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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 15 June 2004

Mardi 15 juin 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 15 June 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 15 juin 2004

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AND
BUSINESS SERVICES STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE MINISTÈRE
DES SERVICES AUX CONSOMMATEURS
ET AUX ENTREPRISES

Mr Watson moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 70, An Act to amend various Acts administered by or affecting the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services / Projet de loi 70, Loi modifiant diverses lois appliquées par ou touchant le ministère des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): I recognize the minister of consumer and commercial relations.

Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): Thank you. I'm pleased to speak to second reading of Bill 70. I'm privileged to share my time today with the member for Mississauga West, the member for London-Fanshawe, the member for Thornhill and the member for York West.

This proposed legislation delivers on the McGuinty government's commitment to real, positive change that will give Ontarians the highest quality of life in North America. If passed, it will help to make Ontarians safer in their homes and communities by increasing the consumer protections they rely upon, while encouraging business to prosper. Bill 70 will also enhance electrical safety in the province of Ontario.

Je crois que tous les membres de cette assemblée sont désormais au courant que l'une des principales raisons pour lesquelles la Loi de 2004 modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne le ministère des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises est présentée est d'accélérer l'entrée en vigueur de la Loi de 2002 sur la protection du consommateur.

If the bill before you is passed, all members of the assembly may be assured that the regulations the government is striving to complete would increase protection in areas of concern to all consumers.

Over the past several months, the ministry has been working to develop regulations for the Consumer Protection Act, 2002, and the three related sector statutes:

the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act, the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act and the Travel Industry Act.

Working in partnership with stakeholders, which our ministry has a very good record of doing in consulting, the ministry has developed proposed regulations that we believe will address the ever-changing needs of the 21st-century marketplace. These proposed regulations are both fair to consumers and businesses alike and are practical to enforce. The ministry is privileged to have stakeholders who care deeply about today's important consumer protection issues, and of course the ministry listens closely to their viewpoints.

For example, draft regulations for the Consumer Protection Act were released to the public and stakeholders for review in 2003. In order to obtain maximum stakeholder input, these draft regulations were posted on the ministry's Web site. Since then, close to 6,000 consumers, businesses and organizations have viewed the draft regulations via the Internet. This represents more than 40 organizations, and the ministry received submissions from most of them. They included groups as diverse as banking associations, consumer advocacy groups, local home inspector associations and direct marketing organizations.

Issues of stakeholder interest run the range from credit and leasing to how long consumers should have to cancel an agreement with, say, a fitness club. On the topic of leasing, one stakeholder group pointed out that the draft regulations would not provide the same number of remedies to consumers who lease as would be available for consumers who buy on credit. One might have expected that this point would have been raised by a consumer advocacy group, but in fact it was pointed out by the leasing industry itself. We have acted on this observation.

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Additional suggestions have come from the minister's Consumer Advisory Council, which met on March 10, 2004. This is a group of men and women from across the province that meets with me and ministry officials to discuss current and future issues in the marketplace.

I'd like to offer just one example of their valuable input on proposed regulations to the Consumer Protection Act. One of the most valuable recommendations received from the council was the need to educate consumers on what action they can take when a business fails to meet its obligations. New ways to inform and educate consumers are always important to me and to our ministry. I want to thank very much the council, who do all of their work on a voluntary basis.

More recently, the ministry released draft regulations for the Travel Industry Act, 2002, for public and business consideration and input. Some of these draft regulations are important for religious organizations, amateur sports teams and cultural groups that may wish to plan trips for their members. If the Travel Industry Act, 2002, comes into force, a proposed regulation would offer an exemption for such groups. This exemption would give these groups the opportunity to serve as non-profit travel agents for overland trips without the burden of being registered travel agents. We all have groups that we know that take advantage of these kinds of trips. We're trying to make it as easy and as unbureaucratic as possible.

The draft regulations also propose to set new standards for travel agents' trust accounts and for the funds contributed to Ontario's travel industry compensation fund. Consultation sessions with travel professionals to discuss the draft regulations were organized by the Travel Industry Council of Ontario, also known as TICO, which regulates travel agents and wholesalers in Ontario on behalf of the government.

Travel agents represent a large range of small, medium and large organizations. It is these travel agents who help customers choose and book travel services, including services that come from airlines and cruise lines, known in the industry as end suppliers. Airlines and cruise lines are not under provincial jurisdiction. With the assistance of the Travel Industry Council of Ontario, the issue of end supplier failure was raised.

Since September 11, 2001, Ontario's travel industry has suffered a number of significant setbacks. Decreased consumer travel due to such things as SARS and the impact of Canada 3000's bankruptcy have affected the profit picture of many agencies.

As part of the bill before this Legislature, the government would narrow the liability for travel agents and wholesalers for airline and cruise line failures. They would not be liable for amounts in excess of those provided by the industry compensation fund. Travel agents all pay into the compensation fund. It affords consumers protection of up to \$5,000 per traveller, or \$5 million total, if a cruise line or airline fails. At present, Ontario is alone among Canadian provinces in imposing liability on travel agencies that have paid for the services they have booked for their customers beyond the limit of the compensation fund.

Although the travel agency has already fulfilled its obligation, if the service is not delivered, the consumer can return to the agency for compensation. The amendment bill would remove this obligation from the industry, protecting the small operator that would otherwise be forced into bankruptcy. At the same time, and this is important to realize, the proposed regulations retain the consumer protection of up to \$5,000 per traveller that is available through the compensation fund.

Michael Pepper, who is the registrar and CEO of the council, says, "This change to section 25(2) of the Travel Industry Act, 2002, which eliminates the overflow

liability placed on registrants who have fulfilled their obligations to their clients, is welcome news to Ontario's 3,000 travel registrants. TICO applauds the government for putting forward this legislative change."

To return to the ministry's work on regulations for a moment, one area in which the ministry has been working to develop draft regulations would result in the modernization of the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002, or REBBA, as it is more commonly known.

On April 30, a draft regulation on the parts of the legislation dealing with a professional code of ethics was distributed to known stakeholders and made available on the ministry's Web site.

The code of ethics is a critical tool to ensure high ethical standards and professional conduct throughout the real estate sales sector in Ontario. In May of this year, a proposed regulation dealing with registration and other matters was distributed. We have one of the greatest real estate agents in the province of Ontario sitting next to me here, the honourable member from Hamilton West, who knows all about the good work that our ministry is doing and the work that REBBA is doing. The ministry did release regulations in two segments, in the interests of obtaining stakeholder responses as quickly as possible, without waiting for all the draft regulations to be complete. Ministry staff will welcome discussions, suggestions and recommendations until the end of this month.

As well as working toward the completion of proposed regulations, the government is introducing some new advantages for consumers and businesses regarding real estate sales through Bill 70. For example, under this bill, the Real Estate Council of Ontario, or RECO, as it is known, which regulates the sector on behalf of the government, could work together with community colleges and other organizations to develop the top-notch specialty training that professionals in the sector need in today's marketplace. Bill 70 also includes a provision to make it clear that action taken by RECO to freeze assets can be taken not only against registrants but against individuals who should be registered but who are not. Board chair Kenneth Hajas says, "The Real Estate Council of Ontario is particularly pleased the government is increasing its ability to protect public monies when individuals and businesses trade in real estate in contravention of the act."

Many other areas that protect consumers are included in Bill 70. For example, another clarification contained in the bill would benefit consumers who have difficulty understanding the process by which information is held in their credit files. It would set out clearly in the legislation how long information about consumer credit can remain on consumer reports held by credit reporting agencies. The amendment bill would also provide for proposals to implement a province-wide licensing system for electrical contractors and electricians. This would allow electrical contractors to work in any part of the province, instead of being excluded from contracts because of the current patchwork of local licensing requirements that does not permit them to participate.

Under the current system, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities administers the apprenticeship program for electricians. It's an excellent program, and I commend Minister Chambers for the work that she and her ministry have done. However, once the formal apprenticeship is complete, renewal of a worker's certificate is not linked to knowledge of current safety standards. At one time, this was not a serious consideration. Electrical equipment and processes did not change quickly, so knowledge learned at the age of 20 was largely appropriate to the workplace throughout an electrician's career. Today, as we all know, technology and safety standard changes take place at a rapidly increasing rate.

De nouveaux équipements, de nouvelles méthodes de travail plus sécuritaires et de nouvelles normes techniques ont modifié les compétences que les ouvriers en électricité doivent posséder pour assurer leur propre sécurité et celle de leurs clients.

How would the government propose to develop a modern, consistent and efficient, province-wide electrical safety system? I'm sure many of the members are asking that same question day in and day out. A uniform licensing framework would be proposed for electrical contractors, master electricians and electricians with the new standards set out in regulations.

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): The people of Peterborough ask that question every day.

Mr Watson: Absolutely. The good people of Peterborough were asking their member, probably the finest member from Peterborough this century. Just remember I said "this century"—and perhaps last century.

Uniform standards are important in Ontario, where at present approximately 70 municipalities license contractors based on unique local standards and many do not license them at all. The Electrical Safety Authority, or ESA, as it is commonly known, would agree to undertake this ambitious electrical safety plan for Ontario. The ESA currently supports the government in administering public electrical safety through a program of public awareness and the inspection of electrical installations. ESA's efforts to preserve public electrical safety represent an important contribution to the work of the government.

To help inform and educate the people of Ontario about electrical safety, the ESA has developed a special consumer-friendly Web site. ESAsafe.com shows consumers how they can make a difference in ensuring the safety of their homes and their families. It offers some basic electrical safety tips and advises consumers to research electrical projects before they start, and to arrange electrical inspections if they're concerned about their home's electrical system.

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Also, the ESA works closely with the fire marshal's office and the coroner's office to produce an annual Electrical Safety in Ontario report. That report reinforces the ongoing need to take precautions when dealing with electrical installations.

ESA also works as chair of an alliance among members of the electrical industry dedicated to increasing public safety by coordinating annual information campaigns.

I want to point out that another great supporter of this provision of the bill is the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. We're delighted to have the president of the IBEW, Robert Gullins, in the gallery today and we thank Mr Gullins very much. This is obviously not just about business, it's about the workers, and the IBEW is certainly very interested in safety for their own workers and safety for consumers. Mr Gullins, thank you for taking the time to be with us today.

Si le projet de loi 70 est adopté, le gouvernement prévoit élaborer des règlements qui permettront de réaliser d'ici cinq ans cet ambitieux projet d'octroi de permis à l'échelle provinciale.

This amendment bill would also help the government implement harmonization agreements that would help Ontario businesses that operate across Canada by providing national standards in specific areas, including Internet sales agreements and cost of credit disclosure. This approach would harmonize with the systems being adopted by other provinces.

Finally, the amendment bill would introduce various housekeeping changes. Some would simplify government processes or eliminate requirements that are unnecessary burdens on businesses. Others would clarify existing provisions, correct simple errors or repeal provisions that have become outdated or unnecessary.

One example that comes to mind is a requirement that corporations provide written information to certain parties when directors resign. The same information is required to be published in another section of the legislation, so the redundant section of this bill would be removed under Bill 70.

In summary, Bill 70 would achieve the four key objectives it sets out to accomplish: It would strengthen consumer protection; electrical safety standards would be enhanced; it would harmonize laws and standards, serving to encourage business success and protect consumers in a consistent manner; and this bill would accomplish a number of housekeeping changes.

I hope that all members of the assembly will support Bill 70. I know from the comments I heard from the honourable member for Leeds-Grenville that his party is in support of this. I want to thank my predecessor, the honourable member for Erie-Lincoln, for the work he did when he was Minister of Consumer and Business Services.

This is a good piece of legislation that is going to benefit consumers and businesses alike. It's something I'm very proud of, and I wanted to take this opportunity to thank the staff at the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services who have worked very hard in consulting our stakeholders. As I mentioned earlier, we have literally hundreds of stakeholders, in fact thousands of people, who went to the Web site to view the various draft regulations. It's a ministry staff that I think we in

this chamber can all be proud of. They reach out, they consult, and they're not afraid to make changes when it's in the best interests of the public. I salute those men and women at consumer and business services, as I do the stakeholders, the volunteers, the association people and the union representatives who have worked hand in hand with this government to ensure that this bill sees the light of day.

It's my hope that we are able to pass this piece of legislation before the end of June, for the simple reason that the industry, business and labour are very much in agreement. They'd like to see the legislation passed. I know the member from Leeds-Grenville will be cooperative, as will the member from Niagara, as he usually is in this place, and I look forward to hearing their comments. I know they want to keep these remarks relatively brief because there's another major event on television tonight. We might lose some of our ratings if we don't finish too early here. We want to see how well the Prime Minister does in the debate. With those remarks, I thank the House for their consideration and I cede the floor to the member for Mississauga West.

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): A number of years ago, I played hockey with a group of guys, some of whom were commercial lawyers. They had a jersey for their firm team that some of them wore to our pickup games. Its logo was their business unit slogan: "Dull but profitable."

Bill 70 is similar in its implications and its scope. It touches many aspects of doing business for tradespeople in Ontario. It helps strengthen consumer protection. It deals with enhanced standards, harmonization of laws and standards, doing things in a consistent manner, and it accomplishes what are in business called "housekeeping changes."

No one speaker, or even a half a dozen, will be able to cover and explain the scope of this bill in just a few minutes. I'd like to speak to and explain a few of its key proposals. Rather than do an overview, I'll focus on just a few key points of Bill 70.

For most people, the minutiae of how electrical contractors, electricians and master electricians are licensed and the dense print that describes it is an even more effective non-prescription sedative than rereading some of my old trade magazine articles on high-tech marketing. However, because dull really is profitable, the dense print in these statutes and the regulations that govern how much it costs to get a home built and how much it costs to renovate your office are truly that important. The impact of these changes is the driving force behind the 80 proposals for changes to 24 of the 66 statutes administered by the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services.

Let me discuss electrical safety. Bill 70 closes some significant gaps in the current licensing system for the electrical sector. Proposed amendments to the Electricity Act will enable the government to develop an Ontario-wide licensing system for contractors in the compulsory electrical trades. What this means to you, as a tradesman

or a journeyman, is that with a single licence, you'll be able to work anywhere in Ontario. In contrast, five different organizations currently share part of the responsibility for licensing 4,500 electrical contractors and some 50,000 electricians in Ontario. Grouped together, this legislation affects enough people to make a medium-sized Ontario city.

About 70 municipalities license electrical contractors, based on unique and often different local standards. Some Ontario municipalities do not license electrical contractors at all, and licensing standards can vary widely from one town to the next. If you are either a young electrician or a contractor trying expand your business, you'd look at the tangled and possibly contradictory maze of regulations and say, "This just doesn't make any sense."

Your government agrees with you, and it's going to fix the situation. Soon, you will be able to work anywhere in Ontario, and the experience, certificates and qualifications that you obtained in one part of Ontario will be recognized by an employer in another part of Ontario. Similarly, as an employer, you'll have a level playing field when assessing prospective employees, as the qualifications earned by an applicant in one part of Ontario will be qualifications that make sense to you in another part of Ontario.

Currently, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities administers the apprenticeship program for electricians. Following adoption of this bill, the Electrical Safety Authority will provide a uniform provincial licensing system and will license electrical contractors, master electricians and electricians. This is a critical change.

Let me explain the need from a personal experience. Late one night a few years ago, I heard fire engine sirens on my street. The neighbour's house on the corner was on fire, and his entire roof was ablaze. The neighbour and his family were not home at the time. The fire had started due to an electrical fault, when wiring that was not up to code had been installed during a renovation. The problem had lain dormant for more than a year. Had one of the teenagers on the street not been coming home late at night, smelled the smoke, spotted the fire and called the fire department, our neighbour would have lost his home and everything in it.

Good standards and the uniform application of good standards, especially in electrical work, is not just good business; it saves lives and life-long possessions. Though the damage to the house was extensive, much of my neighbour's property was saved.

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Just as in information technology, the pace of change in electrical work is rapid. The workers who install and maintain electrical wiring and fixtures, just like the people who write your software and install your computer hardware, need to stay current with the latest technology. Just because you've always done it that way doesn't mean to say there isn't a better way or a safer way.

The solution is ongoing training to keep the skills and the practices of even the best master electrician up to

date. Accreditation, whether in the professions or the trades, is a great chance to step outside your accustomed role and your familiar daily routine—to think not about what you're doing, but how you do it and why you do it the way you do it.

If you're watching this, and if you're an IT professional, a lawyer or an accountant, you know how valuable ongoing professional development is. If you're an electrician, you're soon going to benefit from clear, consistent, portable training in the same beneficial career way that other trades and professions do.

If passed, the bill gives the Electrical Safety Authority, or ESA, the authority to license, register and certify electrical contractors, master electricians and electricians. The ESA will develop a plan to bring province-wide licensing and training into force, something they lack the authority to do now.

This is a five-year plan. It will begin with electrical contractors in areas where they are currently licensed in the first year of the project. As a contractor, you'll find fair and equitable "grandfather" provisions if you don't immediately meet the licensing standards. You'll be eligible for a provisional licence while you fulfill the master electrician requirements.

Once the proposed amendments are in force, you'll be able to call a toll-free line for information as the program is phased in across Ontario. Consumers will be able to verify whether a contractor anywhere in Ontario is licensed. It's going to raise standards of excellence. It's going to maintain a level playing field, especially for contractors whose business practices are solid and who invest in their employees' skills. Small wonder then that this plan has the solid support of professionals, labour organizations and businesses all across Ontario.

This bill is about good, healthy, fair competition in business. It's about progressive, modern standards that protect Ontarians. It has many more facets than I have discussed here and I look to my colleagues to bring out other aspects during further debate.

Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I will be speaking in support of Bill 70. Bill 70 has four key objectives: (1) It will strengthen consumer protection; (2) electrical safety standards will be enhanced; (3) it will harmonize laws and standards, serving to encourage business success—

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): Who gave you that tie?

Mr Racco: May I speak for the people, please? Thank you—and protect consumers in a consistent manner; and (4) will accomplish a number of housekeeping changes that potentially—

Interjections.

Mr Racco: If both the PC and NDP members will allow me to speak on behalf of my people—that's why we are here. Speaker, you may wish to talk to these two gentlemen, so I can continue my discussion. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Thornhill, would you please take your seat.

Mr Racco: I'm trying to—

The Acting Speaker: Would you please take your seat?

I would ask all members of the House to allow the member for Thornhill to make his presentation to the House.

Mr Racco: Thank you, Speaker. I'm sorry; I couldn't hear what you were saying.

It will allow the government to create a new system of licensing and training for electrical contractors and electricians. It will also lead to the creation of a new appeal process to help ensure the system is fair. It will help to create a more level playing field and discourage the underground economy. It would weed out unfair competition from unqualified contractors who work underground without proper apprenticeship, training and experience.

Under the consumer protection initiatives, the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services, MCBS, administers 66 statutes that cover the most important and fundamental consumer and business practices. MCBS is involved in some other major outreach initiatives as well, and the ministry launches an identity theft campaign, a large project that involves financial institutions and law enforcement agencies. The result is a new publication on how to avoid identity theft, in the hands of more than 100,000 consumers. Most importantly, this will protect the consumer.

Under film classification, the proposed amendments to the Theatres Act, if passed, will enable the Ontario Film Review Board, OFRB, to adapt the classifications and ratings of films determined by other organizations.

The amendments would help business by improving efficiency for film distributors and help consumers make an informed choice, a choice that parents and taxpayers in Thornhill, and Ontario, have been asking for, an informed choice that will allow a taxpayer to choose based on a person's wants and needs.

The amendments will also give the government the legislative authority to ensure that video games are classified and labelled for age appropriateness. Again, it's something that consumer and professional groups have been asking for.

It will also help consumers in the travel industry, as has been said earlier. Passage of these proposed amendments as soon as possible would no longer impose liability on travel agents in the event of an airline failure. However, as the federal government holds the regulatory responsibility for airlines, Ottawa must provide a leadership role with respect to air carrier failures. Ontario encourages provincial and federal governments to develop a strategy to address consumer protection in ways that are fairer than imposing airline or cruise line liability on individual travel agents.

Under housekeeping amendments, there are 24 technical and housekeeping amendments that have been proposed to simplify government processes, to eliminate requirements that are an unnecessary burden on business, to clarify existing provisions, to correct errors and repeal outdated or unnecessary provisions. For example, one

change would eliminate the requirement for publication of a material correction to a corporation's articles in the Ontario Gazette under the Business Corporations Act. MCBS now electronically updates the public database and reflects those changes, and the public has immediate access to this information.

For electrical safety standards—and I'm pleased that the union leader is here tonight—most importantly in my area, Thornhill has many electrical contractors that operate from my riding. They will be happy about this bill and so will, potentially, the member from Hamilton. This bill would enable improvements in public safety, allowing the government to close significant gaps in the current licensing system for the electrical sector.

They will support Ontario businesses by allowing them to work anywhere in the province with a single licence, which is not the case presently. In fact, five different organizations share some part of the responsibility for licensing the 4,500 electrical contractors and 50,000 electricians in Ontario. Approximately 70 municipalities license contractors based on unique local standards, and some do not licence contractors at all. Licensing standards can vary greatly from one town to the next.

If the bill is passed, the Electrical Safety Authority would be given the legislative authority to licence, register and certify electrical contractors, master electricians and electricians. Under the plan, ESA would grandfather contractors who do not meet the new licensing standards through provisional licences and allow them the time to fulfill the requirements.

The government plans to develop details over the licence standards in regulation, in consultation with stakeholders. This proposal has the support of industry stakeholders, including professional labour and business, such as the electrical unions, the Electrical Contractors Association of Ontario, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers in Ontario, the Electrical Safety Authority and the Ontario Electrical League, among a number of them, and certainly in my area, A-1 Service Group and Canada Electric Ltd from Concord.

There is also the Real Estate Council of Ontario, the Ontario Motor Vehicle Industry Council—

Interjection.

Mr Racco: Speaker, I hope you can hear me, since the member from Hamilton insists on talking while I am speaking, which I find to be very offensive. Nonetheless, I hope that the NDP will be able to support this bill so that we can do what's necessary, not only in the ethical electrical contracting industry, but in all the other changes that we are proposing.

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Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): As always, I'm honoured to stand up in this place to speak on behalf of my constituents of London-Fanshawe, just like the honourable member from Thornhill speaking on behalf of his constituents.

I listened to the Minister of Consumer and Business Services for his detail about the bill and how the bill

would benefit the people of this province. From my experience, that's what I heard from the member from Mississauga West when he was talking about his personal experience, about his neighbour whose house caught on fire due to an improper or unsafe wiring system done by one of the electricians.

I believe that this bill, if passed, would help all the people in this province and also would fulfill another commitment our government promised to do before the election. When I went through this bill and the issues and elements it speaks about, I was very impressed when it started talking about safety and how we can license the electricians across this province.

At the present time, we have 70 different municipalities licensing across this province. Every city has different standards. Sometimes when a person is licensed in one city or town, he cannot use his profession in other towns and cities, which makes it difficult for the people who work hard to earn that licence and are not certified when they try to use it in another city, which can create some kind of division of the standards across this province.

This initiative from the minister is a great step toward unifying the licensing across this province. The minister and the ministry, I believe, are not going to give one licence across the province without consultation with the stakeholders and also working in conjunction with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities in order to give the licence—a proper licence—and put the proper standard that everyone wants to adopt so that that profession will be trained well and, when they're given a licence, he can practise his profession anywhere in this province, and do what's right, not only for the sake of the electricians or the profession, but also for the safety of the people of this province.

When I listened to my colleague from Mississauga West, I was very impressed, because this example would apply in every spot in this province. If we start allowing people without licences, without proper training, to start using the professions it will cost a safe environment and a safe community. I think this initiative is great for the protection of the people of this province.

Another very important thing I went through talked about the protection act for the consumers, the consumer protection initiative. So many people in this province are consumers looking for protection. We don't want to leave the whole trade open to anyone for fraud, for theft. I know a lot of people come to this land and they don't know what the regulations are, how to deal with a company, how to deal with contractors, how to deal with any consumer or any business in this province. This act will strengthen safety and make sure all the consumers are protected and looked after by the government and the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services.

Another important point the minister brought to the table which I think is very important is working with the two levels of government, the provincial and the federal. With much of the licensing, people and professionals can use their professions in this province, but when they

move to different provinces, they cannot use their profession. Hopefully, this bill will be a good step to open negotiations between all the provinces across this country to have unified professions. Everyone in this province, everyone who has worked hard in their lifetime will be able to use their profession somewhere else, outside this province.

Another important step that this bill will justify and will help is film classification, which put a lot of burden, a lot of regulation, on this industry. Leave it open, without regulation. I believe we owe the people of this province some kind of protection, some kind of attention by serving the consumer or customer with clear service by providing or forcing the film industry to label the film, detailing what it includes. So many people don't know what a film includes or what it's all about. I think that in order to work and protect our generation, we have to be honest and sincere. We have to be open. We have to be clear about the service we supply to the people of this province.

Also, a very important thing, especially for the tourism industry in this country, is that after September 11, many regulations or rules were imposed on the travel agencies across the province. The minister mentioned liability, where a small company has to provide about \$5 million in order to conduct business. I think that number is too great. It's too big, and some small companies cannot absorb it. This will force a lot of small companies to go bankrupt. Therefore, this bill will eliminate this point and give small companies a chance to conduct business. In other ways, it will help the tourism industry in this province to grow and prosper.

This bill also gives a lot of details about other aspects: housekeeping, the services in this province, how we can provide it without duplicating the service, without asking too much of the companies in order to conduct business. I think by working together, the ministry in this province and the federal government can eliminate a lot of rules and regulations. We can invent ways to eliminate all this duplication in services and the burden put on the industry, which will allow them to do a good business, make profits and then expand across this province.

Further, I hope that from this debate all the members of this House, both sides, all parties, will support this bill. I cannot see, from reading this bill, any element that may contradict any of the party philosophies in this House. I'm looking forward to the NDP and the Conservatives coming forward to support this bill, so that we may keep having a prosperous province, open more businesses and create a safer environment and protections for the consumers and the people of this province.

I'm looking forward to hearing a lot of input and ideas from the NDP and the Conservatives on this bill, in order to enhance and go forward with a better future with this government for the people of this province.

I thank you, Minister, for allowing me to speak on this bill.

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Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I'm very pleased to rise today in support of Bill 70 and to conclude the gov-

ernment portion of this debate. But just in case, I would like to share some of my time, if time permits, with the member from Scarborough Southwest.

Just to continue debate on the bill that has been introduced by Minister Watson, I would like to congratulate the Minister for Consumer and Business Services on introducing his first bill to this House, to this assembly. It is an important piece of legislation that I know the minister is eager to move very much forward. He's looking for and asking for the support of this House today.

I'm also very pleased to speak about this bill, which would benefit the people of Ontario in the area of electrical safety. As Minister Watson noted earlier, passage of Bill 70 would provide Mr McGuinty's government with an opportunity to improve electrical safety for the citizens of Ontario. It would allow the government to create a new system of licensing for electrical contractors and electricians as well. This legislation would also make it possible to develop a strong new enforcement process. It would also lead to the creation of a new appeals process to help ensure that the system is, in fact, fair.

As you have heard, under Bill 70 the government would create a province-wide licensing system for contractors and electricians. If the electrical safety program proposed by the government were in place, consumers could have more confidence that work gets done by qualified contractors. The opportunity also exists to improve electricians' access to state-of-the-art training. All this would be made possible through Bill 70.

Ontario's trained electrical workers are already very highly skilled.

I'm pleased to welcome and introduce to the House the support of Mr Robert Gullins, president of Local 353 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, who is here to follow the progress of Bill 70 as it moves through the process in the House. I would like to welcome Mr Gullins as well.

Mr Gullins wanted me to acknowledge that Bill 70 would enhance the level of electrical worker safety and competency in Ontario. His 37 years in the electrical trade made it quite clear that much has changed over the years. An electrical worker today has to be equipped with extensive knowledge in order to install the more complex systems that the world offers today.

We all note that our economy relies increasingly on automated systems and computer technology. This makes the consumer's life much simpler. But few of us stop to think of the ever-growing demand for increasing technical skills needed to support the 21st-century marketplace. The knowledge and technical skills needed by workers will continue to grow in the future, and Ontario's electrical professionals must meet the challenges.

Also, despite the fact that the skilled contractors and electricians of Ontario are highly qualified, when it comes to safety, you must be ever vigilant. Province-wide licensing would help encourage contractors, electricians and master electricians to keep up with new developments in electrical safety.

It would also permit contractors to work anywhere in Ontario. As it is now, standards for electrical contractors'

licensing differ from one municipality to another. If Bill 70 is passed and province-wide contractor licensing comes into force, the Electrical Safety Authority—or ESA, as it is known—would work together with contractors in all areas of the province to make sure that the system is effective and fair. This would also include the many electrical contractors and municipalities where business licences have never been required. Rules for the new licensing system would be set in our regulations.

Bill 70 would help honest electrical businesses prosper by letting them work anywhere in the province, using just one uniform license. Now, they often need separate licences to work in jurisdictions that may be across the street from one another.

It would also offer another advantage: If Bill 70 were to be passed—and I'm sure that it will—it would help to create a more level playing field and discourage the underground economy. It would indeed weed out unfair competition from unqualified contractors who work underground without the proper apprenticeship, training and experience. If all qualified contractors were licensed, those who tell consumers they are qualified would be able to prove it. Consumers could ask to see their licences.

The changes proposed to the Electricity Act, 1998, under Bill 70 would help to better protect the public and workers by improving electrical safety. This would cut administrative costs for contractors and allow them to compete for jobs anywhere in Ontario. They would help deliver on the McGuinty government's commitment to real, positive change that will give Ontarians the highest quality of life in North America.

To develop the program necessary to bring about these changes, ESA would work closely with the government and stakeholders. ESA is the agency that now inspects and approves electrical designs and equipment in Ontario, so that people will know if their homes are indeed safe. ESA does an excellent job of inspections, and anyone who has concerns about the safety of their home electrical system can call ESA to arrange for an inspection. In addition to its inspection work, ESA offers public information and services to help people protect themselves against potential shock and fire hazards. ESA wants people to know that they can make a difference in keeping their homes and family safe as well.

To help keep safe, ESA advises consumers to follow certain basic safety tips. These include simple things such as checking frayed electrical cords and overloaded outlets often. Also, consumers should do some research before hiring workers for electrical projects around the home. And consumers should arrange with ESA for electrical inspections if they have concerns about their home systems.

The government also wants people to know about all the information ESA makes available, both for adults and to teach children about electrical safety. For example, ESA Safety Flash notices warned consumers about the possible dangers of portable generators during last summer's power outage. Also, ESA publishes recall

notices on unsafe electrical products that range from industrial equipment to laser printers, from ceiling fans to coffeemakers. These are distributed to Ontario media and posted on ESA's Web site. Safety tips for children are offered by the ESA mascot, in posters that feature Buddy the Jack Russell terrier. Buddy helps youngsters learn to avoid dangerous power lines and utility equipment.

ESA is dedicated to educating consumers. The government now wishes to work with ESA to allow every Ontario consumer to know that their electrical contractor is a licensed professional.

All I ask of the members of this assembly is to support Bill 70 and allow the government to improve electrical safety standards for the people in Ontario.

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I hope indeed, in the brief time we have to debate the bill, that the message is getting through to all members on both sides of the House, the third party and the opposition party. I believe the people of Ontario would be looking to this type of legislation to feel more secure, to alleviate some of the fears they may have. I don't have to tell you, especially at this time of year when a lot of families are considering doing renovations, additions to their properties or whatever, that a good, qualified electrician comes in very handy and can alleviate a lot of anxiety.

I don't have to tell you that we all get calls from our constituents, especially from seniors. What better message can we send to our constituents throughout the province—it doesn't matter which riding we represent—than that they can call a qualified contractor, a qualified electrician with a licence? For sure we all understand that this carries a lot of satisfaction and security in that whoever they may be calling will be qualified not only to do the job but to do a safe job.

As well, we have new families. We have first-time purchasers of new homes who will try to make improvements. Again, they may need brand new lines, if you will, wiring. They may acquire new and more sophisticated equipment—new washers, dryers, computers, what have you—and they may bring the entire system more up to date. I think this brings contentment to those people, and safety, that the work will be done in an appropriate and safe manner.

I remember when my colleague here from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell was working with contractors from across our province, between Quebec and Ontario and Ontario and Quebec. He brought to the attention of the House that some contractors, for example, couldn't go and do work in certain areas because they needed a different licence, or no licence at all in other areas. I think bringing uniformity to this type of business is extremely important even to the professions, to contractors and electricians as well.

What better message can we send out there than that these people don't have to fear any more that if they go outside of their particular jurisdictions, whatever they may be, they cannot do the work because they don't have the necessary documentation, the necessary licence to go

and do work in a particular area? This must be a huge satisfaction for those people out there, and I'm sure the message will carry out of this House into the marketplace, into the various communities, into the industry.

I said before that I'm delighted we have the support of the president of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Mr Gullins. I'm sure he will carry the message out there as well and say, "Folks, it's high time; it's about time we had one licence to worry about." I'm sure Mr Gullins will take to his members the message, "We want professional people, well-trained people." This is the message we want to send to the public, to the marketplace and to the industry as well.

I don't have to tell you that we have a huge shortage of skilled trades all over the place: electricians, contractors, qualified skilled trades, especially electricians. It's one of those fields that builders look at very much because of the demand in the construction industry. What better measure can we send to that industry—to the union people and to the many individual contractors, electricians, the labour movement—to make sure they can find it much easier to face the labour force, the marketplace, when we make it easy for them to obtain a licence? We can say, "This is Ontario. You're licensed. You can go and work wherever you want." It's a good message to send out there. But above all it is the work that our minister, Mr Watson, and the staff have done in bringing this bill together, and putting it together in such a way that it delivers a very clear, very strong message that it is important, it is a good thing to do, it's a must-do for the government. Mr McGuinty has been aiding in moving this bill forward. I can't see any member of the House opposing it for whatever reason.

Interjection.

Mr Sergio: Absolutely. There is no reason whatsoever.

I would encourage the members of the House to call on the minister and say, "You know what? This bill is so good that we don't have to postpone it any longer. Let's do it. Move it for first, second and third reading." It's a good bill. It's a good piece of legislation. It's good for us here in the House and it's good for the people of Ontario out there.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I'm pleased to comment a little bit on Bill 70, An Act to amend various Acts administered by or affecting the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services. This is quite a bill. This is probably one of the biggest bills you guys have put in since you got here.

Interjection.

Mr Murdoch: An omnibus bill, yes.

I'm glad to see that the minister's here. You forgot something in this, Mr Minister. We could have certainly done our marriage commissioners right with this bill, if you had been thinking over there. I know you probably would have done it if you had thought about it, but we do need that act. For some reason, it's not in this bill. I thought for sure it would have been there, but it's not.

As you know, there is a bill that's passed this House. All you'd have to do is put in some regulations and we would have a marriage commissioner. It's something that's certainly needed in rural and northern Ontario. It may not be so much of a problem down here in Toronto, but I know you don't think about Toronto as some people in your party do.

The thing I noticed about this is that people are going to have a hard time just knowing whether you're on the right track here or not. It seems OK. As the last speaker just said, maybe we should just pass it now and go home. I'm not so sure whether we want to do that, though, because we're having a little trouble trusting you guys lately.

Applause.

Mr Murdoch: I appreciate the applause, but we are having some trouble just appreciating what you guys are trying to prove here in Ontario. As you know, people are cranky. I think they might get cranky at us if we started saying, "There's a bill, Bill 70. We should just let it go."

But I am really disappointed that you don't have something in here about the marriage commissioners. We certainly do need them, as I say, especially in our area, in rural Ontario. So I'm looking forward to the minister bringing something forward very soon on that.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Folks, it's 10 to 8 on Tuesday night. At 8 o'clock folks should be picking up the clicker and tuning in to CBC Newsworld. I really encourage people to watch—

Mr Runciman: It's on Global and CTV as well.

Mr Kormos: Global, CTV and Newsworld at 8 o'clock, in around 10 or 11 minutes' time, to watch Paul Martin get the stuffing kicked out of him by some very skilful debate by Jack Layton, amongst others.

Interjections.

Mr Kormos: Well, if you watched last night—far be it from me to feel sorry for Paul Martin. What with all his family wealth, Canada Steamship Lines, those Cayman Island bank accounts and all the millions that his family enterprise makes without ever paying taxes, far be it from me to feel sorry. He did appear to have the most expensive suit of all of the—

Interjections.

Mr Kormos: Well, he did. That was some expensive suit.

Poor Paul Martin. I understand enough French to know when you're getting the stuffing kicked out of you in French, Madame Meilleur. My French was good enough to know that Paul Martin was taking a whole lot of body blows. So I encourage people at 8 o'clock—Global, CTV, CBC—

Mr Delaney: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I respectfully request that the member from Niagara Centre address the provincial level of government and the topic at hand.

Mr Kormos: Global, CTV and CBC Newsworld at 8 o'clock. Watch that leaders' debate. There's a whole lot of folks out there that are going to depend upon the leaders' debate to decide how to vote in this federal

election. All I know is that folks everywhere I've been down in Niagara and across Ontario are saying anybody but Paul Martin and the Liberals. And all I know is that folks are angry. I encourage them to stay angry, watch that debate, 8 o'clock, CTV, Global, CBC Newsworld.

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Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I'm pleased to speak to this bill, and it's fortunate for Mr Kormos that the bill has not yet passed, because the bill would require truth in advertising and full disclosure, so he would not have been able to make the statement about Mr Layton.

As I read this bill, what came to mind was that I recall over the last eight years we had a Red Tape Commission that was going to bring things all together, simplify and consolidate, make less paperwork and make it easier for the consumer. Actually, it didn't accomplish as much in eight years as this one bill is going to do in three readings. This, truly, for the first time brings it together.

Applause.

Mr Parsons: Applaud the minister for that. There's so many things, like the proposed cooling-off period for people who purchase certain items and require full disclosure. This is great.

I would like to focus in specifically, though, on the portion of the bill dealing with electricians. My oldest brother is an electrician and he's actually quite a bit smarter than me because he didn't go into politics. But as I watched—

Interjection.

Mr Parsons: He's right. I'm right. As I watched his career over the past few years, I've gotten a bigger and deeper appreciation of what's involved in providing electrical services. It is a very complex industry, a rapidly changing industry, and an industry that requires things to be done absolutely right—not nearly right but absolutely right. And so, as I see where municipalities have passed legislation to govern electrical firms, I applaud the minister for bringing it together because, quite frankly, it takes some expertise, that not all small municipalities would have, to develop the regulations. So I applaud that.

I also say to any young people who are watching this evening—and there probably aren't a lot, but if there are, I strongly urge you to consider a career in the skilled trades. There is a need for you, and it is a rewarding career. You cannot do better than pursue a career in that.

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): The member for Prince Edward-Hastings, thank you very much for the compliments about this bill, because essentially this is a bill from the last government. Its amendments to 24 different acts, all of which were in place prior to the change in government last October—I really appreciate the support that the member opposite offers to the previous government, the endorsement. It's wonderful that you would think that the previous government did such a great job. The minister acknowledged that Mr Hudak and Mr Runciman—and actually I started some of these reforms when I was minister. So I want to thank the member. In fact, the Red

Tape Commission did do some good work, because they brought some of these issues which are here before us today in front of the cabinet of Ontario yesterday.

We have an omnibus act here amending 24 different statutes in Ontario. This wasn't done with any kind of political panache or political intent. It was done by a group of individuals. The Ministry of Consumer and Business Services is made up of some wonderful, wonderful people who work in the civil service of Ontario and have worked there a long time. They deserve the bulk of the credit, along with the designated administrative authorities, for bringing forward to the government of the day the amendments needed in order to make our province more healthy, more economically vibrant, and they've done a great job. It's with the great direction of Tim Hudak and Bob Runciman that this bill came forward. Thanks very much, Bob.

The Acting Speaker: One of the government members has two minutes to reply.

Hon Mr Watson: I want to thank—I have so many predecessors in this chamber. Mr Sterling, Mr Runciman, Mr Kormos, Ms Churley and Mr Hudak are all former ministers. As John Kennedy once said, victory has a thousand fathers, and I certainly share the credit with my predecessors, as I do with the staff at CBS.

I thank the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. It sounded like he was offering a marriage proposal. I didn't quite hear what he was talking about, but certainly we're going to deal with the issue that he's talked to me about on a number of occasions.

The member from Niagara Centre once again, unfortunately, didn't even talk about the bill, but I'm sure he's read the bill and I look forward to seeing the debate. I'm sure on June 28, the NDP will have another moral victory, with maybe a dozen seats or so.

The honourable member from Prince Edward-Hastings, one of the great, plainspoken speakers, talked about the "duct tape commission" of the previous government. This is a piece of legislation that is basically moving forward and bringing greater consumer protection to the people of Ontario.

To the member from Lanark-Carleton, certainly previous governments started the job, but the McGuinty government is finishing the job. We're very proud of this piece of legislation, and I encourage members to support it.

Finally, to all of the stakeholders who will be affected by this bill—because they too are instrumental. It's not just the public service; they play an important role. Our friend from the international brotherhood of electricians, as well as various groups from the real estate sector, travel agents, the travel industry, the motor vehicle dealers' associations across the province: They're all very supportive of this and are looking forward to its passage, hopefully in the near future.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Runciman: I appreciate the opportunity to participate in the debate on Bill 70. As Minister Watson pointed out, there are three former consumer ministers

sitting on this side of the House and it's quite unique, if not historic, that we're going to have three—

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): It's a revolving door in that ministry.

Mr Runciman: Yes, there's some question about job security there. I agree.

But when you look at three former ministers who are going to be participating in this debate on the opposition side and offering their insights, hopefully, I think it's quite unique. Regrettably, we have a reasonable viewing audience in this place on normal occasions, but this evening even those people who tend to tune in to the goings-on at Queen's Park in evening sessions like this are unlikely to be catching us; unless it's the opposition members, then they may want to do a little channel surfing. If Mr Martin is on, switch it over to see what's going on with the opposition members at Queen's Park. I can understand the rationale if that's the kind of decision people are making.

I want to compliment the whip—I shouldn't mention anybody who isn't here, but there's a pretty good complement of Liberal members in the House tonight, and I think that's praiseworthy. This may be because they're hiding out. They don't want to watch the debacle that's about to occur on CTV, Global and on the CBC, on Newsworld and the broader network. These are pretty dismal days for Liberals, both provincially and federally. But of course the provincial Liberals can take a great deal of credit for the sad state of affairs their federal cousins find themselves in.

Speaking to the bill—and I know the minister is anxiously awaiting my comments on the bill. I should have said at the outset, Mr Speaker, that I'm going to be sharing my time with the member from Lanark-Carleton.

I want to say as well that this is indeed the culmination of a lot of work done by the previous government. I think the minister has acknowledged that. But I would also like to add my compliments to the staff at the ministry. I was in the ministry and had the good fortune to be there on two occasions: very briefly in 1985, I had six weeks as the consumer minister during the time the NDP and Liberal accord—the bedwetters' accord as it's known unofficially—was pulled together; and then 14 years later, in 1999, I had the opportunity to go back into the ministry. I have to compliment—I'm sure Minister Watson is finding this out now—the outstanding staff working in the ministry, probably as good as you're going to see in the public service, really; the epitome of what we think of as dedicated, long-serving public servants.

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I want to put a special compliment on the record with respect to the deputy minister who served during my time, Sandra Lang, an outstanding individual who is probably at the top tier in terms of public servants. She's just an outstanding person. Sandy took retirement, and I understand the government has brought her back as a deputy in the new children's ministry. You haven't made too many good moves across there, but that's one of the

few good ones you've made. She is going to make a solid contribution, there's no question about it.

Mr Sterling: She re-retired. She only stayed for six months.

Mr Runciman: She only stayed for six months, I'm advised. I'm not sure whether that's the case or not. But she's a great person and we need more of her ilk in the public service in the province of Ontario.

I also want to reference a few things about the bill. I should put on the record off the top that we are in support. At the end of the day, whenever this does come for third reading, we'll be voting for it. We think it's good legislation, and not just because our past government had a major role to play in it. We think this is good legislation. It's needed legislation. It's going to accomplish a great deal.

We've had reference to the electrical area, and the president is here tonight, I understand. Certainly, I think there are a number of concerns that they've expressed over the years that are going to be addressed by this legislation. We think that's good and we hope that, indeed, this can be passed before we adjourn for the summer recess. It's certainly our intention and our hope to see that happen.

One of the reasons we're participating in this debate, of course, is because we are unhappy in the opposition, but I don't think we're alone in that. If you take a look at the polls that have come out recently in the last two to three weeks respecting the government's budget, the implications for taxpayers in this province, the questions surrounding promises made and promises broken and the level of unhappiness amongst Ontarians with respect to what's happened over the past few weeks in this building, I think that we have a responsibility on this side of the House to convey that frustration on the floor of this chamber.

There are very few ways in which we can do that. We can raise issues in question period, as you know, and hope that we're going to get substantive responses. But we've all seen that that's not the case. On a daily basis, we pose questions and, I think, concerns. We express them in the House, and we're getting non-answers from the ministers across the floor. That builds in frustration, not only here on this side of the chamber, but I think that spreads across the province and fuels cynicism, resentment and unhappiness. That's being reflected in current polls, when we see the Premier of the province in single digits in terms of people who believe in him and trust in him. I think that's unprecedented and it should be a cause for concern.

Again, that's why this bill is being debated extensively. We want to explore all of the pros and cons of virtually every line item here, primarily because there are limited options available to us in opposition to make sure that we get our positions on the record and convey the concerns of the public at large.

If the minister and others in his ranks are wondering—and I know that, to many of them, this is new; they haven't served in this Legislature in the past—about the

processes that are undertaken and the negotiations that occur between House leaders prior to the wrap-up of a session or through the duration of a session, this is part and parcel of all that.

We talk about committee hearings. The minister tabled legislation in this House the other day, BYOB legislation. Part of the problem, from our perspective, is not necessarily that we have a problem with the concept but with the lack of consultation and the fact that there are a whole range of people who have serious concerns about that initiative who were not given an opportunity to have input into it before it was tabled in this House.

Mr Kormos: Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

Mr Runciman: Mothers Against Drunk Driving is certainly a solid example, and the police associations and the hotel-restaurant associations—a whole range of people who may have liked to have input.

We felt the same about the budget. We've had the comments made that previous budgets did not, the last few times, have public hearings. But there's a significant and marked difference between those budgets, I would argue, and the budget that was tabled on May 18. The difference is significant changes in positions that resulted in the election of the Liberal government versus the positions that were presented to the public on May 18—dramatic changes in direction. In our view that merited—demanded—widespread consultation. A commitment was made in the platform as well that significant pieces of legislation would have that kind of widespread consultation before coming to this House for final reading. Again, that has not occurred.

I'm trying to lay the groundwork to have everyone in the House and viewers—limited as they may be this evening—have a better understanding and appreciation of why we're debating this legislation at length, even though I suspect—and I can't speak for the NDP—all three parties, with some reservations, are in general agreement with this legislation and feel we'd like to see it become law in a very timely way.

My friend from Grey raised an issue, and I don't want to forget it as I proceed here this evening. It is related to a responsibility that falls within the ministry of consumer and commercial relations, the marriage area, and the fact that legislation was passed by this House a year and a half ago, something like that, and, for reasons unknown, was never brought into law. The argument made at the time, I gather by one of my successors, was the development of regulation. It seems to me that this is the sort of thing where it's the will of this place, the will of this Legislature to move ahead with the creation of the office of marriage commissioner in the province of Ontario. And for whatever reasons, whether they're bureaucratic or whatever they may be—I would implore the minister to respect the will of this place and bring that initiative forward.

I find it passing strange—and I'm not taking a position on this pro or con; I don't want anyone to suggest I am. I was reading recently about, the shariah law, I think it is; I'm not sure what the correct pronunciation is—but with

respect to that proceeding and questions about training for people involved in arbitration and family disputes and so on, and the fact that there's no requirement whatsoever, even though the fact that can occur was mandated back in 1991, I gather. It must have been during the NDP government tenure. But the fact that it is there and is apparently going to occur, agree or disagree, and here we have a piece of legislation that was indeed endorsed by this House, and a year and a half later, going on two years, nothing has happened. Again, I urge the minister—this is a responsibility that falls under him—that he should ensure that does indeed come forward, and come forward in a timely way. Otherwise, I would describe it as contempt of this place, the fact that you're simply ignoring the will of the Legislature.

Hon Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): You had it for a year; we've had it for six months.

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Mr Runciman: Yes, we did. I agree with you, and I don't apologize for that. It is nice to see the Minister of Labour in the House this evening. He wasn't here the other night when we debated his legislation. His parliamentary assistant wasn't here either to address issues, which is truly unfortunate.

Mrs Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): He was here, Bob. The parliamentary assistant was here.

Mr Runciman: Well, they didn't speak up if they were. I specifically asked a question.

Hon Mr Bentley: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: When we're talking about parliamentary traditions, when we're talking about respect for the rules of the House, one would have thought that the honourable member, who's been here a lot longer than I, would know that it is not in the traditions of this House to refer to someone's presence or absence. It should not be done. But what happens so often in this place is that those who know what should not be done often do it because they know they can get away with it. That is my point of order, Mr Speaker. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. The Minister of Labour is correct when he says that it is the tradition of this House that we don't refer to other members' absences in the present—

Mr Runciman: Yes, Mr Speaker. I respect that and I try to respect the rules of the House. We see some people abuse points of order, and we just saw a case in point here this evening with the Minister of Labour. But I would rebut his case with respect to the time I've been around here. It's been traditional, it has been a practice, to ensure that a minister and/or a parliamentary assistant is present during the debate of a bill that falls within the purview of that ministry. I'm advised there was a PA here.

Mrs Mitchell: He was here.

Mr Runciman: If there was, fine and dandy. They certainly didn't identify themselves, and there was no suggestion that there was anyone present that evening.

The Minister of Labour wants to stir the pot here this evening, I guess. If he wants to do that, that's fine and

dandy, but he's going to get it stirred right back, I would suggest to him, if that's the sort of thing he wants to raise in the House.

We've talked about marriage commissioners. I want to talk about another thing—again, I guess there can be some justifiable criticism with respect to the former government—and that's the Athletics Control Act, which falls under this bill. It's referenced in the bill, some of the changes. I'm going to throw a bouquet to the minister with respect to a study that I had initiated during my time in the ministry to take a look at professional boxing in the province of Ontario. I asked Jim Hunt, who's a very well known sports columnist, author and commentator, and Ralph Lean, a highly respected Toronto lawyer and a boxing fan, to take a look at the state of professional boxing in the province and report back with recommendations on how we could enhance professional boxing and the impact it could have on tourism, implications in a significant way. It's nice to see the Minister of Tourism here when I'm having an opportunity to talk to this. Mr Hunt and Mr Lean, I think, wrote an excellent report, some recommendations dealing with tax policy in a whole range of ways in which we can improve the environment for professional boxing, including enhancement of amateur boxing, which could again, I think, fall under the purview of tourism and develop excellent, world-class athletes who could compete in the Olympics in the future.

One of the recommendations they made dealing with the Athletics Control Act—and I'm not sure if the minister has had an opportunity to take a look at this, but one of the concerns they heard, talking to the professional boxing community, was the fact that it was the one individual who's head of the Athletics Control Act, responsible—Ken Hayashi, an outstanding individual—who would make decisions and there was no appeal process available if indeed he made a decision related to whatever it might be in terms of a boxing site or venue or the boxers involved. We certainly know there are health issues involved here. But the concern of the group, the task force, was that we should establish, like so many other jurisdictions have, a three-person boxing commission, so that Mr Hayashi's decisions could be appealed to this boxing commission, so that we would have that opportunity to make sure it wasn't simply an individual decision with no recourse available.

So I hope the minister will review that and take a look at moving ahead. I doubt that would require a legislative change; it may be a regulation or simply a policy change that he could initiate within the ministry.

I want to say, I had difficulty. Once Jim Hunt, Ralph Lean and I left the ministry, that report sat on a shelf for some time until Minister Watson indicated he had no difficulty with it being released publicly, and I want to thank him for that. I've done it on past occasions. I think it was especially important for me and for people like Jim Hunt and Ralph Lean, who contributed hundreds of hours to developing this report, researching and meeting with people. I thought it was an outstanding report and it was

only fair to them that they had some recognition. Whether this report goes anywhere or not—I hope it does, some of its recommendations. But at least I know Jim Hunt was here for the release, and Jim is getting up in years. He's a terrific gentleman and I know he appreciated the opportunity to explain the report and explain the recommendations. Once again, I want to thank Minister Watson for agreeing to that release and also posting the report on the ministry's Web site. Thank you very much.

There are a couple of other things we should talk about. The Theatres Act in some respects has always been a bit of a controversial area with respect to the Ontario Film Review Board. What the legislation is talking about is moving into the area of national standards so that we have a similar standard across the country with respect to a rating system for movies and videos. That does make sense. I guess the concern would be—and I'm not sure, and perhaps at some point the minister can explain this—how you arrive at a national consensus with respect to these kinds of standards. Is there some sort of body? I don't quite understand the implications of this. I know we've talked about it, how this is agreed upon, that we don't find a particular jurisdiction, that we sort of sink to the lowest level rather than rise to the highest level in terms of the kinds of standards that are set. So I would be curious, and hopefully the minister will have an opportunity during his responses to provide a more detailed explanation.

But I know over the years—and we saw this recently with a court decision related to the film review board. What was the case?

Mr Kormos: Glad Day Books.

Mr Runciman: Glad Day Books? Was that the case? I can't reference the specific case, but certainly there is an indication that the whole censorship issue and removing certain parts of films, rather than simply providing guidance to people—I think that's the argument, whether certain things should be available to the public on video or through movies and whether the whole question of censorship should apply versus simply informing the public as well as you can that a movie or a video is going to contain certain things that may be offensive.

I think part and parcel of the whole question of the current rating system, where they deal with age limits—whether someone under 14, or whatever the age limit might be, is restricted, or there are certain parental guidance issues. There's very little policing of that. In a way, it's a bit of a joke. I'm not sure how many charges have been laid over the past 10 years under those areas. I suspect none. There may be some exceptions, but the fact is that the ticket takers in the theatres themselves are people who are not really going to take that responsibility on their shoulders unless it's truly a blatant situation where someone's bringing in a seven-year-old, for example. You would hope that in those kinds of instances the person selling tickets or someone taking tickets at the check-in would act to make sure those children weren't allowed into those kinds of movies. But even in those

kinds of situations, I suspect that virtually nothing is happening and there's no policing there.

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When you take a look at it in that context, you can have these rules and guidelines, but in effect what impact are they having? I suspect the answer is virtually none. So perhaps we should look at simply doing a better job in terms of classifying films and then making sure that the consuming public, parents and others are warned if there are explicit scenes of violence, sexual scenes that could be offensive and a whole range of areas. I've gone up to the Ontario Film Review Board in years gone by and sat through some of the garbage that these people have to look at on a daily basis, and some of it is truly vile. I guess you can understand the concern among some elements of the public about even having that kind of material out there and accessible to people whom you may not wish to have access to it.

These are a whole range of pretty heavy duty issues, and if you can't police these things, if you can't effectively control it, what's the next best avenue of recourse? I think appropriate classification and a better investment in ensuring that the consuming public are aware of what's contained in a video or a film would go a long way to addressing many of those concerns.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Is that water?

Mr Runciman: Just water. That's all we can afford in this place.

I want to talk about a few other things too. There's a reference in here to public safety and I find that somewhat ironic, although it's related to the Electricity Act. I think my friend in the NDP is going to talk more extensively about the ESA, the public safety elements and some of the suggestions here regarding licensing. I won't get into that because that's not necessarily a concern we share, although after I listen to him this evening, perhaps we will. But I know that that is a concern of his.

This whole broad heading of public safety—and we see the Minister of Community Safety today second-guessing police officers who have to put their lives on the line, rushing into a situation where someone is reportedly attacking them with a 10-inch blade knife. The minister has the audacity to suggest they should have used a Taser gun in a situation like that. I find that totally incomprehensible and unforgivable and I think it is truly offensive to the men and women in blue who really have to face these very challenging situations. For someone to suggest that they could have handled it otherwise, for anyone in the government to talk about public safety, is disturbing. There's a whole series of legal questions surrounding his intervention in this, not to mention the special investigations unit in any criminal investigation that may arise. I would think the potential for any civil action has been dramatically increased as a result of Mr Kwinter sticking his nose where it should not have been stuck. In any event, it's happened, even if the Premier wants to ignore it, and we'll see what flows from that in the weeks and months to come.

I think the retesting requirements—again, my friend from Welland-Thorold may wish to speak to this—and

the costs of tradespersons are, again, issues that are not adequately addressed here. On this whole question of retesting, we think there should have been some consideration here related to grandparenting. That doesn't seem to be addressed here. Although it's unlikely it's going to happen at this stage of the game, we hope this is something that the minister may look at addressing, perhaps through some regulatory change or regulatory amendment that could look at that sort of issue.

I think when you look at the consolidation of the six core consumer protection laws into a single act, and the modernization of those statutes that weren't proclaimed or passed—the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act, the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, the Travel Industry Act—this is positive updating in business sectors that represent some of the biggest-ticket purchases that most consumers in the province will ever make, whether you're talking about buying a home, a motor vehicle or travel. I know my friend talked a bit about travel and some of the government members talked about travel. Certainly that's another area that I think we could talk extensively about in terms of providing additional protection.

There is some additional protection built into the changes here. Again, during my time in the ministry, we did a review and made recommendations. I would encourage the minister to take a look at that report, which took a look the travel industry. I met with the federal travel ombudsman at the time, Bruce Hood. We required a federal ombudsman because certainly you can't—he's a federal candidate now and I feel sorry for him. He's running for the Liberal Party, and that's a challenge in Ontario at the moment. Bruce Hood's a nice guy. I think he wanted to do a good job.

Certainly the regulatory folks at the federal level were not doing the job. Whether it relates to Air Canada or to whomever, we've certainly seen a deterioration. Fortunately, we've seen some competition come into the airline sector across the country, but I think we need more competition if you want to see improvement. That's going to really drive improvement in the airline industry across this country.

My colleague from Lanark-Carleton wants to participate. I want to reiterate that we will be supporting this legislation when it comes to a vote. We would like to see it come to a vote in the very near future, but again, a lot of that depends on the government House leader and his willingness to recognize the concerns and desires of not just the opposition, but the people of Ontario.

Mr Sterling: During the interim, I did have an opportunity to go out and look at the debate. I want to say that I'm very proud of Stephen Harper as a result of that. He is putting forward a very calm—

Interjection.

Mr Sterling: Yes, I may have the opportunity to leave here and become a senator in Ottawa. I won't have to rely on anyone appointing me, either. Actually, one time I proposed a Senate here, but nobody took me up on that.

I remember the day I brought forward a proposal in this Legislature to abolish the Senate of Canada. My

colleague Mr Bradley, now the tourism minister, was another member. We were both in opposition at that time. It was 1990-95, and Mr Bradley really wanted to speak to it, but unfortunately one of his colleagues took all the time. I can remember his anger with regard to that because I think he agreed with me on that date.

At any rate, this act is—I don't know whether you call it an omnibus act or whatever it is, but it's an act amending 24 different statutes in the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services. It does tell people a little bit about the complexity of that particular ministry. Back when Mr Runciman, our elder statesman, and myself were ministers of that, we had the Liquor Control Board of Ontario under our wing. I did think that it was proper to move the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp from the Ministry of the Attorney General to the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, but I do question the move of taking the LCBO away from this ministry and into the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade. I say that for two reasons. Number one is that the institutional knowledge in the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services—

Hon Mr Bradley: You'd be a good chair.

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Mr Sterling: Try me on. Mr Bradley says that I would be a good chair and I just said, "Try me on."

The Ministry of Consumer and Business Services had tremendous institutional knowledge and worked very well with the Liquor Control Board of Ontario. I also believe that the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade has enough on its plate with regard to other matters, and that this minister, by being in charge of or responsible for the LCBO, gets a little bit of the element of not only being a representative of consumers, as he is the Minister of Consumer and Business Services, but he also gets first-hand the opportunity to really be involved in running a significant business in Ontario, and that's the LCBO. So I was a little sorry to see that move take place. And quite frankly, that particular agency is a very important one that deserves a lot of attention because, as you may know, our Canadian vintners sell about 40% or 45% of their product through the LCBO. It's really important. But I digress a little bit away from this bill.

I wanted to talk about this bill because there are a number of acts that are amended, and I'm just naming four of the 24: the Electricity Act, the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act, the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act and the Travel Industry Act. Perhaps the most significant amendment here is to the Travel Industry Act. That saves our travel agents from potential problems if Air Canada should ever go down and fail.

Back some time ago, I was involved with the ministry, I believe, at the time when Canada 3000 failed. At that point in time, it was necessary for the cabinet of Ontario to change the regulations to deal with the responsibility of the individual travel agent to deal with that failure. Up until that point in time, TICO, the Travel Industry Council of Ontario, ensured each consumer that he or she would receive payment back if, in fact, the end supplier

failed to supply the product. That's sort of the basis of it. But it only did that after the travel agent became bankrupt, insolvent and paid out all of what they would have in terms of assets; then TICO would come in behind them. We changed it with regard to Canada 3000, and I'm glad to see the government react to a potential problem with Air Canada. It's very important for the stability of our business community and residents that they have the opportunity to travel with Air Canada because it serves so many of our communities, and they provide the bulk of the coverage in terms of air travel in Ontario.

A lot of what the Ministry of Consumer and Business Service does now is done differently than was done eight or nine years ago. That's because we changed a lot of the way that business is done, or how business is managed in Ontario. In 1995 or 1996, we brought in Bill 54. Bill 54 was the first comprehensive piece of legislation dealing with designated administrative authorities. It brought into the fold automobile dealers, cemeteries, real estate industries and the travel industry, in terms of saying, "We in the government can't deal with the nitty-gritty of managing regulations in your industry, and we think that you in the travel industry, and people involved with the travel industry, consumers and consumer representatives, can deal with it better than the government can."

The automobile dealers have their own self-management organization. As a result of that, we have seen great improvements in things like car leasing arrangements, where they have agreed to have a common car lease, because it is so easy to misrepresent what the interest rate is if you compound it semi-annually, quarterly, monthly etc. As a result of that piece of legislation, Bill 54, brought in by the former government, I believe we have been able to protect the consumer to a greater degree in terms of dealing with automobile dealers. And now, in terms of cemeteries, we have finally, after I don't know, 30 or 35 years, whatever the number of years, got all of the segments of the bereavement sector together, and now the whole idea in terms of the bereavement sector makes more sense. We used to have some archaic rules and regulations that people who transported the remains of people from one place to the other could only do this, the people who were in the cemeteries could only do this—they couldn't sell headstones, certain people couldn't do this—and it really didn't make sense in terms of what happened.

As a result of saying to the bereavement sector, "Look, we the government think this doesn't make any sense to the consumer. Get together, iron this thing out, and come forward with some reasonable regulations, reasonable law, and we will look at them and put them forward," as a result, we have had significant good reform in that whole area, and I don't think there are too many disgruntled people, even in the industry, who are concerned about that.

The other industry that has benefited greatly from self-management is the real estate industry. I had a fair bit to do with that particular piece of legislation. I felt it was

necessary to introduce a greater degree of professionalism into the real estate sales people's and brokers' business. As a result of their taking it over, and the registration process, there is much more customer satisfaction with regard to the people who are dealing with the real estate business, and I believe that they are driving more rational, reasonable decisions in terms of disciplining those who step out of line.

This afternoon we were graced here at the Legislature by the greenhouse industry, who came to talk to members of the Legislature, down in the legislative dining room, about their particular industry. One of the matters which was raised with me some time ago, and was raised with me again today in the legislative dining room, was the whole problem with pressure boilers, which virtually every greenhouse has to use for its heating system. How do you do this? How do you have a pressure boiler without having a qualified stationary engineer on the job 24 hours a day to take care of that? Some of these operations are relatively small in terms of their employees and that kind of thing. So it was necessary to try to find a line between requiring a stationary engineer, which would be very expensive on a 24-hour basis, and to try to find a solution which would ensure the safety of that boiler, the workers around that boiler and any consumers who might come close to that boiler.

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When I was the minister, I went to the TSSA, which is the Technical Standards and Safety Authority, which was again another designated administrative authority. I said: "Look, as minister, I cannot take the status quo as it now stands. We have to have greater accountability with regard to the safety of these boilers. We can't just allow them to be uninspected so that they're sitting out there in the field or they're sitting there in an enclosure and nobody who is technically competent is dealing with that or there are no standards associated with that."

So I said to Margaret Kelch, who is the president of TSSA, a former deputy minister of long standing in the Ontario government before she became the president of the Technical Standards and Safety Association, "I demand that you give to us a better response to this particular problem," and I was pleased to learn today when I was talking to some people from the greenhouse industry that they have come to a solution which will provide adequate safety, good safety, in terms of these boilers but within some economic reality of the industry.

I bring all these examples forward because the way consumer and business services was operating prior to 1995 was very different than it operates today.

I also wanted to talk about one other designated administrative authority, and that's ONHWP, the Ontario New Home Warranty Program, which now has another name, Tarion or something like that. What they do, for those who wouldn't know, is that when you buy a new house, your builder charges an insurance premium that guarantees the buyer that they are getting a structurally sound house, and it's an insurance policy that lives on for various periods of time, depending upon what structural part you're talking about.

When I came to the ministry in 1995, I had heard on the campaign trail of a problem with certain plastic vents. These were vents that came off gas furnaces, and there was a real problem with carbon monoxide. I think people should know about the actions that ONHWP, which is now Tarion, took at that time, with me as the minister. It was something that was done in a room. I said to ONHWP, "Look, we have to guarantee that there's not going to be carbon monoxide leaking into these homes from these plastic vents," because there was some technical problem with them at that time.

I want to tell you, at that time ONHWP, which had been very well run and had, I believe, reserves of something like \$30 million or \$35 million, stepped up to the plate and said, "Mr Minister, if you ask us to do this, we will do it." I said, "I want every vent changed in every house in Ontario where this vent is." We believed that this is a problem of the manufacturer and the manufacturer can be sued and the money can be regained. But they stepped up to the plate and they wrote a cheque for \$8 million to replace all of these plastic vents in Ontario. They then went after the manufacturer and they actually recaptured most of that \$8 million, which I think is a double check mark for this particular administrative authority. I think it was a tremendous show of the success of being able to do this, being able to do it quickly, because I was concerned about time. Nobody had died of carbon monoxide, but you know carbon monoxide is an insidious gas that nobody can smell or tell is in the place.

I wanted to talk about all of those designated administrative authorities briefly. Some of this legislation amends some of the powers that are involved there, but I also want to say that there is forever a danger with regard to a designated administrative authority, because it's a balance. Designated administrative authorities are there for the consumer, and the problem you continually face as a minister, as a consumer etc, is that there is a balance in their decision-making, that they are not becoming protective and monopolistic about the services they are providing.

From time to time, I had to say to one of the designated administrative authorities—and I won't identify which—"Look, you're there for the consumer. Your first duty is to the consumer, and second is for you to be involved and ensure that there's an equal playing field with regard to the services you are providing to the consumer."

We have to be very careful with these agencies. You've got to keep your eye on them. You've got to be sure they are not gouging in terms of fees, nor are they providing protection for the people who are providing these kinds of services where that protection is unwarranted. You will find, Mr Minister, from time to time you will have other groups that will come forward and say, "We want to become a designated administrative authority." You want to be certain that they, in fact, have the consumer interest at heart, that they are not there to protect their industry, their profession etc.

I just wanted to put forward those particular thoughts tonight. I do want to acknowledge one other person who

was what I would call at the genesis of designated administrative authorities. He was a former ADM of the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services, and that was Art Daniels, who was one of the most enthusiastic persons I ever met with regard to any in the public service. Art did a great job in bringing those administrative authorities on stream and making them very successful.

The public accounts committee, which I chair—and I see some of the members are here—has been reviewing DAAs, designated administrative authorities. I think it was expressed by some of the members of the committee that this whole aspect that the DAAs must represent the consumer first and the interests of the industries second has to be continually remembered with regard to any of these particular sectors.

This act is quite thick; it has 84 pages in it. Some of the amendments might seem quite innocuous, but I can assure you that the words in these amendments are very important. They are important, for instance, from the aspect of giving officials the right to search a particular business, search a residence, demand documents and demand things of people. Therefore, they have to be carefully thought out and have to be very parsimoniously given to these particular officials.

The act is a conglomeration of a great deal of work, a great deal of thought, but this will not, of course, be the end of amendments to these things. Designated administrative authorities, consumer protection, the way business interrelates with other businesses, the way business relates to the people who work with them, the professions, the way we operate our business and consumer climate in the province will continually change and will continually need amendment and regulation.

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But it does take an ever-vigilant ministry to keep their eye on the ball, and I want to say, as Mr Runciman has said, that this ministry has done an excellent job of doing that. They have good interrelations with the public. I can remember them telling me that they used to get, I think it was, something like 10 million calls a year at the ministry, with regard to a whole range of ideas, and I must say they reacted in a very, very good way. These people in this ministry have their feet on the ground, and therefore I think in a lot of ways we can trust that these amendments, in general, are good for the consumers of Ontario and are fair to the people that they affect.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments? The member from Niagara Centre.

Mr Kormos: I listened carefully to Mr Sterling's comments, with only those interruptions wherein I went back to the lounge to watch the leadership debate, which came on at 8 o'clock and is on until 10. It's on Global, CTV and CBC Newsworld.

So notwithstanding that I am going to be speaking to this bill starting at around 9 o'clock, and I'm loath to ask people to do this, notwithstanding that I'm going to be on my feet for 30 minutes this evening, I encourage people to pick up the clicker, to switch the channel to Global,

CTV, and CBC Newsworld and watch the federal leadership debate. It will help you understand why the Liberals are in that downward spiral, why there's this haemorrhaging of support for Liberals across Canada, not just in Ontario. We understand what Dalton McGuinty and his government did with the budget and how that, of course, brought him down to 9% in the polls and has dragged Martin and the federal team of candidates with him.

You have people like Sue Whelan, out in southwestern Ontario way. Sue Whelan comes from great political stock; her father is Eugene Whelan. You've got Sue Whelan, a federal Liberal incumbent candidate, saying to Dalton McGuinty, "Dalton, apologize for breaking your promises." She's pleading with the Premier of Ontario to apologize for breaking promises that Liberals made in the election campaign, because, you see, Sue Whelan knows that she's going to wear the broken-promise label. I think they call it branding in the industry. She's worried that she's been branded now as broken promises, just like the provincial Liberals have. Poor Sue.

Mr Delaney: The member from Lanark-Carleton noted that some of these proposals began on the watch of the former government, and I say to the member opposite, this is indeed true, and we hope we can count on his support to get these changes—I hesitate to call them common sense amendments—passed into law.

One of these changes is a long overdue overhaul of Ontario's film classification system. The vast majority of feature films, video and DVD releases are fairly straightforward exercises. Surely, for example, a film classification of PG, for parental guidance, for the Harry Potter series done in British Columbia or New Brunswick is unlikely to vary in Ontario.

Bill 70 lays the groundwork for the adoption of a national film-rating system. This benefits Canadian film producers, distributors and exhibitors, in that the criteria are national and a rating in one province is acceptable by all. This means far fewer references that say "subject to classification." It tells producers very clearly what's in and what's out when they develop scripts and shoot scenes. It tells distributors and exhibitors what they can confidently schedule in their theatres, and how and where they should promote a film.

Ontario, of course, retains the right to apply its own ratings, but clearly this would involve only films in which there are extenuating circumstances. It's been eight years since the act governing film classification systems has been overhauled, and it's time for some routine maintenance.

In a debate update, it's looking like Martin by a solid decision. Those undecided voters are coming back to the government that balances their books, pays down their debt and gives them a caring, compassionate and all-embracing Canada.

Mr Murdoch: It's my pleasure again tonight to speak a little bit on Bill 70 and what's not in there. Mr Runciman mentioned that we don't have regulations in there for the marriage commissioners act, and I'd like to ex-

plain to the House what happened there. A year ago Christmas it was passed in this House. It was unanimously supported by the NDP, almost unanimously supported by the Liberals, and I think there were about 10 Conservative members who didn't vote for it. It went through. There is a bill there.

Interjections.

Mr Murdoch: I hear a few catcalls and that: "Well, you guys had it for a year. Why wasn't it done?" I want to tell you why it wasn't done: because we had an incapable, incompetent minister handling it in Minister Hudak. He shouldn't have been the minister. He was the minister, and that's unfortunate. He had his own agenda. He didn't want to do what the House wanted to do. This was passed in this House by all three parties, and he wouldn't do the job that he had to do as minister. He had a year to do it, and he didn't do it.

So, Minister, I'm depending on you to do this for us. There are two ways you can do it. You can bring a bill into this House that mirrors the bill that was passed or you can put regulations into that bill, because that bill stands passed in this House; it got royal assent. The regulations were never done because, as I say, we had an incapable minister looking after it, which was unfortunate. But those things happen.

I suggest that you probably will have some incapable ministers over there from time to time, but I don't believe the minister today is that way, and I believe he'll bring in some regulations so we can have marriage commissioners in this province. I'm leaving it in your hands to do that, because, as I say, it wasn't done here. I'd appreciate anything you do over the summer, and hopefully in the fall session you will have something done for us.

The Acting Speaker: We have time for one further question and comment.

Hon Mr Watson: I know there was a reason why I respected the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for his frankness. He won't be disappointed. We're working on some provisions with respect to the issue he's talked about and hope to have some news that I'm sure he'll be pleased with in the next several months.

I thank the members from Lanark-Carleton and Leeds-Grenville as well for their comments. They speak with great experience and authority, having been minister in this ministry on two occasions for Mr Runciman and I think on two occasions—or was it just one?—for Mr Sterling.

This bill is something I'm particularly proud of because of the emphasis on consumer protection. Let me just give you a couple of quick points that I'm pleased with.

Extending cooling-off periods from the current five days to 10 days: Often people are pressured—you think particularly of time-shares—and perhaps make a decision in haste. They need that extra time, particularly senior citizens as we celebrate international Seniors' Month in the province of Ontario. They need that time to think about what they've done and to get out of an agreement. That's one thing I'm quite pleased with.

Also, increasing fines for people who contravene the laws with respect to dishonest activity is going to protect the reputation of Ontario businesses. They'll be increased to \$50,000 for individuals and \$250,000 for corporations, sending a very strong signal that if, in the province of Ontario, you try to rip off a consumer, you're going to pay the price for it.

I am very pleased with the support of the official opposition and I certainly look forward to the support of the NDP.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Lanark-Carleton has two minutes to reply.

Mr Sterling: Because I know most people are watching Stephen Harper embarrass Paul Martin with regard to the scandals and the lack of accountability at the federal level, I'm going to keep my remarks very, very brief.

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I do acknowledge that there wasn't one iota of criticism with regard to what either Mr Runciman or I said, and that, of course, is because we do support the bill. The genesis of the bill was with the government in the past. I look forward to working for the consumers, whether I am on the government benches or the opposition benches. It's important that these laws be kept up to date.

I want to extend to the minister our openness toward further amendment with regard to any consumer laws, as long as we are certain that the proper consultation has taken place. They do require a lot of work, a lot of consultation. This bill represents that in the past, and we will work to that in the future.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Kormos: As I indicated earlier—here it is 9 o'clock at night already. I've got an hour to do the lead-off. I'm only going to be able to do 30 minutes this evening, and I apologize.

Having said that, I admonish those people who might still be watching—surely the battery has died in the clicker. The problem now is that it's not a matter of just going up and turning the channel. With television sets, anything newer than 10 years old, there is no thing to turn the channel. I need the remote control for my TV set to change the channel. I wouldn't, for the life of me, know how to change the channel if I didn't have the remote control.

But I'm encouraging folks who are watching—and I appreciate that, over the course of the last couple of hours, the folks who might have been watching probably aren't any more, but I would exhort them to switch to CBC Newsworld, Global or CTV to watch the balance, the final hour, of the federal leaders' debate. We're awful proud of Jack Layton and the work he's been doing in this campaign across the province. I am confident that he's going to give Mr Martin the same drubbing tonight that he gave him en français last night.

I'm here with my colleague from Hamilton East, Andrea Horwath. I'm as mindful as anybody can be that we're debating Bill 70, but on Sunday I was over at St John the Baptist Hungarian Greek Catholic Church on Second Street in Welland. What was happening is that on

this past Sunday, St John the Baptist Hungarian Greek Catholic Church was having one of its feasts and we were saying hello to the new bishop of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, the Greek Catholic rite within the broader Catholic church. A newly ordained bishop was in Welland for the first time, Bishop Stephen Chmilar. He was a delightful, delightful person. I was so pleased to see him in Welland, so pleased to meet him and chat with him. He has a huge territory to cover, he really does. He covers basically all of eastern Canada, from the Manitoba border east. He has a rich background in western Canada with the Ukrainian Catholic Church there and is going to serve those Greek Catholic churches, their parishioners and their clergy well.

The reason I was reminded of the dinner at the St John the Baptist Hungarian Greek Catholic Church on Sunday—which was an outstanding dinner, as usual. It was a little warm. We were in the basement, but the place was packed, as it inevitably is, and not just people of the Hungarian Catholic, Greek Catholic, Ukrainian Catholic faith, but the Reverend Maria Papp was there from the Hungarian Presbyterian Church across the road. The level of ecumenism was profound.

What prompted me to recall that, of course, is Andrea Horwath being in the chamber with me this evening. There was a group of Hamiltonians at this dinner. They travel pretty regularly, as these people share each other's celebrations. They had a chance—or rather, I'm the one who had the chance and the privilege of saying, hello and howdy to them once again. But I want to tell you how specifically proud they were, as Hamiltonians, of having sent Andrea Horwath to the provincial Legislature, not just because she's proven herself in a mere matter of days to be an extremely capable member of this Parliament but because she's a Hungarian. She's one of theirs. She's a Magyar. So they were doubly proud to see Andrea Horwath sent to the Parliament by Hamiltonians.

I was just so pleased that these folks from Hamilton had a chance to celebrate with me their contribution to improving the quality of this Legislature. Did I tell you Father Deak was there, of course? Because Father Nicholas Deak, for whom I have profound regard, a great deal of affection, is the pastor at St John the Baptist Hungarian Greek Catholic Church. We go back a long way. He and his family are incredibly hard-working. Of course he, like so many others in this tradition, are worker-priests, which adds a special quality to it. It really does change the perspective.

I got the sense, I sort of picked up the enthusiasm of the minister around this bill. Look, I tell you, New Democrats are going to give the bill the support that it deserves. New Democrats are going to give this bill the support that it merits. And New Democrats are incredibly concerned that the minister would have presented this bill with such fervour and passion.

First, on the one hand, he says, "Oh, the bill's a nothing bill. The bill really doesn't do anything at all. It just tinkers and fine-tunes." Then, on the other hand, he purports to say that it's of such significance that he hopes for speedy passage. Right off the bat, I tell you that this

bill ought to go to committee, that this government would be delinquent, this government would be downright negligent, if it were to fail to send this bill to committee.

The bill is, in effect, an omnibus bill. Now, boy, did Liberals rail against omnibus bills when the Tories introduced them. And indeed, in short order, the Liberals, after having been elected, in addition to breaking almost every promise they made—the only promises that haven't been broken are the ones they haven't been tested on yet, right?

Again, the branding—I call it the Edselling of the Liberal Party and the Liberal government in Ontario, because there's a point. You're not old enough to remember, but I'm certainly old enough—and my friend over there is old enough—to remember the Edsel. My friend may well have driven an Edsel. At the end of the day, the Edsel was not a bad car at all. It really wasn't. It was an innovative, novel car, but it didn't matter. You couldn't sell one of those things for love nor money, because it got branded. It acquired this branding. The fix was in. It was over. Game over.

You say, "Liberal?" "Broken promise." You do that sort of word association stuff out there on the street. It's incredible. "Liberal?" "Broken promise." Immediate response. It's the first, immediate reaction. I know I have Liberal friends who are in the same position who say—I was watching the Liberal candidate down in Glanbrook; her signs, rather. It looks, quite frankly, like Dean Allison may be beating her in the first round of lawn signs, and I wish it were Dave Heatley, who is doing very well in his own right. Certainly in terms of the sign war, Dean Allison is winning, at least in Fenwick. But you see, she had signs that had her name on them, then had "Team Martin" with Paul Martin's portrait. She didn't just go for "Team Martin"; she's got "Team Martin" with the portrait. I mean, that candidate should have had her own portrait on these signs.

The new signs are out. I saw them on Saturday when I was in Fenwick, driving out there; as a matter of fact, at an event—it was at Dr Mayer's house—for Dave Heatley, who's the NDP candidate. I was down there for a backyard barbecue, down in Fenwick, in the new subdivision just north of the old Church Road. Dave Heatley is our candidate down there in the Glanbrook area. I saw the Liberal signs, the ones with the candidate's name on them and "Team Martin" and the huge picture of Paul Martin. She has given up on those, because the new signs just have her name. I'm not even sure if they say Liberal. Jim, do they say Liberal on the new signs? I don't know. The problem is, she is putting them up beside the Team Martin signs. If you are going to change direction in midstream, pull the Paul Martin portrait signs out. I appreciate that all these silk screens and stuff were made a long time ago, but heck, even then, what were people thinking? What were they thinking? This is incredible. The poor Fenwick-Glanbrook candidate there has got the Paul Martin sign. Now, it's not that she's—

The Acting Speaker: I have been listening intently to the presentation of the member from Niagara Centre and

I have to ask him: How does what he has said so far relate to the bill?

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Mr Kormos: Speaker, I'm glad you raised that issue. Just this evening, I was looking at Erskine May. As a matter of fact, I was like a kid at Christmas tearing open the package yesterday morning when the newest edition of Erskine May came. I knew it was coming but wasn't quite sure when it would get here. So here is the newest edition, the 23rd edition, 2004, of Erskine May.

I just happened to be looking at it. Honest, the book happened to open to this page. My eyes fell to the right-hand page. Sure enough, the book having fallen open to this page, it says, "Rules governing the contents of speeches," subheading "Relevance in debate," so I read on. I took great comfort from what I read, because it says, "A member must direct his speech to the question under discussion or to the motion or amendment he intends to move, or to a point of order. The precise relevance of an argument may not always be perceptible...."

I took great comfort from that observation by this learned author: "The precise relevance of an argument may not always be perceptible...." So I understand why you and maybe even other members may find themselves provoked to rise and do exactly what the learned authors of Erskine May say should be done, because the sentence is, "The precise relevance of an argument many not always be perceptible, but a member who wanders from the subject will be reminded by the Speaker that he must speak to the question," and you just did that.

The Acting Speaker: Then I'll remind the member that he must speak to the question.

Mr Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. Now we're playing by the rules. You and I are reading from the same book. We're singing from the same page. And now this is going to make this work a lot easier than it would if somehow you were over there and I was over here. It's your job to remind me to speak to the question. That is your job, and I'm going to do everything I can to help you do it. It's my job, insofar as I understand it, to ensure that the precise relevance of an argument may not always be perceptible. Is that fair enough? Because it seems to me we've got this wonderful excerpt from Erskine May covered from the alpha to the omega. It's my job to ensure that the precise relevance isn't always perceptible, and it's your job to remind me to speak to the question. If we reversed the roles, heck, I would be the Speaker and you would be the member giving the speech. By the way, it happened to be page 433 of that 23rd edition, 2004.

When I realized this bill was going to be called tonight, I looked to my computer and to e-mail that had just come in, because if there was anything that had to be dealt with in my e-mail, I wanted to make sure I could deal with it during the dinner hour. Again, lo and behold, what's the e-mail on my computer this evening? It's an e-mail dated June 15. It's from Michael Parkin and it reads:

"Mr Kormos,

"In March of this year, my daughter sent in a change-of-name application. At that time we were told that it

would be completed within six months. We are now told that the time has increased to 54 weeks, that is ridiculous! Now she does not have her birth certificate as she starts university in the fall. As well, we are moving to Kingston so our address is changing and we will be unable to close our bank account here as the cheque we submitted has not been cashed. In March we were told that more staff was to be hired, apparently that was not true.

"I would appreciate any assistance that you can provide."

The perceptibility of the relevance may still be in doubt, but let me explain that this minister, the sponsor of this bill, is responsible for this young woman's dilemma, who when she submitted her change-of-name application was told it would take but six months and is now told it will take 54 weeks—that's two weeks in excess of a year. Understand that. And understand that this isn't a non-issue for this woman. A very important thing is happening here. She's got to go to university. She needs a birth certificate. She wants that birth certificate in the name she will have her name changed to. And the family is moving to Kingston, so the address is changing, but they can't close the bank account because the cheque they sent in still hasn't been cashed and they don't want it to bounce.

You know, I had concerns about the legislation. Then, when I discovered that it was Tory legislation, I understood why I would have had concerns. I would have had concerns if it were Liberal legislation, but then I also understand that the minister wasn't always a Liberal himself and indeed has a proud heritage as a Conservative supporter, perhaps even a member. Mind you, I understand why he has no discomfort being a Liberal, because one of the nice things about being a Liberal is that you don't always have to be a Liberal. The Liberals prove that over and over again. I suppose the other nice thing about being a Liberal is that you campaign like New Democrats and then you govern like Conservatives. I suppose the other observation, à la Jean Charest, is that becoming a Liberal while maintaining your Conservative values is no source of discomfort whatsoever.

But it is not just one person and one change-of-name application thrust into crisis, because after leaving my computer and having read that e-mail, I went to my fax machine. Here is the message that I had in my fax machine from my constituency office. This is the chronology of it, the course of events:

"I am writing to express my concern over the wait times for live-birth registrations and birth certificates.

"My son was born in October of 2003 and I registered his birth with the city of Welland by the end of the month. They completed his registration by November 25, 2003. When I registered the baby, I was told that I would receive notice that the live birth had been registered with the province.

"Even though I had not received the live-birth registration, I sent away for a birth certificate anyway. I have been waiting at least 10 weeks for this document, and it too has not arrived.

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"I have heard that both processes are behind and that the wait time is five months for each. If this is the case, then I should have received the live-birth registration at least a month ago.

"I was fortunate enough to have been able to travel using a travel letter from the city of Welland, but this document has since expired as it was only good for 180 days after the birth of my son.

"My concern is that the wait time for both of these important documents is unacceptable. At this time, I am unable to obtain a passport for my son, and I am unable to travel with him because I have no identification for him. I am also unable to start an RESP for him because I am unable to get a social insurance number without his birth certificate.

"Anything you can do to remedy this situation would be greatly appreciated."

There's a follow-up, after my office contacted your office, after my people spoke to yours, and after my staff received some words of comfort from yours and got back to the constituent with reassurances, relaying those reassurances that were given by your people. Unfortunately, it didn't work out the way your people said it would, because on June 7 this same woman wrote back:

"I still have not received anything from either my son's live-birth registration or his Ontario birth certificate. I returned your e-mail with his name and birth date on May 14. My son ... and I are flying to Calgary at the end of June, and the only documentation I have for him is his Ontario health card. The travel letter I had expired in April. What other documentation can I get in order to travel this month?"

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): To Calgary?

Mr Kormos: "I am still very dissatisfied that I have no documentation for my son and he is eight months old, and all his papers were submitted within a week of his birth on October 15."

A heckle beside me says, "To Calgary?" Well, of course. Haven't you been on a plane lately? You can't fly to Sudbury without producing identification, and a neonate is unlikely to have a driver's licence, especially if he hasn't been able to get his birth certificate, notwithstanding effort after effort after effort.

Underneath that fax was this fax. Poor Peggy Dobrin in my office. She works hard. She, along with her colleagues in that constituency office, works hard. Years of Family Responsibility Office, family support plan frustration, and now the registrar's office—birth certificates, changes of name.

Here's another one: A family sent for its son's birth certificate on June 27, 2003—not 2004, because we're not at June 27, 2004, yet. The cheque was cashed and, by gosh, I've got a photocopy of their cancelled check. You've got their money. Somebody up there's got their money, but still no certificate. Now the response is that they, it, you have no record of the transaction.

Mr Murdoch: It's in the mail.

Mr Kormos: What are the world's three greatest lies? "Your money cheerfully refunded," "The cheque is in the mail," and, "Hi, I'm from the government and I'm here to help you."

Minister, there are real problems going on in your ministry that require immediate addressing. You've sent out, I think it was, the red-on-white one-page memo. Do you get those, Billy Murdoch? Do you get those memos from the minister? I think we're up to memo 15, aren't we? That's what I last noticed. It was double-digit for sure. Why don't we just subtitle them the Snafu Memos, just get right to the nitty-gritty? Because you haven't fixed it, you haven't solved the problem. You haven't added sufficient new staff. You haven't shortened the delays. Oh yes, you issue press releases saying you have, but in the real world, for real people, that's not the reality. Again, if these were just inconveniences for folks, it would be one thing, but this causes serious problems, practical problems, real problems.

I know that Joan Gravelle was watching earlier. That's Mike Gravelle's mom. She was watching earlier tonight. Whether she got tired of the stuff that was going on and switched over to watch that federal leadership debate on Global or on CTV or on CBC Newsworld could well be the case. Again, she was disappointed because her son Mike wasn't speaking tonight. I want her to know that the Liberal whip is simply just not warm to her son at all.

Mrs Gravelle, don't be angry with Michael, but I suggest you write a letter to either the Liberal House leader or the Liberal whip, saying that your son Michael, who's clever, who's well-spoken, who's quite frankly owed a huge debt by this government because his conduct in the House when they were members of opposition is in no small part responsible for them forming government—and what thanks does he get, huh, Mrs Gravelle? He deserves better treatment than what he's getting. I, for one, like your son. I presume you do too. I'm prepared to go to bat for him. I hope you will also.

But I say to the minister that to come here with tired, tattered, dusty Tory legislation isn't exactly a feather in your cap. Decisions like the Glad Day Books decision have made your Theatres Act amendments not specifically redundant, but the fact is, what we need is a whole new Theatres Act brought into this chamber. What you've done is just pulled this off the shelf.

I understand the competition. There's yourself. There's the young Minister of Labour. You've got a whole bunch of young Turks in the cabinet. Again—Mr Murdoch knows this—part of the way you prove your worth is by getting bills prioritized. But, Jeez, better to wait six more months and do a bill that's going to be specific, do a bill that's going to be more than obsolete the minute it's passed. You've got Theatres Act amendments that are redundant at this point because the court—and you have acquiesced to the court's position—has told you to get your act together and come up with a new Theatres Act.

I regret that I'm going to have to shut these comments down in a few moments' time. Next time this bill is

called, I will be taking the floor again and I'll complete my comments. I will address Bill 70 and the concerns that New Democrats have about it. I'll be making it clear once again that we expect this bill to go to committee. I'll be making it quite clear that we expect the minister to excise those portions of the bill which don't belong with Bill 70 any more, specifically amendments to the Theatres Act, because we need a whole new Theatres Act. The courts have told you so. Quite frankly, you can ignore the courts, but you know what the time frame is and you know what happens if you don't address the

court's concern: Then the whole statute's out the window.

We heard from Mr Murdoch about one of your predecessors, described by Mr Murdoch as incompetent. I don't want Mr Murdoch's next speech about an incompetent minister to be about you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. It being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 pm.

The House adjourned at 2130.

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