too tired, that it's inappropriate after working a shift that they would go elsewhere and perform some of these services—the reason those do not ring very true to me is that I personally know a number of firefighters in my community, in my riding, and I know they carry on other part-time occupations. That's just a fact. I suppose if that is the rationale firefighters are using to say their colleagues should not participate in other part-time activities as a firefighter, then perhaps what they should also be prepared to do is to say that from this point on in time no firefighter will have any other engagement—no other part-time jobs, no other part-time businesses—because they won't be in any condition to work if they happen to do some other form of business.

2220

**Mr Levac:** It's not the same.

**Hon Mr Klees:** The honourable member across the way says that it's not the same. Well, let me tell you that I don't know if it's not the same, because whether you're building a deck or whether you're putting on an addition or whether you're working in carpentry or whether you're cleaning driveways with your front-end loader, these are all things that take time; these are all things that you have to be awake to do, my friend. If you have the ability to do other part-time jobs, why not do something that you have been trained to do, that you have the ability to do, that you can show leadership in doing? Many of these firefighters take the time to train individuals, other volunteers, within the community.

I was at a function in Whitchurch-Stouffville where we were honouring volunteer firefighters in the community. There were young people there who were volunteers. They were being trained to be volunteer firefighters within their community. I spoke to two young men who got their start in the volunteer firefighting

capacity in Stouffville being trained by so-called double-hatters who have now gone on to be full-time firefighters in the town of Richmond Hill.

I spoke earlier about a natural evolution that takes place. Tell me what's wrong with that. I think it make ultimate sense. And what we have to do in this place, I think, is just understand. We have to understand that perhaps when this debate began there was much more to it than simply ensuring that people are awake when they get on the job and that perhaps it's too hard on them to carry on as volunteer firefighters. I really believe there was more to it than that. I'm confused at the same time by some of the debate that has gone on this evening.

I've heard from members of my own caucus who are arguing against this bill, and what confuses me is that some of that debate—I won't make a specific reference, but anyone wanting to look up Hansard would know that there are individuals who are arguing in favour of this bill who quite frankly at some other time and place in this very Legislature have stood up and have argued and debated in favour of a so-called right-to-work bill that was tabled here in this place, which, by the way, I supported as well. There's a principle at stake here, and the principle that is at stake here in this debate is, do people in this province have the right to work at a job that they choose to work at without intimidation by a union, by an organization, whether that be a political party, whether that be a labour union, whether that be an association? I happen to be in favour of the right to work, and I'd prefer we were debating a right-to-work piece of legislation in this place.

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Klees:** I knew that would evoke some form of reaction from members opposite. I fully appreciate the NDP, because philosophically that's where they stand and they have never wavered from that.

I happen to believe that in a free society we should have, as men, women, young people, residents, citizens of this province, the right to do as we choose without intimidation. And at the core, I believe, of this legislation is that principle. Had the members of the association of firefighters taken, as I said at the outset when I began this debate, the approach on this in a much more logical and rational and I believe civil way, then individuals like myself would actually be taking a different position here, because I would believe that they intend to resolve this issue. Having said that, I believe I have to take a stand on behalf of the constituency that I represent. I was approached by the mayor of the town of Whitchurch-Stouffville, I was approached by firefighters from the town of Whitchurch-Stouffville and I was approached by firefighters from other jurisdictions who expressed to me that they feel that in the province of Ontario they have lost some of their freedom. That's a sad commentary for our society. I don't believe that anyone in this place would want to stand by and allow that to be said about this province. I honestly believe that upon reflection the firefighters in this province also don't want to go down that road. I would think that upon reflection they would

want to be sure we had a settlement of this matter, that they can work side-by-side with their colleagues, that they can look at each other and respect each other for the choices they make. That's what this is really about. I respect you as a brother or a sister, and I respect you for who you are as a professional. I respect you so much that I believe you have the ability to say, "I can do this. I'm prepared to put in another three or four hours for my community, and I'll make the decision, in the interest of my community and in the interest of my fellow firefighters, that I will ensure, when I do show up to my permanent job, that I'm in a condition to do so, and I'll conduct myself accordingly."

Let's not rob individuals in this province of their own self-respect. That's effectively what we're doing when we're telling our firefighters, when we're telling our neighbours, that they can't make those choices. It's about making choices. It's about doing the right thing. It's about respecting each other. It's about ensuring that in our communities we understand the limitations that communities have. It's about understanding that eventually many of the communities that are in this fight right now will have full-time firefighters because of the natural growth of those communities. But in the meantime, between now and then, let's ensure that we are working harmoniously together. Let's ensure that we understand what is truly at issue here. I believe that at the end of the day, by passing this legislation, we will send a signal to both parties that in this province we have choices, we have freedoms and we respect each other. That's really what it's all about.

We've had the opportunity to debate this bill. I want to commend my colleague for bringing it forward. We've had the opportunity to debate this at some length—unique, in the sense that as a private member's bill we have had some three and a half hours of debate. I believe it's in the interest of the people of this province that we all have an opportunity to cast our vote, and I would ask that the question now be put.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** The member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** I believe it's back to the Liberals in the rotation, and then you.

**Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington):** I'm really happy to have the opportunity to debate this bill this evening, because there's some question about how much debate we should be having. I am especially happy to have this chance, first of all, to talk about firefighters. When I think of firefighters, I usually don't distinguish between firefighters who would be volunteers in communities and firefighters who are full-time firefighters, because in my mind there's really no distinction. These are men, and in some cases women, who put their lives at risk every day, and they do so to keep all of us safe and to protect us. In my opinion, they deserve the greatest respect and consideration. I've thought about this particular issue at great length and tried to consider as many as possible of the

issues that have been presented to me, both by constituents—people within my riding—and by people within the profession for whom I have the greatest of respect.

**2230**

I want to make reference to a comment that was made by the Minister of Tourism. He indicated it was his hope that there could have been a negotiated solution to this issue. I think many members on all sides of this House want the same. Ideally, rather than have an issue that pits one good group against another, we would like to see the two sides come together and work out an agreement. This legislation will prevent that from happening. Sadly, it will create a rift within our communities, a soreness that need not be there.

I also want to mention the fact that when this bill was at committee, my colleague Dave Levac, the member for Brant, put an amendment. I have a copy of the amendment here. It basically stated that before the bill was proclaimed, a committee of representatives of both volunteer and full-time firefighters would be struck, and they would meet on a regular basis to debate and discuss the outstanding issues. Sadly, and for me quite puzzling, this amendment was defeated by government members. In my opinion, it speaks to the point that was raised by the Minister of Tourism. It would have provided a vehicle for both parties to come together to try to hammer out a resolution.

One of the comments made in the debate this evening was around the issue that volunteer firefighters who were full-time firefighters and would be volunteering their services received letters that made very clear to them that if they were to continue doing what they were doing, that would put their job at risk. They were worried about their livelihood, and I'm sure that is not to be desired. However, I would remind the members of this Legislature that, yes, they're worried about their livelihood. But I have had the opportunity to speak to firefighters, and they tell me that their issues are equally, if not more, serious, because they're worried about their lives. They're worried that they're going to get called to a fire and that the person in front of them or behind them or beside them, someone they're depending on to assist them in this very, very dangerous role, may have been volunteering in their community and came to work after that activity and was not really able to give the 110% that every firefighter in this province gives when he goes on a call. That's what I heard from firefighters, and I think it's a fair concern to be worried about their lives.

I spoke with a gentleman who came to my office, and I visit a number of volunteer fire services in my riding. The equipment alone that they wear can weigh over 80 pounds. I can't imagine that if you were out on a volunteer experience—in my riding, volunteer services are now out fighting forest fires, something they didn't do before, and they're fighting day and night. If a firefighter has been involved in that kind of activity and then gets called in to work, carrying this 80 pounds of equipment, I think it's a legitimate concern that these people may not



be at their best, at their peak, where they need to be for the other people on their team who are working with them.

I was also very interested—I listened very intently—when the member sponsoring this private member's bill asked a question in question period of Mr Runciman, the Minister of Public Safety and Security. Mr Arnott asked the minister, "Will you support this bill?" I did want to understand from the minister what his position would be on this matter. Surprisingly, and I invite all members in this Legislature to review Hansard, I don't believe the minister supported it. He didn't not support it, but when a government member asks a minister a question, I believe that if the minister wanted to say he supported it, he would have on that occasion. Whether or not the minister will support it I think is a question, and it gives me cause to wonder if this is good legislation when the minister would have some problem giving it an unequivocal vote of confidence, and I know there are other members of the government as well.

It's not a partisan issue, and I don't think it's a rural-urban issue. From my perspective, it's about public safety. I know some of the members this evening have talked about the many groups that have supported the bill. One of the groups is AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, certainly a group to be respected. But I couldn't help but note in one of the more recent communiqués they have sent to their members that their concern is that if Bill 30 is not passed, there could be a significant cost impact on municipalities across the province, as many may be expected to replace two-hatters with full-time firefighters. What disappoints me about this communiqué is that I have not read anything that speaks to public safety and what must be considered to ensure that the public is safe, and not just the public but that our firefighters are safe as well when they execute their jobs. For me, that is something worth noting.

I want to talk about my riding, Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, and the kind of fire services we have there. We have literally hundreds of volunteer firefighters, who do an excellent job. I've witnessed their dedication and their ability first-hand. There isn't anything like a fire to attract people, to draw a crowd; if people see smoke and fire, they come to the fire. I have always been impressed with how well served we are by volunteer firefighters in rural Ontario and most definitely in Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. I have only one full-time service in my riding, and that is in the community of Napanee. Also, because of the nature of this issue, I thought it was important that I understand, that I investigate, how many two-hatters are in my riding. If this bill passes or fails, it's important for me to understand the impact it will have locally. I have to say that I was surprised—not necessarily disappointed and not necessarily delighted, but just surprised—that of the hundreds of firefighters in my riding there is one two-hatter. I'm given to understand that this two-hatter has a very good working relationship and an understanding of what's at stake with this very bill.

I also think it's very important to remind ourselves here and to have it stated in the record—I think it has been already, but even for those people who would be listening to the debate this evening—that when we talk about volunteer services, I think people have an idea in their minds about what a volunteer is in our communities. If you volunteer for the Canadian Cancer Society, the Kiwanis Club, the Rotary Club, it means you spend a great deal of time and put forward effort in very valuable areas, and you don't get paid to do that; you do that out of the goodness of your heart because you want to assist your community. When we see our neighbours or friends or people in our community in a situation where they need help, our immediate reaction is to go and do what we can to help them. I think initially volunteer firefighters were just that: they were volunteers. They were not paid for their efforts. However, today in Ontario that is not the case. I am not in any way suggesting it's not appropriate that volunteer firefighters be compensated for putting their life at risk to save my property and my life; I'm not suggesting that at all. But I think it's important to note that when we speak of volunteer firefighters, they are compensated; there is compensation for what they do.

**2240**

We then have to consider how many other workplaces would allow their employees with whom they have a contract to go out and do the same kind of work for another company. In the public sector, for example, I know that many school boards have in their collective agreements that if you are a teacher with a board, you are not allowed to go out and teach for another board or another private company. That would not be accepted. Here we have a case in point where full-time firefighters who are paid for that also go to another service and volunteer but are paid for that work. That does bring about an inconsistency in terms of application of our labour laws. Should the bill pass, what's appropriate in one labour setting will not be consistent in another labour setting. In fairness to all the workers in the province of Ontario, we need to pay some attention to that particular issue.

With regard to where we go from here, I continue to maintain that the best solution for this issue is for the minister to strike a task force to bring all parties of this debate together at a table and have them hash it out: "What are all the issues?" "What are your suggestions?" "What are yours?" "How can we make this work in the province of Ontario?"

I believe the amount of goodwill on both sides of this issue is immeasurable. However, this kind of resolution is certainly a weighted consideration, where it would appear that one side is going to come out the winner and the other side is going to come out with less than what they had before. I can't think of a group who deserves that less than our firefighters.

I have actually written to the minister on this very issue and have asked him, given the very divisive nature of this bill, to consider establishing a task force. I think it's absolutely essential that we try to work collabor-

atively, that we show the people in our communities that we believe that's the best way to achieve a resolution to a very complex issue. I certainly hope the minister will exercise the regard that he has at his cabinet table. He is certainly a veteran of this Legislature. I know he is very respected by members on this side of the House; absolutely he is on his side of the House. I hope the minister will take the opportunity that I believe is before him right now on this issue to set up such a task force and invite both parties—both full-time firefighters and volunteer firefighters—to the table to talk about ways that their outstanding issue can be addressed.

I want to commend all of the people who have written to me, to my office, to explain both sides of the issue. Families and friends and members of our communities have taken great interest in this and have taken a great deal of time to have everyone here understand how important it is. They have done a very good job to educate the people in this place. Sometimes I think we are really quite isolated here. While we do a lot of reading and think we have a lot of the background, it really isn't until we read the letters and meet people face to face that we gain a real appreciation for the issue.

For me, this is not a rural-urban issue. It's not a partisan issue. It's about what you think is the right thing to do. For me personally, while I appreciate that two-hatters do provide benefits to the communities they serve—the benefit of their knowledge, the benefit of their expertise at bargain-basement prices, as it were—I also appreciate and understand how for municipalities this is a good deal they have going and don't want to lose it. On the other hand, the important issue for me is the safety and well-being of professional firefighters, a group of people that I think—in fact, I can't think of a profession that is held in any higher regard.

If, with the position I hold and why I am here, I could leave this debate with an image of why I will be proud to go back to my riding and say, "This is how I voted on Bill 30"—we all remember the horrible images of September 11; we will all have those etched in our minds. For me, one of the most poignant is the story of those people who escaped the tragedy. They talk about running down the stairs and the difficulty they had running down because the firemen were running up the stairs. They were running toward the danger; they were running to help people without regard for their own well-being. That's the image I have of professional firefighters. They are the people who have come to me and have said that this bill could have an impact on safety in their workplace. So I'm very proud this evening to say that I will stand for those people, for the men and women like the people who were running up the stairs in New York.

**Hon Mr Stockwell:** Oh my God.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** I really thank the Minister of the Environment for his—it sounded like a note of approval there.

In any case, I am delighted that I've had this opportunity to make my point around Bill 30. I certainly hope

that whatever the outcome is, the two communities will be able to come together eventually and live with the decision that's made in this Legislature.

**2250**

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** I'm pleased to be able to participate in this debate because this is quite controversial legislation, legislation that, were it to pass into law and be implemented, would I believe create an even more difficult situation out there in many communities across the province.

Let me say at the outset that I think there are a number of myths that need to be exposed with respect to this legislation. You might know, Speaker, that earlier in the year I spent some time travelling from community to community in a bus talking about hydro. But sometimes, when you got to communities, members of the municipal council would want to come and talk about some of the other issues that were on their mind. This was one of them. So while I was travelling around out there, across Ontario, there were a couple of myths I heard associated with this legislation that I immediately want to dispel.

I had some municipal representatives say to me that if this legislation does not pass, it will mean the end of volunteer firefighting. To those people out there who are under that impression, let me say clearly and categorically that that is completely false. This legislation will not do anything for volunteer firefighting, and if this legislation fails, it will not hinder volunteer firefighting in any way. In fact, professional firefighters across this province support volunteer firefighting and have been very supportive of volunteer fire departments.

The other myth out there is—as you know, some firefighting services across the province are composite. You'll have some members of the firefighting service who are full-time firefighters and then you will have, working alongside them, the volunteers. I had some people say to me, "If this legislation doesn't pass, it will be the end of composite fire services." That is also false. I say to those government members who want to propagate that myth, go out and engage in some of the discussions, because this legislation will do nothing for composite services, and if this legislation fails, which I believe it should, it will not in any way negatively affect composite fire services either.

What is really the issue here, from the prospective of New Democrats, first and foremost is this: some government legislation mandates that there needs to be a certain level of fire service provided. One would think that if the government mandates certain levels of fire service, the government would then step into the responsibility and ensure that adequate funding is provided so that municipalities, no matter where they are, can provide that level of fire service. Alas, that is not happening across Ontario, and that is a big part of the problem here.

What has many of us concerned, and it concerns us more and more all the time is that this is very dangerous work, as we all know, maybe some of the most dangerous work people undertake in the province, so we

want to ensure that we take every measure to ensure that the members of fire services are adequately protected in terms of health and safety while they work, but we also want to ensure that a community can depend upon the fire service they're purported to receive.

I want to deal with a historical example, the very serious ice storm in eastern Ontario a few years ago. The city of Kingston has a professional fire service. Many of the rural municipalities surrounding Kingston do not have a professional fire service; they have volunteer services. Many of those surrounding municipalities in fact were using double-hatters. Firefighters who were employed on a full-time basis with the city of Kingston fire service would then work as double-hatters with some of the surrounding municipalities. The ice storm strikes, creates major chaos across eastern Ontario. What does the city of Kingston do and what does the city of Kingston fire service do when faced with a very serious problem—electrical lines down, trees falling down etc? They recall and bring into service all of their trained, professional firefighters: "We've got an emergency situation here. We need you on the job." That was good for the city of Kingston and that was good for the people of city of Kingston, that they were able to assemble all of those professional firefighters to do the work necessary.

But in the context, what happened to the surrounding rural municipalities when suddenly some of those double-hatters that they were depending on weren't available? What happens to the level of their fire service? What happens to the quality of their fire service? What happens to the protection of life, limb and property in those surrounding rural municipalities? To the degree that double-hatters were depended upon to provide the leadership and to provide the direction for volunteers in those surrounding municipal fire services, to what degree was the health and safety of those volunteers who no longer had the double-hatters there—because they had all been recalled by the city of Kingston—compromised?

That I think is a very serious historical issue. And before any government or private member puts forward legislation, I think we would want to have a very thorough examination of the kinds of scenarios that happened in Kingston and the surrounding municipal areas, because if you're purporting that a given rural municipality or small urban municipality is going to have a certain level of fire service by using double-hatters, but then we get a very serious fire in the immediately adjoining urban area and all the double-hatters are recalled and are not available, then really aren't we telling people a bit of a fib in terms of the quality of their fire service? Aren't we putting them at risk?

We're telling them, "Oh, don't worry. You've got a fire service here," but as soon as an emergency happens in the adjoining urban municipality, that fire service in that rural area is suddenly full of all kinds of holes and cracks. Does anybody in this Legislature think that would be acceptable, to tell people, "We believe you've got this level of fire service, but gee, if an emergency does happen in the adjoining urban area and all of the double-

hatters are recalled, I guess you don't really have that quality of fire service"? In fact, not only do you not have that quality, but you don't have the numbers either, and you don't have the expertise. I would think that before anyone here entertains voting for legislation which could be the accomplice to that kind of situation, we'd want to think about it very, very carefully indeed. I believe quite strongly that there ought to be a deeper analysis of what's going on here.

Think about it from another perspective. Imagine if it's a small rural municipality adjoining, say, a city like Toronto or Hamilton or London, and a full-time firefighter who happens to be a double-hatter spends a great deal of time fighting a very serious fire in the urban area, but then immediately, when he or she goes home, is called out to work as a double-hatter because a situation has arisen in the rural municipality. He or she is tired, stressed, quite possibly exhausted from having undertaken the duties which are part of their responsible professional job, but now they're purportedly going to exercise professional judgment or the required statutory judgment in fighting something else. That's a health-and-safety risk to their colleagues, not to mention once again putting the life, security and property of those people in that rural municipality at risk.

#### 2300

Or the reverse example: someone who is a double-hatter is called to a fire situation in a rural community or a small town where they work as a double-hatter and they work for many hours, but then they're called in to an emergency situation where they also work as a full-time professional firefighter. It's a very serious and dangerous situation. What about all of their colleagues who need to depend upon them in that very critical situation? What about all of their colleagues who need to know that they're at the top of their effort, that they're well rested, that they're able to work and to provide a service and can be counted on at a certain level? Isn't that putting their health and safety at risk and potentially putting the lives, the security and the property of citizens who may be depending upon them at risk?

I've heard some of the government members talk about this as freedom, simply a case of freedom. Well, I've been around long enough to know that freedom carries with it some responsibility, and if someone signs on to do a full-time professional job where other people's lives and security are at risk, not to mention the colleagues they work with—their health and safety is at risk—then there is some responsibility that comes along with that job and that undertaking. People, the citizens, have a right to expect that that responsibility will be met, not just some of the time or not just at this level, but all the time and at the appropriate level. That's really what is at stake here. I don't believe we can go around the province and say to people who live in smaller towns or in rural municipalities, "Oh, you're going to get this level of fire service. Don't worry; this level of fire service will be provided, and it will be provided through the utilization of double-hatters," and then see all too often the kind of

situation that happened in Kingston, where because of the severity of the ice storm the double-hatters aren't available and too many people are left with what is in effect a skeleton fire service that cannot provide the level of protection, that cannot provide the level of security and cannot ensure the health and safety, never mind of citizens but of other volunteer firefighters who have to be called into the breach.

This legislation is not going to do anything in terms of protecting or enabling volunteer fire services. It's not going to do anything in terms of protecting or enabling or enhancing composite fire services. And I don't think it's really going to do anything to address the kind of scenario that we saw happening in Kingston or that we could see happening in a number of urban and rural or urban and semi-urban regions around the province. The problem is really much deeper than that.

As the professional firefighters' association has said, they approached the Minister of Public Safety and Security and asked that an independently facilitated task force be established to investigate the impact of two-hatters within fire services, to look at what was the impact in Kingston. Has the government studied that? Did the government look at, for example, how people in those rural areas that suddenly were deprived of a number of the firefighters that they believed they could count on—did the government look at the public reaction, how the public felt? Has the government looked at those scenarios where a firefighter who has a full-time professional job, after working in that job and perhaps answering a fire call, then has to answer in another emergency situation with the volunteer service in very close timeline proximity? These are real issues, and they're real issues that affect people's lives, could essentially be potential life-and-death issues that affect the working health and safety of other firefighters. I would think that the government would want to address this issue very seriously in terms of looking at the actual real-life situations, in terms of looking at the potential conflicts and in terms of looking at how serious some of these outcomes could be. I would think that would be a government responsibility. For a private member to advance a bill without having any of that evidence, without having any of that analysis, I think is really an even more serious problem.

So I know I speak for all of my colleagues here. We cannot and will not support this legislation. There is too much at stake, far too much at stake. A number of issues here need to be thoroughly examined through a task force or through a commission. A number of issues here, after thorough examination, need to be discussed from the perspective of what needs to be provided for smaller towns in semi-rural areas, what level of resourcing, what level of training, what level of expertise. To offer up that somehow allowing double-hatters is the solution to all the issues that need to be addressed, the questions that need to be asked and the scenarios that need to be analyzed is giving very short shrift to, as I say, some very, very serious problems.

So we will be opposing this legislation, we'll be voting against it, and I would urge a number of the colleagues here from the Liberal Party to oppose it as well. I know some members of the Conservative caucus are going to oppose it, again for many of the reasons I've had this opportunity to speak about this evening.

I just want to say a few more words about the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association and the international. We had a number of meetings with representatives of the professional firefighters, who said to us that there is a number of ways this could be approached. If the government simply parked this legislation and brought forward the study and did the kind of analysis that a task force would be prepared to do, that would be a very good step forward. Then there would at least be an opportunity to debate, to discuss the real issues in terms of, how do you best protect the health and safety of firefighters, not just professional firefighters but volunteer firefighters? How do you ensure that not only rural areas that have a full-time professional firefighting service receive the quality of fire protection they need but also that the smaller towns and surrounding rural areas receive adequate protection as well?

That's what the professional firefighters are actually asking for, that instead of what they see as a hot-button, veneered attempt to cover over the issue, there really needs to be that thoughtful analysis, that thoughtful examination. If that thoughtful analysis and examination that could happen through a task force were to occur, then some real solutions and some real possibilities in terms of solutions could be brought forward.

**2310**

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** I have watched most of the debate tonight on this bill, Bill 30, and I have to say from the beginning and the outset that it's a very, very difficult and complex issue. It has been described on each side as being kind of a rural-urban issue, it has been described as an issue of union versus non-union, and it's anything but. In my view, it really is the case—I have to relate it. I think each member here, regardless of which party they're affiliated with, has to represent the needs of their community. I've met with the chiefs, I've met with regular forces in the professional firefighters, some who are at this time double-hatters, some who are opposed, against. Even when I read more recent communications from the current president, Fred LeBlanc, I see that he has wrestled with the issue as well. I have to quote a memo from October 1, 2002.

"Attention all members of the OPFFA re: moratorium on secondary employment charges." Fred goes on to say in the memo:

"I must commend all our affiliates, as collectively we have acted in good faith and with the utmost professionalism.

"Past president Henry Watson, in February of this year, requested that our locals respect a 'moratorium' for any new charges regarding our members who were two-hatters.

"I supported past president Watson's position at that time and carried that same position and request upon my

induction into the presidency of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association (OPFFA).

“We have attempted since February to have serious and thorough discussions on the reliance of two-hatters within Ontario’s fire service with all stakeholders. These discussions were intended to identify how many two-hatters there are, where they are located and if there was a serious threat to public safety upon their withdrawal of service.”

I can’t help but think of small towns throughout Ontario, and most of Ontario is small-town. Clearly it’s no problem in larger urban centres like the cities of Toronto, London, Ottawa, Hamilton, indeed Oshawa in my own area. It’s clear that they have the resources to grow to be a full-time complement, as they should be and as everyone would want. That would not say for one moment that any of the volunteers—I believe they’re mandated to have a certain level of training in safety and rescue and other procedures with respect to the very, very difficult work they do.

I can’t help but think, and I want to put it on the record, that in my riding of Durham, I have part of the city of Oshawa, I have the municipality of Clarington, and I have the township of Scugog; the most prominent city there, of course, is Port Perry. When listening tonight to all sides—very objectively, I might add—I can’t help but say that I think most clearly of the difficult but necessary decisions that Doug Moffatt, the mayor of Scugog, has to make. I can tell you, the town of Port Perry is a beautiful town that has a very large rural area, is what I would say a very assessment-poor community in terms of having any large industry. It’s mainly dependent on small business and on rural farm businesses. I think of Ken Carruthers. I also think of other town councillors. I know personally that one of them is or was a volunteer. I also think of the municipality of Clarington, with Mayor John Mutton; I might say that I was at the council meeting earlier this evening. The regional councillors there of course are Jim Schell and Charlie Trim, and I know they, like me, are concerned that the level of service that we have in our community is very much dependent on volunteers.

I can say to you, without any reliance on input from others, that Bill 30 has caused me a great deal of anguish, because I really believe that at the end of the day it’s about a level of service. In fact, it’s our own government that prescribed certain levels of service. That 10 in 10 issue hasn’t really come up directly, but there are a couple of regulations that we’re responsible for implementing and strengthening the requirement to have 10 people in 10 minutes. That’s the fundamental issue here. The fundamental issue is that fire service is paid from the local tax base.

I think of firefighters, whatever their definition is—professional firefighters, whether they volunteer in their off time or not—as real people. I think of them as my neighbours. So it is a really gut-wrenching kind of decision.

It’s very healthy for us in public office to be forthright with our constituents. I could avoid the discussion totally,

but I think it’s important for us to be honest with the people we try to represent fairly.

I’ve listened to the leader of the third party. I understand that the code name for the NDP is the union government, and I don’t try to describe that as a negative. I think it’s important for people to have rights and protection of those rights.

In this case, I think of the case a lot of speakers have mentioned: September 11 in the United States. Professional firefighters, trained people, were more than anxious to go and try to provide support, volunteer, if you will, because they’re called to it, as one of the speakers said earlier. I believe there is a part of this where by the very nature of risk and reward they are called to it. I really believe there are those who have been in for a few years who may not have that engendered in their character, that they seem to be the first people on the scene, the first people to render support, and I commend them for that.

In any of my remarks, I have nothing but the highest regard for any of those persons who put themselves at risk, who put the community or the individual before themselves. I can’t say enough about that. I think of them very much like my son, who served in the armed forces as a captain on the Sea King helicopters. Much of what he did was volunteering, to the extent that it was duty first. But they put country before self, and in this case firefighters put the community before themselves. So in any of my remarks I would not cast a disparaging remark. I support volunteer firefighters.

The issue here is, what’s volunteer? Is that paid service or does it mean you have “professional training” and you work somewhere else? That’s a very complicated issue.

I want to be on the record as supporting the professional firefighters. I support professional firefighters like Doug Tennant. Doug is in the chamber here. He’s the vice-president of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs. Doug of course is the vice-president to Fred LeBlanc, who is in the same memo that was quoted here earlier from the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association. So I know how they’ve wrestled with it.

I’m quite surprised, actually, when I’ve listened to the speeches all night—in fact, I made a deliberate effort to come back tonight to participate—by the member from Prince Edward-Hastings because, not unlike my own riding, he would have what I would describe, without being disparaging, as an assessment-poor area, by and large, with the exception of maybe Belleville, where they probably would have a full-time fire complement and they would be supplemented by volunteers who have other jobs. That could be anything from working in one of the local companies or indeed working in the capacity of a firefighter in some other community.

I drive this down to real people I’ve met more recently, on the last couple of Fridays, in my constituency office. Graydon Brown is one example of a fellow who has I think 25 or 30 years of service as a captain, a professional firefighter.

*Interjection.*

**Mr O'Toole:** Where does he volunteer? He volunteers in Newcastle; he volunteers in Orono; he volunteers where his neighbours live.

If it's so prescriptive by some constitutional issue with their contract that they can't volunteer, what is that really saying about the whole thrust I described earlier, as these people are drawn to a very high-risk profession and they have the training to help their neighbour? I think it would be dreadful if somehow, politically, we disengaged them from that innate desire to volunteer. If they don't want to volunteer, no one is forcing anyone to volunteer. That contradicts the description of a volunteer.

**2320**

So I would really like to say that I would prefer that we have a negotiated solution. In my area, I know that the call-back issue—I support that as the first response. I know that our mayor of Clarington, John Mutton, has recently put an ad out and put in his budget that he's going to have enough money set aside to train the volunteers who may not have the training that double-hatters would. Obviously they wouldn't have the training. They'd need to have not just CPR and all of the other rescue and jaws of life and all of the things they do, and the training and equipment they need to know how to handle to work effectively as a team, to not put their peers at risk. I support that as a solution.

I would prefer that the association was able to find a negotiated solution. I can only say that this can be voted on as third reading and not be proclaimed law, which would give them time to come forward and remove those parts that are going to disadvantage the current full-time members of their dutiful employment. For members who have been professional firefighters for a number of years, it's a tragedy to think that they would have to give up their profession, let alone work in some irritating way with their peers.

Even in Whitby, in Oshawa and in Clarington, many of the people, I said earlier, from Port Perry—Port Perry's fire service is completely volunteer, and I commend them. Many of them are volunteers who work at other things, but many of them are volunteers who work for York and other areas. Now they're being put at risk because of some—pardon my hard edge here—kind of union language. That's the only problem I have. I think people need protection. The Employment Standards Act and other acts should provide those assurances that people have a balanced relationship with the employer—in this case, it's the municipality. The real employer is the taxpayer.

I have to say that in my riding—it's about 50% rural, 50% urban—I can't think for one moment how they could instantly ramp up to providing a complete full-time fire service. It's my understanding that if it's a 10-people-in-10-minutes rule, that to have 10 full-time positions, you would need, to my understanding, 50 people, because for seven days a week, 24 hours a day at 365 days a year, it takes five people for every full-time position. To man a truck with four on it, do the numbers:

it's \$100,000 for one truck. If it's 10 employees, that's \$500,000, and on the tax base, that's a 5% or 10% tax increase.

*Interjection.*

**Mr O'Toole:** Ask the taxpayers in your community, I would say to the member from Brant. This isn't strictly about that. I think it's clearly a case of providing opportunities first for volunteers and secondly for other people who choose to do it without someone intruding into their personal decision. I believe that they do work hard and in a dangerous environment. I would prefer that at the end of the day, people have free choice without having to be fired. I would prefer that people not be pressured in some way to exercise anything more than their contract of employment requires them to do.

I think that the municipal councils try to match their deployment of resources with the resources available. Again, I think it's unfair to try and characterize this as a comparison between Port Perry and the city of Toronto.

I would like to repeat myself a little bit by saying that it goes back to the very fundamentals of the free spirit, the individual person, with the right, and anything I can do to engage the freedom of the individual is extremely important. I think, Mr Arnott, perhaps this has become probably one of the more difficult issues that most people have dealt with in this House. I don't think there's much pressure on the NDP. Clearly, Wayne Samuelson gives them a call and says, "That's how you vote." But on the Liberal side I know there's a lot of anguish. I know there'll be a bloc vote over there. You mention the word "union," and finished—that's the end of the question.

What we're trying to find is a reasonable solution to a very difficult human problem.

**Mr Parsons:** Then let them find it.

**Mr O'Toole:** Really, I'm surprised as I speak that the member for Prince Edward-Hastings—I'm almost embarrassed for him actually, because I think that if he thought about his community first—that's the people who elected him to speak for them. I think he's being whipped on this vote by Dalton McGuinty. I honestly do. I feel that clearly the people on the other side—I think the member from Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington—a relative of mine in part of her riding, Bancroft, called me on the weekend and said they were just absolutely amazed. This is a fact. I'm trying to give you fair warning to vote with your heart. Vote with the people that sent you here. This is not about voting against firefighters. There's no one in this chamber that would vote against firefighters. I want to bring some reason to the debate. I believe, and do support, that municipalities at the end of the day and the elected councillors who pay the bill are in the best position to make the decision.

**Mr Parsons:** Because you're not paying a penny.

**Mr O'Toole:** The member from Prince Edward-Hastings has absolutely no clue. I listened to him earlier tonight about the training and the commitment to the college. He is actually doing his community a disservice. In fact, for those who are up this late at night, people like James Gilchrist from Peterborough, perhaps,

a fellow I've spoken to recently—I believe that the members on the other side and this side should vote how their communities are trying to send them.

*Interjection.*

**Mr O'Toole:** Yes, Mr Mazzilli would like to have a word, if that's possible, under this rotation.

*Interjections.*

**Mr O'Toole:** Well, they don't want him to have any word because the member from London-Fanshawe is very concerned on this issue, having served as a police officer for some 20 years, I believe, before he came here.

I don't want to leave on a negative note. I believe in the principle of a free vote. I think it's causing many members—and I don't mean it disparagingly—on both sides of the House, with the exception of the NDP; Wayne Samuelson made up their mind for them. I think the key here is, let's have the vote but let's keep in mind that I want the professional firefighters to resolve this issue internally. It's been in their constitution for 20 years. I can't understand for one moment why they are listening to the larger international union, which is trying to make this into an issue.

Give the member for London-Fanshawe a chance to speak. He needs to be on the record. I've got a minute left and I'd be happy to share it with him.

*Interjections.*

**Mr O'Toole:** They won't permit him to speak. They've shut him down, which is something I've been trying to do for years.

I go back to the basics of the right for people to make choices, the right for volunteers to not feel intimidated. I can only say that we need volunteer firefighters in our communities so that we have the level of service that people expect. I know how difficult it is for municipal people to make the decisions, to make sure they have the level of service they need. I don't see this as in any way a political juggernaut on either side, but I do believe a free vote will certainly be an interesting vote. I myself have been anguishing on this because I know people who are concerned about it on both sides of the issue. But I think that at the end of the day I'm voting with my municipality and I'm voting with the people of Ontario. I believe it's the right thing to do—support Mr Arnott—and, Mr Speaker, I think this debate has been beneficial, although it is getting quite late.

**Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell):** I'm pleased to participate in this debate. We wouldn't be debating this bill if someone or some municipal fire department hadn't tried to discriminate toward firemen who try to render service to a rural community. At the present time, we have what we call in the rural sector "mutual aid." If this bill doesn't go through, I'm afraid that the mutual aid will close, that it won't be in operation any more.

Mutual aid was put in place to try and help out municipalities in the rural sector, such as whenever there's a major fire in a neighbouring municipality, firemen from the next municipality would go out and help those people. They would make sure they kept at least two firemen

at the fire stations from which the fire brigades had gone to the next, neighbouring community to help out with a major fire.

**2330**

When I look at this bill, I just can't understand why at the present time we're trying to eliminate those firemen who go out in the rural sector. Most of the time those firemen live in a small rural community. They have a full-time job. In my area, the Ottawa region, Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, I have 10 fire brigades or departments—I am not including the city of Ottawa—that are part of my riding. In most of those municipalities that I approached—I talked to every fire department and they told me, and I have the letters of support here, "Jean-Marc, this bill has to go through; otherwise we will be in deep trouble." Why are they saying this? Because at the present time small rural municipalities cannot afford to have full-time firemen.

I have one letter that comes from the township of North Glengarry: "As mayor of the township of North Glengarry, I strongly urge you, on behalf of council and the entire community, to give your full support to the above-noted legislation." That's Bill 30.

Next I've got the township of Alfred and Plantagenet: "Please be advised that the council of the township of Alfred and Plantagenet, at its meeting held on November 18, adopted resolution number 2002-425 to voice its support of the adoption of Bill 30." That is one.

The next one is the Ontario Small Urban Municipalities Association. They're asking us to support the bill. Then I've got, "I am writing to you in my position as captain of the Kemptville fire department to request your support for Bill 30, the Volunteer Firefighters Employment Protection Act." That's another municipality.

The town of Petawawa, which is not in my riding: "Whereas the town of Petawawa and many small municipalities who cannot afford a full-time professional fire department are the beneficiaries of the expertise and these same professional firefighters are at an affordable cost; and..."

I have many of those letters. At one time, when I was mayor of the town of Rockland and the population was 8,000, the services those firemen were rendering to the community were irreplaceable. I remember one night, New Year's Eve, we couldn't find the problem. Only the firefighters were able to find the problem. Otherwise we would have been in a crisis position.

At the present time, all the municipalities surrounding the city of Ottawa have professional firefighters working full-time in Ottawa. They are the ones who offered us the service. In return, the municipality said, "We need you in our community. You people have got the proper training, training you received while being a permanent firefighter. This could render a lot of service to our community." Also, those firefighters working full-time for the city of Ottawa come down and work in the rural sector. Let's say, if we have a barn fire, then that is experience they would acquire working in the rural sector. Ottawa is the city with the largest number of rural

and agricultural areas, and we need those professional firefighters in those agricultural areas.

When I look at all the notes I received from different fire departments, I can tell you that at the present time, with the downloading we have experienced, there is no way we could afford to have full-time firemen. This is the beginning. By having this bill defeated, it would turn around and say that from now on—I remember when I was the mayor. The fire marshal used to come to my place and say, “Mr Lalonde, I think you need full-time firemen for a population of 8,000.” No, we didn’t need it. We had good, trained professional firefighters as volunteer firefighters.

Do you know how much those volunteer firefighters are getting paid? All they’re getting is \$14 or \$16 an hour. This is reported on their T-4. Those firefighters working full-time very often have a side job, and it’s paid under the table. I’ve seen this many times. When they say it is risky to work for another fire department, let me tell you, when I see a fireman working in Ottawa full-time coming down to spray your lawn with pesticide, isn’t that dangerous for the health of this firefighter?

Also, in most of the small municipalities, most of the time it’s 25 volunteer firefighters; they make sure they have at least 20 of their firefighters working locally. Let’s say there’s a major disaster in Ottawa and they are called in to go and help their colleagues in Ottawa, they would let them go. They still have 20 firemen down there to do the work as firemen. I’ve been trying to find out, when do we get a major disaster in a major municipality that would say that all the firemen, even those off-duty, would be called in? Probably during the ice storm we had to get them all in. But try to tell me when this would happen. We have enough firemen in every fire station to cover off, and even those who are off-duty could be called back in. If one of their firefighters is working in a small rural municipality, let me tell you, they have a professional job to do and they would go and help out their colleagues in Ottawa.

At the present time, how many of them declare sick one morning because they were working on a side job and couldn’t report for their regular duties? That would never happen. The same thing as this gentlemen who came to me: he got a six-month suspension, working for a major company. I asked, “Why were you suspended?” “Well,” he said, “I was scheduled to start at 8 o’clock. I reported I was sick and they caught me working for a mover.” He got a six-month suspension. It should be the same for the firefighters. If you’re not there on your regular duty and you perform other duties in other municipalities, any other type of duties, if you don’t report for your regular shift, you should be disciplined because of not reporting properly.

I can’t believe this Legislative Assembly cannot support this bill. Let me tell you, in my own town, the volunteer firefighters were getting the same benefits as the regular employees. They were part of the union. They were part of the insurance plan. I strongly believe that anyone who is working as a volunteer or as a full-time

firefighter should be covered by health insurance. They should have special coverage because they’re performing firefighter duties. They should also have a pension plan at any time. No matter the number of hours that they’re working, they should be part of a pension plan.

**2340**

While I was the mayor of the town of Rockland for 15 years, I sat on the AMO board of directors for 11 years, nine years of which I was on the municipal development committee. On that committee, we had the services of professionals from the cities of Ottawa and Toronto who could come down and help out the small municipalities. That’s what this bill is saying. The firefighters from major municipalities would be allowed to continue, as they do at the present time, doing some volunteer work in their own communities. It’s because they enjoy living in that community and they want to render a lot of services to the community.

Just to come back to mutual aid, I remember a few years ago, going back probably 10 or 12 years, one fire department from a municipality didn’t want to go to the neighbouring community because they had said that this community had not contributed to mutual aid. But, again, they proved that all municipalities in eastern Ontario should be part of mutual aid because we could not afford to have full-time firemen. Also, by adding this mutual aid agreement, we could expect to receive those services from the neighbouring municipality.

But, again, I will definitely continue supporting this bill. I also have a letter here from AMO. AMO is saying, “These two-hatters, as they are sometimes called, provide leadership and experience to rural and remote communities who rely on their skills and expertise to supplement local departments. Without these skilled and dedicated volunteers, municipalities would be forced to hire new workers with less experience and training. The estimated property tax increase would be in the area of 16% to 20%. We cannot afford this type of increase in our municipal taxes.”

Mr Speaker, going back about three months ago, I read in the Ottawa Citizen that the little village of Osgoode was short of firefighters for a major fire. I don’t know if it is your riding or John Baird’s riding.

**Interjection:** John’s.

**Mr Lalonde:** John Baird’s. When I read this story, immediately I got back to my office I noticed why they could not find enough firemen to respond to the major fire they had within the municipality. It’s because they had some firefighters who were working for the city of Ottawa and they were told that if they were going to give that service as volunteers in their own communities, they would be suspended and probably lose their jobs.

**Hon Mr Klees:** That’s shameful.

**Mr Lalonde:** It’s a real shame, yes.

I’d just like to read the contents of the bill in French:

« Pas de représailles à l’encontre des pompiers volontaires

« 56.1(1) Nulle association de pompiers ne peut prendre de mesures disciplinaires à l’encontre d’un



membre qui est employé contre rémunération dans un service d'incendie au seul motif qu'il travaille également en tant que pompier volontaire.

« (2) Nulle association de pompiers ne peut refuser de représenter une personne qui est employée contre rémunération dans un service d'incendie ou de lui délivrer le statut de membre au seul motif qu'elle travaille également en tant que pompier volontaire.

« Protection des pompiers volontaires

« 56.2 Malgré toute autre disposition de la présente loi ou de toute convention collective, nulle personne ne peut être licenciée de son poste de pompier ou de pompier volontaire parce qu'elle a cessé d'être membre d'une association de pompiers ou d'une unité de négociation, ou que son statut de membre de l'association ou de l'unité de négociation a été suspendu, au seul motif qu'elle travaille en tant que pompier volontaire.

« Protection d'emploi

« 56.1(1) Malgré toute autre disposition de la présente loi ou toute convention collective, nulle association de pompiers ne doit, directement ou indirectement, exiger qu'un employeur prenne une des mesures suivantes pour un motif énoncé au paragraphe (3) :

« 1. Refuser d'employer quiconque en tant que pompier.

« 2. Licencier quiconque en tant que pompier.

« 3. Refuser d'affecter quiconque à la fourniture des services de protection contre les incendies en application de la présente partie. »

This is why at the present time we are debating this bill. We know that there are some municipalities that have told their firefighters, "If you do work as a volunteer firefighter, you are subject to suspension and to disciplinary action. This would mean if that neighbouring municipality needs some additional help, you're not allowed to go. You could let the house burn completely and we won't allow you to go and render that service." I wonder, if the volunteer firefighters were doing it as free, whether the action would be the same.

At the present time, once again, I do believe in a pension plan. I do believe in a union for firefighters. But in this case we are trying to allow volunteer and permanent firefighters to come and help out small communities. Again, I will support this bill.

**Mr Kormos:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Can we have unanimous consent for that same member to have another 20 minutes?

**The Speaker:** There are two up there. The Minister of Northern Development.

*Interjection.*

**Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Northern Development and Mines):** No.

Mr Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity. I know other colleagues wanted to speak—

**Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Since I didn't have any time to speak, I want to make it clear that I will be opposing this bill for many different reasons.

**The Speaker:** I thank the member, but the Minister of Northern Development has the floor.

**Hon Mr Wilson:** I do appreciate the opportunity. I thank the member for London-Fanshawe for allowing me a very few moments to speak.

This is a very important bill for my riding, even with those fire departments that are mixed full-time and part-time, like Wasaga Beach. I was asked by the chief and a number of firefighters on Friday night at a public function in front of a lot of people to support Bill 30. I want to thank Ted Arnott, the member for Waterloo-Wellington, for really a number of months now of hard work in bringing this bill forward. He's been tenacious and he's to be congratulated. No matter what side of the issue you're on, Ted has done a great job in bringing this to this point.

To me the issue is an issue of freedom. I don't think any of us have the right to tell people what to do on their days off. When I first heard of the bill, I didn't know much about the issue, but the fact of the matter is that the principle hit me right away. I didn't take a lot of time deciding this. I think it's the best bill that I've had an opportunity to vote on. It truly shows that I'm a Conservative. I believe in freedom. If firefighters and everyone in this country and province aren't fighting for freedom, I don't know what they're fighting for.

The fact of the matter is that people have to be free to do what they want on their days off. No association, no government, no one should have the right to say what to do outside their normal working conditions. I wouldn't want anyone telling me what to do in my life in that sense, and I don't think others would either. I can't believe that all full-time firefighters who are members of the association now are in any way totally opposed to this bill. Many independent thinkers must see some relief in this bill that the union can't tell them what to do outside their regular working hours.

Firefighters are responsible people. They've been in this practice, in volunteer service or working full-time, in our case in a more urban setting, and then helping out when needed in their communities, helping out with training and fighting the fires and adding a level of expertise to our volunteer forces that is appreciated. It's not always needed, because we have very professional volunteer forces that are well trained, but it is appreciated and they bring an expertise to the table that wouldn't be there in some cases.

**2350**

Recently we opened an extension of the Markdale fire hall. Again, the chief from Durham came over. That's not even in my riding, but he made a special trip to make sure that I was on side with Bill 30. As I've said to them all from the very beginning, "It's not a big problem for me, in that it's a question of freedom, a question of your rights as an individual in this society." At the end of the day, if this bill doesn't pass, I can't believe that this won't be resolved by the courts anyway. I just can't believe any association can tell you what to do. If you've got five days on and five days off, no one can tell you

what to do in those five days off, as long as you are fit and ready for work when you are supposed to be at work and you live up to your collective agreement.

I have a mixed riding, in that I have a full-time fire department in Collingwood, and I've not heard from them on this issue. I've heard from every other municipality in my riding, whether it be Clearview, which is the former township of Nottawasaga, Sunnidale township, Stayner and Creemore. Great pride is taken in Clearview by that fire department. We just opened, a couple of years ago, a new station for them. If you look at Clearview or New Tecumseth—and by the way, the chief of New Tecumseth, which is Alliston, Tottenham, Beeton and the former Tecumseth township, spoke to me on Sunday. He's a fellow I went to high school with, Dan Heydon. He's the only full-time employee, and he was just hired full-time this year; there's a lot of administrative work as chief of New Tecumseth so the municipality hired him full-time. He's already told me that because of this kerfuffle and this nonsense that's going on, he has already lost two or three and could be losing his fourth firefighter, because they're people who work in the city now in their full-time job and then volunteer in Alliston and Tottenham and Tecumseth township and Beeton.

So it's already having an effect, and I hope this bill passes so it will put an end to it. I hope the parties come together too. Obviously there's some healing to do. I hope goodwill comes and that everybody is friends in the end, as we say. But my municipalities, with the exception of Collingwood, have all asked for me to support this bill. I have no problem in doing so.

Our firefighters in rural and small-town Ontario aren't just professional in what they do in fighting fires but are literally the lifeblood of our communities. They run our baseball, our hockey, our soccer—most of our recreational activities. They fundraise for numerous causes. They're there when you need them for all kinds of things, even Remembrance Day. I don't have Legions in some of my small towns, so it's the fire brigade that comes out and provides the parade and marches the colours with great pride. When they march those colours, they're marching for freedom.

Freedom is why I ran for politics. Freedom is why we all should be here. It is why our ancestors and our relatives and our grandparents and our grandfathers died and fought in the wars. Our charter, which was brought in by another party than my own at the federal level, upholds freedom as its most valued principle in society. I think that has to be upheld in everything we do, whether it's in the workplace or our days off. As I said at the beginning, I don't think anybody has the right to tell you what to do.

Everybody has a second job in these days. I mean, there are lots of police officers in my riding—

*Interjections.*

**Mr Arnott:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm about four seats down from the honourable member, my colleague. I can't really hear what he is saying because of

the interjections from the opposition. Could you ask them to behave themselves?

**The Speaker:** Thanks. I appreciate that. The member is sitting very close. I've allowed some leeway. I would ask all members to—

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** Just a second; let me finish up. We'll allow the honourable member to continue.

**Mr Mazzilli:** On a point of order, Speaker: I would ask for unanimous consent to have one minute before turning it back over to the minister.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent to allow the member for London-Fanshawe to speak for one minute? OK. Then it goes back to the minister.

**Mr Mazzilli:** I want to thank all sides for the one minute.

There's a lot more to this issue between volunteers and professionals. The professional firefighters have never opposed volunteers. In fact, this is about part-time firefighters, and we have to understand that. When you belong to a professional association and you've been trained by a professional association, if you get in trouble and there's an inquest, who is going to represent you, the professional association or the volunteer one, with no backup support if you get in trouble? This is the difficulty we have with this kind of system.

I suggest that the municipalities in difficulty get together with the municipalities with professional firefighters and have hire-on rates, like police officers, where you hire on, through that municipality, the professional firefighters, and they are covered both through—

**The Speaker:** The member's time is up. The Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

**Mr Bisson:** Mr Speaker, on a point of order: It's rather sad, but I'd like to move unanimous consent to give Frank another two minutes. I know he had other things he wanted to say. He's been trying to get into this debate. Unfortunately, his members have not allowed him to speak.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent? No. The Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

**Hon Mr Wilson:** I said no this time, Mr Speaker, because I would like an opportunity to speak myself. I'm a member of this Legislature too. As a minister, frankly, we don't get to speak out that often, and this is a wonderful opportunity to put something on the record that I strongly believe in. These guys get to speak all the time.

I will say to the member from London-Fanshawe that I'm sure the associations do a great job for their members. They are there to back them up, as is the police association, of which he was a former member, and that's great. Again, I don't think they have the right—they have to earn the right, if anything—to do that in our areas, where the association isn't prevalent now. Our firefighters are fully backed up by their municipalities. We went through that last year or the year before with an adjustment we had to make to one of our workers' compensation bills. We sat down with our firefighters and

learned—I knew, because I've been around so long—that the municipalities back them up.

All I can say is that I haven't had firefighters come to me in my riding over the years saying they don't like the relationship with the municipality. They obviously have confidence in the people they work with and the people who try and provide them with the resources to do their job.

Our communities simply aren't going to survive without these people, and we should be upholding them. Causes like muscular dystrophy—

**Interjection:** Oh, come on.

**Hon Mr Wilson:** Well, if you live in my community, as I said, even on Remembrance Day parades have to be done by the firefighters, and they do it joyfully. They never complain. They don't come running to their MPPs about every little issue they have. They are professionals, professional in their daily lives. And you're damn glad to see them: there have been a lot of fires in my farm area, in my farm family, over the years and you're damn glad to see them when they show up. We should support them every step of the way and we should allow them to do what they want to do.

**Mr Kormos:** Mr Speaker, on a point of order: Children down in my constituency are watching this. Can he please watch his language?

**The Speaker:** I thank the member for his help. The Minister of Northern Development and Mines, please.

**Hon Mr Wilson:** I'm going nowhere fast here, at 12 o'clock at night. I appreciate the opportunity and I appreciate the hard work the member for Waterloo-Wellington has done. I hope members spend the next few hours not just sleeping but thinking about this issue, thinking about the fact that it is freedom and about the fact that—

**Mr Kormos:** Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I would like to draw your attention to the fact that it is 12 of the clock.

**The Speaker:** It isn't quite. We go by that watch. I'm a little bit ahead. It is not quite 12 o'clock.

**Mr Bisson:** Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I would like to draw the attention of the House to the great number of people in the gallery today.

**The Speaker:** Don't waste our time doing that. The Minister of Northern Development and Mines has the floor.

**Hon Mr Wilson:** It's just getting rude, is what it is.

**Mr Kormos:** I apologize.

**Hon Mr Wilson:** Thank you very much. Mr Speaker, it being 12 of the clock, I adjourn the debate.

**The Speaker:** This House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

*The House adjourned at 2400.*

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