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(Hansard)**

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des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 13 October 2004

Mercredi 13 octobre 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 13 October 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 13 octobre 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GASOLINE TAX

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): As of this month, the provincial government is committed to turning over a portion of the provincial gas tax to cities to finance their transit systems. Regrettably, this policy discriminates against people who live and work in rural Ontario.

We who live in rural and small-town Ontario pay the full 14.7 cents per litre of gas tax to the province, just like Ontario's urban residents do. How, then, can the government possibly justify a tax rebate that benefits only people who live in the city? Most municipalities would not oppose using a portion of the gasoline tax to rebuild aging infrastructure in their communities. But our rural residents know that any way you look at it, this policy is a special, exclusive deal for Ontario's cities.

Even the federal Liberal government, in promising to share a portion of the federal gas tax with municipalities, has said the money must be available to municipalities large and small. This commitment was made by the Honourable John Godfrey in a speech to the Toronto Board of Trade on October 1. In light of the federal commitment, how is it that the provincial Liberals can be so fixated on our cities, to the complete exclusion of rural Ontario?

In Waterloo-Wellington we have an answer: The town of Minto and the township of Wellesley have both passed resolutions on the sharing of the gas tax and they are insisting on fair distribution based on a formula that would ensure that they receive equal treatment from this government. The municipalities in Waterloo-Wellington have outlined their transportation priorities through their support of the Waterloo-Wellington transportation action plan. There are over 40 projects in the plan, and transit is among them, but the majority of them demonstrate the need to include rural Ontario—its roads and bridges—in any dedicated distribution of gas tax revenue.

Rural Ontario needs to speak up forcefully on this issue and the government needs to listen.

STEEL INDUSTRY

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I rise today to call attention to a very important issue for my riding of

Hamilton East and for the entire province. It is the vital role of steelworkers and the steel industry in Ontario, past, present and future.

Last session, and especially during the by-election in Hamilton East, Premier McGuinty promised repeatedly that he would be there for Hamilton steelworkers, but since then his Liberal government has done nothing to help them. There's no plan, there's no long-term strategy and no help for steelworker families and pensioners. Meanwhile, Stelco has just barely avoided bankruptcy and its workers are facing uncertain futures: Will they have jobs? Will they have pensions? Will they have health benefit plans into their retirement years?

Today we find out that Stelco's bondholders, major global players like Deutsche Bank, want to buy up assets for less than they're worth. They're meeting behind closed doors even though Stelco is a publicly traded company.

The government needs to take a serious look at where steel is going. The Premier, along with the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, needs to work in partnership with the federal government to develop a new, comprehensive strategy for steel. We need a long-term strategy, but we also need immediate assistance and immediate government involvement.

I call on the government today to act by immediately increasing the monthly amount guaranteed by the pension benefit guarantee fund from \$1,000 to \$2,500, and to get actively involved in Stelco's current crisis. Stop hiding, stop dragging your heels, and come to the table now to save Stelco.

PAT FORTUNE

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): As the MPP for Guelph-Wellington, I rise in the House today to pay tribute to an outstanding Guelph-Wellington constituent who passed away last Monday. Pat Fortune was 71 years of age and just two days away from celebrating her 50th wedding anniversary when she lost her battle with cancer.

Pat represents one of those constituents who gave you her best advice every time you met her, whether you really wanted to hear it or not. She was outspoken at times, but always a defender of the less-advantaged in my riding. I am confident every Guelph-Wellington MPP and every MP over the course of many years knew her well, because she didn't back down if she felt something just had to be changed.

Pat was a lifetime volunteer. For 25 years she volunteered at the Guelph Correctional Centre and was a very involved and passionate supporter of the Royal Canadian Legion.

Pat was a school bus driver and a community leader on school bus safety issues. She continued her interest in traffic safety in retirement. Over 600 seniors have attended the seniors' driving seminars that Pat initiated at the Evergreen Seniors Centre.

Pat was no stranger to this Legislature. During the 1950s, Pat was part of a group that picketed this Legislature to convince the government of the day to allow residents of a Guelph housing development to purchase their own homes. Many seniors in Pat's neighbourhood are homeowners today because of Pat's efforts on their behalf.

Pat also took on Ford Canada when she felt her new car turned into a rust bucket too soon after she purchased it. Pat will—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you very much.

WINE INDUSTRY

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I rise today to express my concern about the Liberal government's lack of attention to the priorities of working families in the Niagara Peninsula. It's been almost a year now and we've seen no movement on the mid-peninsula corridor—in fact it has gone backward—little help to relieve truck congestion along the border, and not a single word of funding for the new West Lincoln Memorial Hospital.

One area I'd expect the government to move on, and it's an easy one that would help out with the greenbelt initiative, is Ontario VQA wine stores. I know, when asked for his position on it, the Minister of Agriculture was supportive and other members were supportive, but we still have not seen it move forward as a government initiative.

I know the Minister of Consumer and Business Services has dusted off other projects that have been there from only a few months ago, taken them as his own and moved them through the Legislature. Good for you, sir, but only one more initiative; I ask you to move this forward as well. It's good for the economy, it's good for jobs, it's good for tourism and it's good for agriculture.

I know the minister will get all kinds of warnings about trade issues—I've heard them before—but in British Columbia, in November, they announced a 20% increase in their VQA-only stores. I know states like Pennsylvania, New York and Virginia have unique stores highlighting their own locally grown wine.

It's time for the Ontario government to uncork the potential of our wine industry and open the VQA-only wine stores. If you pass it, it's also good for the government. I don't mind sharing these ideas with you from time to time.

HINTONBURG COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I rise today to salute an amazing community builder in my riding of Ottawa Centre, the Hintonburg Community Association. Many of us would be overwhelmed and perhaps even defeated by the torrent of drugs and prostitution in our neighbourhood, but not the residents of Hintonburg.

In recent months the Hintonburg Community Association leaders have organized walkabouts in order to pressure governments to clean up crack houses and to keep prostitutes away from schoolyards and out of residential areas. They've also initiated Needle Hunters in Ottawa, where cleanup of drug debris from playgrounds takes place, and a community justice forum to reconcile criminals and victims; and they've established Ottawa's first John school, whose attendees fund an educational program to help prostitutes reform their lives. If that were not enough, they're also planning to strengthen the artistic and theatrical presence in their immediate neighbourhood. This is the Hintonburg formula for reclaiming their neighbourhood.

I say to them, your fierce persistence, community solidarity and unique spirit, forged in adversity, are turning Hintonburg around. Your energy and commitment have made an absolute difference on Pinhey, Melrose and Wellington Streets and at Devonshire, Connaught and Saint-François-d'Assise schools. For an area that was fast becoming a sad blight, Hintonburg is now a dynamic community that is determined to take control of its own destiny. To parents, volunteers and the feisty leaders of the Hintonburg Community Association I say bravo. You are very special people indeed.

1340

HEALTH PREMIUMS

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): What a shock it has been for members of our armed forces, of whom over 4,000 are stationed in my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, at CFB Petawawa, to find out that the McGuinty government was instituting a health tax, one which would be spent on any number of non-health-related projects, and that the tax would be levied against them even though the province does not pay for their health care. This is yet another example of this Liberal government's insatiable addiction to taxation. This government wants your money by any means. All Ontarians have come to realize that fact.

What a double whammy for our military and RCMP personnel to get the news that in spite of the fact that they do not receive their health care from the province, they would still have to pay this tax. The health care of members of the military and the RCMP is the sole responsibility of the federal government. This wrong and punitive decision of the McGuinty Liberal government, that is costing all working families in Ontario, is now forcing soldiers and police officers to pay twice.

This decision is at the very least a violation of the spirit of the Canada Health Act. Both British Columbia and Alberta, two other provinces that charge health care premiums, specifically exempt members of the Canadian Armed Forces and the RCMP from paying these premiums. I insist that the McGuinty government reverse this decision and exempt those who put their lives on the line for us every day from paying for a service that they do not receive.

NURSES

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): On August 19, the Premier visited the Windsor Regional Hospital to mark a turning point in Ontario's health care system. He was there to talk about nurses who were coming back to Ontario to work in their field instead of heading to the US.

Those nurses were part of a group of 14 new, full-time nurses who were hired with the funding this government has provided province-wide. The government is investing \$50 million in more full-time jobs for nurses. That means full-time jobs for new nurses and part-time nurses. Having more nurses means that the people in Windsor-Essex are getting the care they need when they need it. It means fewer bed shortages and shorter wait times.

The same is true for cities across Ontario. More full-time nurses means that I can tell nursing students in Windsor-Essex who have come to me with their concerns about the availability of full-time work in Ontario, and who would choose to stay, work and live in Windsor-Essex, that the opportunities exist for them.

I say, don't make any plans to head south just yet. Things are changing for nurses in Windsor and across the province. The Windsor Regional Hospital is a living, breathing, nursing proof that there is more work for full-time nurses in Ontario thanks to the McGuinty government.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I want to take this opportunity to express my dismay with the irresponsible comments made yesterday by a member of the NDP regarding the government's new ODA legislation. He called the legislation a PR exercise. He said it didn't offer optimism to the disabled. Clearly, he wasn't listening to any actual members of the disabled community.

David Lepofsky, chair of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, called the new legislation very good because it "requires standards" and "provides a time line in which it has to be done. This law requires things to get started now."

Mr Lepofsky said the legislation "includes the key ingredients that we have been working for." He said the legislation "keeps the Premier's promise" to "sit down and work with the disabilities community, with the business community and the municipalities to develop legis-

lation." He concluded that the Premier "promised the legislation will be brought forward within a year [and] that's what's happened today."

Shame on the NDP for not listening to the disabled community, but instead, engaging in the politics of irresponsible opposition. I would like to point out that when the NDP was in government, they failed to make any improvements for people with disabilities in this province. Had their government addressed this issue then, disabled people across this province would be much closer to a barrier-free lifestyle today. Instead, their government did nothing to improve accessibility for Ontarians.

In contrast to their party, in contrast to the party opposite, the McGuinty government is delivering real results. We're listening to Ontarians. The NDP should do the same.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I am pleased to rise today to assist the member from Burlington with his revisionist history. Yesterday, our government introduced the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. In referring to the legislation he introduced as minister, he said in response, "Not one amendment was tabled by your critic. That is a fact."

How wrong can he be? Or maybe he has just forgotten that since he has been a member for a long time, he hasn't been a minister. So let me remind the member of what actually happened.

In opposition, my friends Steve Peters and Ernie Parsons worked long and hard to fix your legislation. We brought in over 100 amendments to try to help you fix your bill, but you wouldn't listen and you voted all of them down. You had your chance and you failed. Now the disabled community doesn't have to wait any longer.

The member from Burlington might want to hear what the disabled community had to say about this piece of legislation and the McGuinty government's legislation. Yours, they say, was totally unenforceable. Ours has the enforcement mechanisms built in. Most of them told us, "This bill is actually a very good bill. This bill includes the key ingredients that we have been looking for. This bill keeps the Premier's promises."

To the member from Burlington, I would like to have had you accept those amendments in 2001 instead of voting against them. The disabled community would have been further ahead. But today they will be, thanks to the McGuinty government.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I would ask all members to join me in welcoming this group of legislative pages serving in the first session of the 38th Parliament. They are: Arif Ali from Sarnia-Lambton, Emilie Brent from Kingston and the Islands, Ashley Casey from Hamilton East, Alexander Cassels from Nepean-Carleton, Kathryn Clark from Etobicoke-Lakeshore, Otto Cortés from Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, Rachele Fischer from Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey, Justin Forster from Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge, Brendon

Holder from Whitby-Ajax, Taylor Lew from Don Valley West, Emma Mauti from Eglinton-Lawrence, Anmol Metley from Brampton West-Mississauga, Alyscha Mottershead from Brampton Centre, Geneva Neal from Huron-Bruce, Norah Paton from Ottawa Centre, Anthony Prail from Chatham-Kent Essex, Inez Roelen from Elgin-Middlesex-London, Gabriella Silano from Oak Ridges, John Steadman from Halton, and Chris Thompson from Kitchener Centre.

Will you all join me in welcoming these new pages.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated October 13, 2004, of the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to standing order 106(e)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by this House.

1350

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

Mr O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 121, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act/ Projet de loi 121, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My constituents in the riding of Durham, our leader, John Tory, and our Speaker expect no less than decorum and behaviour in respect for the traditions of this House. This bill goes a long way to making sure this place is a better place for all Ontarians.

CORPORATIONS TAX AMENDMENT ACT (FINES AND PENALTIES NOT DEDUCTIBLE), 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'IMPOSITION DES CORPORATIONS (AMENDES ET PÉNALITÉS NON DÉDUCTIBLES)

Ms Churley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 122, An Act to amend the Corporations Tax Act to provide that fines and penalties are not deductible / Projet de loi 122, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'imposition des corporations afin de prévoir que les amendes et pénalités ne sont pas déductibles.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): The other title to this bill is the Make Polluters Pay Act. I entitled the bill this because I don't know if you're aware, but right now, if environmental firms are fined under the Occupational Health and Safety Act all of those, they can get the fines back through a loophole in the taxes. What this bill does is close the tax loophole. For instance, when the government recently announced higher fines for polluters, the reality is that they can get that money back through their income tax. This bill will change that once and forever.

I would ask for unanimous consent to pass this bill right now.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Second and third reading.

Ms Churley: Yes, unanimous consent for second and third reading right now, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Ms Churley has moved for second and third reading. Is there consent? I do not hear consent.

TRANSPARENCY IN PUBLIC MATTERS ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE DES QUESTIONS D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC

Ms Di Cocco moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 123, An Act to require that meetings of provincial and municipal boards, commissions and other public bodies be open to the public / Projet de loi 123, Loi exigeant que les réunions des commissions et conseils provinciaux et municipaux et d'autres organismes publics soient ouvertes au public.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): The bill designates certain public bodies and requires those designated public bodies to give reasonable notice of their meetings to the public and ensure that the meetings are open to the public. The bill establishes procedures by which a person who believes a designated public body has contravened or is about to contravene the bill may make complaint to the Information and Privacy Commissioner. And the bill authorizes the commissioner to make certain orders after a review, including an order to void the decision made by a designated public body at a meeting that did not conform to the requirement of open meetings.

ORAL QUESTIONS

LIBERAL CAMPAIGN PROMISES

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): I have a question for the Premier. Today I'd like to revisit an issue raised with you yesterday by the member for

Whitby-Ajax, and that is the Ministry of Finance's 60-page costing of the Liberal Party's election promises.

You and your Minister of Finance have followed the advice of your spin doctors and your new media guru and portrayed the document as meaningless and demeaned the civil servants who prepared it. Premier, can you advise us why a document you believe is worthless, prepared by people your finance minister scoffingly described as mid-level bureaucrats, was kept under lock and key for a year? Why do you fight tooth and nail to prevent disclosure of a worthless document?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): If this is the single, most pressing issue that weighs heavily on the minds of Ontario families, then I will be delighted to address it again.

What I said, to be perfectly clear, is that, to use the words of the Deputy Minister of Finance, to tally up the figures presented in that document would be wrong and misleading. He specifically said in addition to that, "So if somebody were to go through and just add up the columns—that can be done—it would be information that's actually meaningless." That's what the Deputy Minister of Finance said. I attach a heavy weight to the advice and the opinion and the independence of our public service, but particularly the Deputy Minister of Finance.

Mr Runciman: Clearly, there was no answer to my question in that response.

We believe this document is critically important in exposing the modus operandi of this Liberal government. They're already tarred with the brand "Fiberal," and their handling of this issue reinforces that description.

The Minister of Finance, while dismissing a document he fought to keep out of public view for a year, says he never saw it. He wants us to believe he prepared his budget in total ignorance of his own ministry's costing conclusions. Nobody told him. He was kept in the dark. What he was in was deniability mode: "Tell me, but don't show me."

Premier, will you advise us who in your government, including your transition team, actually had the courage to review the document last fall?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I'll tell you, when this member tells us that somehow we should have some courage over here, they should have had the courage, they should have had the gumption, they should have had the honesty to own up to the fact that they saddled the people of Ontario with a \$5.6-billion deficit. Now we have to clean up their mess, and we will do that as diligently and responsibly as we can. But when it comes to admitting what it is we had by way of information, we'll take no lessons from this former government, which hid the fact from the people of Ontario that they had a massive deficit.

1400

Mr Runciman: Another refusal to answer a question. Check the calendar. You've been in office for a year.

Premier, we all know you've broken significant and solemn promises that you made to the people of Ontario.

You are now mistrusted by many Ontarians. Your reaction to this document, first to attempt a cover-up and, when that fails, to dismiss and demean its conclusions and its authors, simply re-enforces a growing view that your party was elected on false premises. It re-enforces the view that your extravagant election promises were purposely and dramatically underestimated to hoodwink voters. It raises alarms that you prepared and presented a budget that dramatically increased spending, knowing your promises could cost three to four times as much as you told voters. Premier, will you commit to the members of the House and to the citizens of Ontario that your government will not exceed your campaign commitments, not a penny more? Will you do that?

Hon Mr McGuinty: The member opposite refuses to acknowledge, understand and accept that the authors of this same report have described it as wrong and misleading and that it would be, again, meaningless to tally up the numbers found within that document.

What the Conservatives would like us to forget is that they actually promised to outspend us. Just so the record is clear, in their platform they promised to outspend us in both health care and education. They also said they were going to cut taxes by another \$5 billion. They also said they were going to find another \$5 billion to pay down the debt. They said all that notwithstanding the fact that they were hiding a \$5.6-billion deficit from the people of Ontario.

I leave it to you, Speaker, and the good people of this province to draw their own conclusions with respect to who is telling the truth when it comes to the numbers.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question, the member for Whitby-Ajax.

Interjections.

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the Minister of Tourism, who really wants to be the minister of other things. But I'm glad you're here. It's good to see you.

The Speaker: And the question is?

TAXATION

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): My question is not to the Minister of Tourism but to the Premier, and it's about your promises and the economy of the province of Ontario, which is a serious matter. We know your \$5.9-billion, fully costed 231 promises are now more like \$18 billion, according to the Ministry of Finance. We know your promise number 65 to balance the budget and keep down taxes has been broken, that number 226 to hold the line on taxes has been broken, that 227 not to raise the debt has been broken. The whopper, of course, the pledge you signed at the Sheraton Centre in Toronto not to raise taxes, has also been broken. We have had the fact of the largest single tax increase on one day in the history of Ontario by your government in its first year in office. We have a new so-called health tax, but we have fewer health services. So the motto now is, "Pay more, get less in Ontario."

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Question?

Mr Flaherty: My question is, will you now stand in your place and assure the people of the province, heavily taxed as they are today, that during the course of your mandate there will be no more tax increases?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Not surprisingly, this particular member is so negative when it comes to Ontario and our opportunities and potential. There are a couple of numbers I'm sure he would be interested in, reluctant though he may be to accept their validity. Since we've been on the job and formed the government, some 80,000 new jobs have been created in Ontario. I am also very pleased to report that this month we have the lowest unemployment rate in Ontario in three years. We've only just begun.

Mr Flaherty: There's no assurance to the people of Ontario that there will not be further tax increases, so they might as well get ready for that.

It doesn't take any skill, of course, to raise taxes. Anyone can raise taxes. It does take skill to control spending. We look at your first year in office and what we see on the spending side is health spending at \$29 billion, the two education ministries \$13.8 billion, community and social services—they add up to \$51 billion in spending. Health care spending is growing at 8% per annum. On top of that, you decided to go on a more than \$4-billion spending spree. You know the average revenue increases, according to your own document, your own economic projection, are about \$4 billion. You squandered that on a spending spree.

My question to you on spending is—your Minister of Finance talks about cost containment after a loss in year one—what is your plan for the people of Ontario to control costs in these three large areas during the course of your second year in office?

Hon Mr McGuinty: It's not surprising that this member in particular takes great issue with our investment in better-quality public services. He objects to investing, for example, in hiring more meat inspectors, in hiring more water inspectors. He objects to our initial investment in nurses. We hired 1,100 new teachers on the job this September.

By way of cuts to government expenditures, we are proud of the fact that we have cancelled corporate tax cuts to the tune of some \$2.5 billion, we have cancelled investments in private schools, we have cancelled expenditures on partisan political advertising. We will continue to make investments where they count. We will make them in such a way that we can get measurable improvement, actual results. For example, we have smaller classes in close to 38% of our elementary schools as of this September, 1,100 new teachers on the job, close to 8,000 new lead teachers working inside our elementary schools. Those are the kinds of investments we're making, and we're getting real results for the people of Ontario.

Mr Flaherty: What we have so far is that there might be tax increases during the rest of the mandate and that

there is no plan to control spending in these three large areas of government going forward.

I want to ask about jobs now, economic growth in the province of Ontario, and your government's mismanagement in terms of investment in job creation. You talk about job statistics. The jobs stats from last week: "In September, employment in Ontario was little changed, leaving gains so far this year at only 0.9%," less than 1%, only 55,000 jobs. Worse than that, in manufacturing, in light industry, in the private sector, jobs are down in your mandate in Ontario so far in 2004. Employment rose in the provincial government and in education services for teachers. Those are the statistics.

So what we have in year one is poor economic growth in terms of jobs. Spending is up. Taxes are up. The debt is up. Interest payments are up. Will you assure the people of Ontario, the entrepreneurs, the business people, that you will abandon this tax-and-spend policy and try to create jobs?

Hon Mr McGuinty: The member opposite just can't handle good news: 80,000 net new jobs since we formed the government. The minister of industry tells me here that we had 4,700 new jobs in September.

It's unfortunate—I attended an event recently, and it would have been good if the member himself could have been there. It was an economic summit hosted by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, and they have put a heavy emphasis on health care, additional investments in health care, because not only does that give expression to us as a caring society but it makes us competitive. It's very important to our businesses. They also said it's important that we continue to invest in education. They want to see greater investment in post-secondary education in particular, because if we build a strong, highly skilled and talented workforce, we'll land the best jobs at the best pay.

This member doesn't understand that the economy has moved beyond this notion that the only thing we can do to strengthen it is to cut taxes and race to the bottom with low-wage jobs. We are working to build a high-wage economy with the best jobs by investing in health care, education and a strong economy.

HEPATITIS C

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, we demonstrated that your government is misusing dedicated federal health care money for hepatitis C victims in a most troubling and unfair way. Under the 1998 agreement, the forgotten hepatitis C victims were to receive enhanced health care services over and above what they have already received through OHIP or existing prescription drug programs. So far, Ontario has received \$66.3 million of dedicated federal health care money to pay for enhanced health care services for those hepatitis C victims, but your own report shows that not a penny of that federal health care money has been used to provide the enhanced health care services that were supposed to occur. Instead, for the past year you followed the dis-

credited and mean-spirited policy of the former Conservative government, something you said you wouldn't do. You said, "Choose change" in the election. Where is the change for hepatitis C victims, Premier?

1410

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): I'll refer this to the Minister of Health.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Yesterday, in response to the same assertions made by the honourable member, I clearly said what I will say again today. Perhaps this time he'll pick up on it.

Yesterday, he alleged that the province of Manitoba, as an example, has a more expansive program with respect to people with hepatitis C than we have here in Ontario. I said yesterday that that was untrue, and I have further evidence that this is the case.

You used examples of drugs, including interferon, as examples of what Manitoba is doing. The fact of the matter remains very clear. Here in Ontario, we are obligated to work with people who have hepatitis C, and who are at risk of getting hepatitis C, to prevent that. The assurance that I gave Ontarians and I repeat today is that we are going to continue to make sure that people with hepatitis C in this province gain all of the benefit that our health care system can provide, because Ontario's standard will be the highest standard in the land.

Mr Hampton: It doesn't surprise me that the Premier doesn't want to answer this question, because it was the Premier's promise. It was the Premier who used to criticize the Conservatives for taking dedicated federal health care money and simply putting it in general revenues and not spending it on health care services. The real issue is that the McGuinty government has betrayed some of Ontario's most vulnerable citizens during their time of need.

Take Roy Royeppen, for example. He contracted hepatitis C in 1983 through a blood transfusion following heart surgery at Toronto General Hospital and more recently has developed diabetes through hepatitis C complications. He now requires daily dialysis because of his condition, and over the last few years has incurred several thousand dollars in out-of-pocket health care expenses for dialysis-related travel expenses, insulin and needles related to the diabetes. There are thousands of victims like him, yet your government continues to pocket the federal health care dollars that were supposed to help him pay for these additional health care expenses. I ask, where is the change for Roy Royeppen? Where is the change for thousands of other hepatitis C victims?

Hon Mr Smitherman: A couple of weeks ago, we had the opportunity to demonstrate that the money the federal government sent to the province of Ontario for the purpose of enhancing the quality of care for people with hepatitis C has in very clear fact been spent on the expansion of health care services.

The honourable member in his own question makes the point, as an example, about the need for expanded

dialysis services. The record is clear that over the course of the agreement with the federal government—a legal agreement was entered into between the province and the federal government, and that was to use the money to the benefit of people with hepatitis C through provision of services through our health care system, and that is what has been done.

Further, we've asked John Plater, who is a leader in this community, to help bring together a group to develop an even better strategic plan for the purpose of hepatitis C in our province. We're creating a hepatitis C secretariat at the ministry to more effectively coordinate the provision of these services. I remain of the opinion that here in Ontario, the obligation we have is to make sure that people with hepatitis C receive the best possible services available—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr Hampton: I remember when Dalton McGuinty used to rise and criticize the former Conservative government for taking dedicated health care funds and simply putting them in general revenues. Now we have the McGuinty government taking dedicated federal health care funds intended to provide enhanced health care services for unfortunate hepatitis C victims, and we have the Minister of Health standing and saying that's OK, that's all right. What's happened here is these unfortunate victims have had to pay out of their own pocket while this government pockets the money that was intended to pay for their health care services.

Minister, you don't need another study. What you need to do is admit that you are wrong, just as the Conservatives were wrong. You need to pay back the money that was wrongly denied these hepatitis C victims and you need to put in place now the enhanced services for hepatitis C victims that were promised and that are part of the spirit and letter of this agreement. Will you do that or are you simply going to—

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister of Health.

Hon Mr Smitherman: On the issue of who is wrong, it's the honourable member. He says, "Follow the letter and the spirit of the agreement." In reading the agreement, what is absolutely clear is that Ontario, like all other provinces, was provided with funding by the federal government for the provision of health care services. Simply, what we did, based on a methodology developed by people who are expert in the field of providing services to people with hepatitis C, was demonstrate that all of the dollars had been spent on enhancing the quality of care for people with hepatitis C.

But we're going one step further. We're working with people from the hepatitis C community to enhance the quality of care through the work being done on a strategic plan. The fact of the matter is, I arrived as Minister of Health to find that the strategic plan work that had been done by the previous government had not involved all of those communities that are affected and those people who are infected with hepatitis C. We're updating that work quickly under the leadership of a man named

John Plater, who stands in very high regard on this issue. I repeat what I've said before—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question?

OMA AGREEMENT

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): To the Premier: You already have a credibility problem when it comes to health care. Before the election, you said that a health care premium would be unfair and regressive for working families. Then you imposed a health care premium. Before the election you said you would never cut health services. After the election, you cut chiropractors, physiotherapists and optometrists. Now we find your government pocketing the money that was dedicated to provide enhanced health care services for hepatitis C victims. Moreover, we find more and more of the details of your secret deal with the OMA.

Last night, TVO's Susanna Kelley reported that, over four years, sole-practice general practitioners will get an 11% raise, those in health groups a 25% pay increase and those in health care networks a 36% pay increase. Those are very big numbers, Premier. Will you tell the people of Ontario what the bottom line is, or is your credibility on health care going to continue to suffer because you can't meet—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Premier.

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): We're very proud of this deal, and I know the member opposite will be very interested in learning more about this deal. It has been made public, so the parties have agreed that we can talk about it in some detail. We're very proud of this deal.

To my understanding, and I'll let the minister answer the supplementary, this is the first deal in the history of this province where there is no across-the-board increase. What we decided to do is to incent the kinds of activities on the part of doctors which will encourage them to do the kinds of things we need them to do. It will result in more doctors working in group practices. It will result in shorter waits, in particular for different kinds of surgeries; hip and knee, for example. It will result in getting doctors, for example, to do on-call work for our long-term-care centres. It will result in shorter waits in our emergency rooms and the like.

It's a creative deal. We have been very imaginative in terms of the kind of approach we've brought, and we are convinced that as a result of this new arrangement we have with Ontario doctors, we're going to actually end up with more doctors practising in a better way that helps us control the costs in health care and brings better care closer to the community.

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Mr Hampton: Premier, the question is this: Are you prepared to release this secret OMA deal so that the people of Ontario won't find some more nasty surprises in it, just as they have found with your nasty surprises in terms of health care announcements already? You have a credibility problem. Most people would find it hard to

swallow an 11% increase, but a 25% increase, a 35% increase? Meanwhile, you're telling nurses and other hospital personnel, and teachers and other people in the broader public sector, 2%.

I think, before people find this is a done deal, they deserve to know just what is being bargained here, what is being negotiated here and how fair it is. Premier, don't you think the people who will foot the bill deserve to know that?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I will refer this to the minister.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Over four years, 4.8% for a doctor who practises in a walk-in clinic. The point here is clear: This is a landmark agreement. Those people who have sought to characterize it as across-the-board increases are just plain wrong. This is an agreement that for the first time aligns the government of Ontario's priorities with our negotiated agreement with the Ontario Medical Association. It incents and rewards different behaviours in three specific areas.

That party, while in government, shut off the supply of doctors to local communities. Under their leadership, it went from 60 underserved communities to 122. This agreement will reverse that trend. Doctors will return to practise in Ontario communities. Doctors will provide more service and address our wait-time challenges, and fundamentally, resources will be invested at the community level, upstream, so doctors are involved again in the provision of comprehensive care to prevent people from getting diabetes, to prevent people from getting cancer. This is a landmark agreement—

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr Hampton: I think most people across Ontario would be alarmed at a 25% increase or a 35% to 36% increase. I think most people would be alarmed at that. I think the people of Ontario deserve to know what is in this agreement before you hit them with another one of your nasty surprises, before you tell them one thing before the agreement and then they find out something quite nasty after the agreement. I think those people out there who are being told 2%, and no more, deserve to know what is in this agreement. The taxpayers deserve to know what is in this agreement because ultimately they're going to have to foot the bill.

Why are you creating two classes of health care workers in Ontario? Why won't you release this agreement now so the people of Ontario can see what you're negotiating and how nasty the surprise is going to be after the agreement?

Hon Mr Smitherman: What's at stake is a better class of health care for the people of Ontario. If there's something to be alarmed about and if there is something to consider nasty, it's the decisions your party made while in government. Communities all across this province that can't get access to a family doctor, that have seen their community designated as underserved, should know from here forward that that party is stuck in the status quo. But this party as a government is not, because we fundamentally believe that the best health

care is the health care you find as close to home as possible.

So I ask the member in his supplementaries to stand in his place and say, do you oppose the idea that doctors should provide more services in long-term-care facilities? Because that's what this deal does. Do you oppose the idea that doctors should be incented and provided the opportunity to provide more help to people to deal with weight problems, like me, or to deal with too many people who smoke? Are these the things the honourable member supports or not?

The fact of the matter is, this is a landmark agreement. It's a historic agreement because it reaches out to change the nature of health care delivery, and consistent with the exact approach—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Let me remind the minister that when I stand up I'd like you to sit down. That means, sir, you should stop your answer. New question.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): My question is for the Minister of Health. You, your Premier and your Minister of Finance have been going to every corner of this province and telling our teachers, police officers and Ontario's valued public servants to hold the line and be realistic when it comes to salary expectations. We now learn from TV Ontario and Sue Kelley that through your secret deal with doctors, you plan to give salary increases of not just 11% but as much as 25% and 36% to some classes of physicians in Ontario. Your secret deal, the cat, is now out of the bag. How can you beat down all our other valued public employees and give doctors such a huge salary increase? Can you tell us that?

Hon Mr Smitherman: Here's what I can tell the honourable member: For those communities—they went from 60 to 122 on their watch—designated as underserved, in those places all across Ontario where we know people, sometimes staff members and family members, haven't been able to gain access to doctors in this province, we have worked on an historic agreement that sends a message to doctors in this province for the first time in a long, long time that we want to be your partners in the delivery of health care, that we need you occupied on the front lines of health care, helping people to stay healthy in the first place and giving them care as close to home as possible, in their local communities, in a way that has been evaporating under their watch and under their watch, for more than a decade now.

This is an agreement that sends a signal of hope to the people of Ontario that has been long overdue. We have, in this agreement, sought and achieved the restoration of the vitality and viability of family practice in this province, something that both of you, while in government, ran roughshod over.

Mr Baird: How can patients and taxpayers trust you to do what's right and what's in the best interests of taxpayers and our health care system? Here's what you said just last week before a standing committee: "I'll send this message very clearly ... as I have on many occasions:

The levels of salary increases that were raised in the question are not appropriate numbers to be discussed in the current environment. It's an era of restraint."

I was using a number of 6% to 10%. Now we learn that in your secret deal some physicians in this province will get a 35% pay increase, when at the same time you were asking the hospitals in my community to make do with 0.6%, or 1.8% at The Ottawa Hospital. How do you have any credibility, and how can taxpayers and other health care workers trust you to do what's in the best interests of our health care system?

Hon Mr Smitherman: It's an interesting question coming from a member of the cabinet of a party that, while in government, saw the communities that were underserved from the standpoint of doctors go from 60 to 122—and he asks me that question. The member wishes to characterize this as a raise, but the fact of the matter is this is an agreement that seeks to change the way doctors do business in Ontario. It asks of them to change the nature of their practice, to work together in teams, to provide comprehensive 24/7 care, and to assist our 12 million patients in staying healthy in the first place. This is a landmark agreement. Nobody earns increases in this agreement without changing the nature of the way they practise, transforming health care, providing more resources upstream and in communities—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

HYDRO GENERATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. During the election you promised to keep our hydroelectricity system in public hands. You said that new generation would be public, that it would be by OPG, and you promised power at cost. Somewhere here you must have suffered a post-election promise blackout, because now you say that new generation will come from private, profit-driven companies and that electricity will be sold at higher market prices. During the election and before the election you said, "Choose change," so why are you repeating now the failed Conservative model that saddled ordinary Ontarians with skyrocketing prices and supply shortages? What happened to the promise of public power? Why do you now prefer a privately owned, profit-driven supply of electricity?

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Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): To the Minister of Energy.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): This government has not privatized a single asset. It's completely false, number one. Number two, the one decision this government did take was to reverse a decision to privatize the nuclear inspection service of OPG. That was one of the first decisions we took. We reject out of hand the notion that we're privatizing. I don't know where you get it from. Name me one asset that we've privatized.

We are consistent with what we said before the election. We are doing precisely what we said before the

election. We have moved forward to try to rescue a system that was left with no new generation, higher prices, poorly managed assets, and we're trying to correct that. Make no mistake: The commitments Premier McGuinty made in the election are being kept. Nothing has been privatized. Number two, the only decision we have taken was to reverse the decision to privatize nuclear inspection services. If you can point out one asset we've privatized anywhere in hydroelectric, please name it.

Mr Hampton: Premier, you must have seen this letter to you in the *Globe and Mail*: "An open letter to Dalton McGuinty: Don't Pull the Plug on Ontario's Future." It's a letter from, for example, Rod Anderson, national director of—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. You know the rules about props.

Mr Hampton: I'm reading a letter, Speaker.

The Speaker: But you know the rules about props. I ask you to exercise discretion.

Mr Hampton: It's a letter to the Premier. It is from Ron Bartholomew, vice-president of production, retired, Ontario Hydro; Myron Gordon, one of the pre-eminent economists—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'm having difficulty hearing the leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: This is what they say, and I think you'd agree these are very learned people. They say that Premier McGuinty's Bill 100 follows "the same old failed and discredited electricity program" as the Conservatives'. They warn that your plan "will increase consumer electricity rates dramatically, and force electricity-reliant industries to move production out of Ontario, taking good jobs with them." And they say the best way forward is to "give Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation the mandate to provide power at cost for the people of Ontario."

Premier, before the election you said, "Public power." You said, "All new generation will be publicly owned and operated on a not-for-profit basis." Now are you breaking that promise, too?

Hon Mr Duncan: First of all, I reject everything that was put in that letter. The same group on August 24 put out a press release that congratulated Minister Duncan "for recognizing that privatization is not a viable option for Ontario." That was after they made their appearance before the legislative committee and saw the bill and had been briefed about the bill and had met with me. That's their press release, not mine.

The so-called expert they brought in, when questioned by me when I met with them on the record in Windsor, said he hadn't studied the history of Ontario Hydro, hadn't looked at the history of Ontario Hydro.

Let me be clear. This government will not go back to the old public monopoly. It was a failure. It left this province \$38 billion in debt. Your government cancelled conservation programs. Their government left a mess. They're voting against the bill because they think we're undoing what they did. You people just aren't consistent.

This government made a commitment to change, and we're changing for the better. I reject the old Ontario Hydro model and I reject the old Ontario Hydro vice-presidents who want to go back to it. It didn't work. We're fixing it. We're cleaning up the mess that you, and the Conservatives after you, left this province in on the hydroelectric file.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Ms Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): My question is for the Attorney General. This past winter, I supported the Hamilton Police Service in its application for funding through the victims' justice fund to increase the ability of the Hamilton police to fight child pornography in the area. That bid for funding was denied; however, I was assured that our government was addressing the situation and actively dealing with the problem of how police and courts tackle child pornography, especially through the Internet, which we all know is the Wild West. There is a need for a sheriff in the Wild West. Can you tell me what your ministry is doing to address the problem?

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I thank the member for Stoney Creek for her question. We've talked about this a number of times, and you have insisted that your community get the protection from our law enforcement that will ensure that, no matter where you live in the province, no matter whether you're in Stoney Creek or Sudbury or Sault Ste Marie, your kids are getting the full force of the brightest and the best people and technology from our law enforcement.

This announcement today is good news for your community. It fulfills the important commitment that the victims' justice fund must fulfill. It means that, for the first time, we're going to have a provincial strategy that will deal with Internet crime against kids and deal with Internet luring. Through our task force on Internet crime against kids, we are working with the industry and ISPs to try to make our Internet safer for kids and to try to better crack down on those who proliferate child pornography.

Ms Mossop: I do understand that the Internet is an international issue, not a local one, but I need to know that the Hamilton Police Service has what it needs to protect the children of Hamilton and to keep them safe.

Hon Mr Bryant: I think I'll refer this to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): This government is committed to stamping out child pornography and luring on the Internet. This morning's announcement is really a major step to achieve that goal. What we have done is taken the OPP Project P department, which is the lead organization in Ontario, in conjunction with the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, and they're going to come forward with a strategy to effectively deal with this.

As part of the announcement, the Attorney General announced that up to \$5 million will be available for this project. The key thing for Ontario is that Internet luring is a major issue.

You're talking about Hamilton. I'd like to quote from the chief of the Hamilton police, Mr Brian Mullan:

"Internet porn knows no boundaries in exploiting the most vulnerable in our society—our children. We recognize that Ontarians are looking to their police services to fight these reprehensible crimes.

"A provincial strategy that addresses the diverse needs of police services and their communities will help in this fight."

That is by the chief.

CLASS SIZE

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Minister of Education. The purpose of my question is to give the minister an opportunity to clarify for the House and for people in this province the discrepancy of some \$600 million between what he says it'll cost to implement the hard cap class size for JK to grade 3 and what a ministry document says.

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The minister has told us that his projection for implementation of this policy is \$375 million. This ministry document, which finance lawyers have spent the better part of a year suppressing, tells us that they project the cost to be in excess of \$1 billion, and that doesn't include any capital costs.

What I'd like the minister to do, because I think it's important, and I'm sure he will agree, that we know what the true cost of this policy commitment is: I'd like the minister to stand today and tell us whether he is right or whether ministry officials are right in terms of this cost projection.

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): To the member opposite, I'm sure he would like to acknowledge the fact that, rapidly under our government, there has been a reduction in class sizes across this province. In fact, for the first time in way too many years, teachers are able to pay individualized attention to those students. They're doing that under a careful plan, a plan that was put together with wide consultation and now has an expert committee, struck for the last six months, looking at all the implications of doing this carefully over four years, and at the price tag we talked about.

There is a gloom-and-doom that permeates the members opposite when it comes to public services. They showed us that when they were in government. They had no idea how to get better public education to happen. They knew a lot about private schools; they tried to promote those.

We have brought down class sizes, we are getting improved results with literacy and numeracy, and we're going to do that, improving the government services we provide, including the cost-effectiveness, as we go along.

Mr Klees: Speaker, I don't know if you heard an answer here; I didn't. I'm simply saying, on behalf of members in this Legislature, who I believe have a right to know what this will cost, is the minister telling us that he as minister does not have a handle on what this policy is going to cost the Ministry of Education school boards across this province?

On Tuesday morning I was on a radio show with the minister and I was asked what my objective would be as critic. My response was, "To get this man to tell the truth." That is what my—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. First I should get some order in here.

I'm sure the member from Oak Ridges would like to withdraw those comments.

Mr Klees: Yes, by all means; absolutely. I withdraw.

I am sure that the minister will stand in his place right now and tell us the truth about how much this will cost: \$375 million or \$1 billion-plus, the way ministry officials have put it. What is the price tag, Minister?

Hon Mr Kennedy: I'm happy to make it easy for him to fulfill his objective and go home today, because the truth is very simple. In fact, we are reducing class sizes. He's against that. He wants to tell those young families out there that they should not have their children get the attention they've been missing all this time. He stands, with his party, against kids getting that kind of attention.

For \$90 million this year—a significant investment, one that this government weighed very carefully and that this finance minister and this Premier supported, even in a constrained environment—we've reached 38% of our schools. It will cost us around \$375 million to reach all of them. We have that number. But more importantly, we have right now some opportunities on the way to helping every 12-year-old in this province to read, write and comprehend at a high level, children who have been held back by the antediluvian thinking of some of the members opposite, of which we've had a fine example.

Mr Klees: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm going to request a late show from this minister—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member from Oak Ridges, I hope you will submit the necessary papers for the late show.

ASSISTANCE TO DISABLED

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, it may surprise you, but there are still some people in this province who believe you and your promises. One such foolish soul is Mr Jason Chenier, who lives in eastern Ontario. He went to your Ministry of Finance Web site and learned that there is a sales tax rebate for vehicles for the disabled. He got all the forms from your Web site. He filled them out. He and his wife went out and redid the entire van for their disabled son. They spent thousands of dollars. They filled out the forms, mailed them in and

awaited their cheque. Instead of a cheque, they got a letter from your officials saying that the program was cancelled. They're now stuck with a bill they can ill afford. What are you going to do about this program that is on your Web site?

Interjections.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I welcome a question from my friend from Beaches-East York. I'm going to try and answer it, but over the heckling from the former Conservative critic for finance, who is now looking for a portfolio to speak to.

My friend from Beaches-East York knows full well that we addressed that question in the budget last May 18. We made significant new investments to help, in a new and more effective way, people with disabilities. Most importantly, I say to my friend, yesterday my colleague the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration introduced an act that will transform life for those who are disabled in this province, and we are very proud of that. I can give him all sorts of detail—but I know you're concerned about time—about those new programs.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary, and I hope I can hear it this time.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Come to order, please.

Mr Prue: I went to the Web site today. This is the form you get. If this was in private enterprise, we would call this false advertising and the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs would have something to say about it.

The worst thing of all, though, is that Mr Chenier is a police officer. He knew that this was wrong and he went to his member of provincial Parliament, the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, who wrote you a letter on September 27 telling you that your staff is misleading the public, and you have done absolutely nothing about it. I went there today; it's still there. You have let this family down. I want to know, what are you going to do to provide him with the money he can ill afford, or is this just another broken promise?

Hon Mr Sorbara: I want to tell my friend directly that if there is misinformation on our Web site, I will have that corrected as of today. I want to assure him of that. I want to assure him that there are literally hundreds and hundreds of programs delivered by this government, often now through the technology of the Internet. I clearly accept the possibility that the information about this program is in error, but I want to tell him that the program that replaced that program will have a much more positive impact on the lives of those in this province who are forced to live with disabilities, and we are very proud of that.

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HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Orléans, which makes up 90% of my riding of Ottawa-Orléans, has experienced rapid growth over the last few years. The population is

now close to 100,000 people. Orléans remains a bedroom community; the jobs are in downtown Ottawa, south Ottawa, Nepean and Kanata. These same jobs are filled by residents from the east of my riding in Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, all of whom use Highway 174 and the split to access their jobs.

The split forms part of your environmental assessment study for the Queensway East and it has been at capacity for many years. The ministry has proposed a preferred alternative for modifications at the split, and the city of Ottawa has proposed improvements to Highway 174 going easterly.

My question, Minister, is about the Hunt Club Road interchange. This is important to us because it is our direct connection in Orléans to the Ottawa airport and is fundamental to providing alternative access to the south and west of Ottawa for the people of Orléans. Can you confirm that your ministry is prepared to undertake an environmental assessment for Hunt Club Road?

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): The short answer to his question is yes, we have received a similar request from the city of Ottawa to do the environmental assessment, and I have asked my ministry to work with Ottawa to go ahead with the environmental assessment process for Hunt Club.

Mr McNeely: The second question is, when will the split improvements be designed so that improvements can be scheduled for this major transportation problem affecting the many people in Orléans?

Hon Mr Takhar: I want to let the honourable member know that the environmental assessment study for this important project is nearing completion. We anticipate filing the transportation environmental study report for public review and comment by mid-2005. I also want to tell the honourable member that we are moving forward with the planning and repair work on five bridges along Highway 417 in the west end of Ottawa. I want to assure the member that we are committed to making sure that Ottawa's transportation needs are met.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. During the election you promised farmers you would develop a new generation of safety nets and companion programs to better address the needs of Ontario's farmers. We recently discovered that the public service has set the cost of these new programs at \$186 million in the first year alone, yet in the 2004 budget you slashed the ministry budget by 20% and took \$50 million out of the crop stabilization program. How are you going to stand up for Ontario's farmers when you and the Minister of Finance are ignoring the public service and making up your own numbers? Tell us, Minister, are you renegeing on your promise to Ontario's farmers, or can we expect a \$180-million announcement in the next week or two?

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I really appreciate being lectured by a former minister who devastated the budget in the Ministry of

Agriculture. The very first year in office you cut the budget by \$12.8 million; in 1997-98, \$31.4 million; in 1998-99, \$62.8 million out of the budget. So you can't stand up and try to explain that you're a defender of the Ministry of Agriculture.

We have been working with the agricultural community in moving forward. We signed the agricultural policy framework in December, which is going to bring \$1.7 billion into this province for farmers. We're moving forward on companion programs. We have the new production insurance program in place, the new case program in place. We're in the process right now of transitioning to new programs, replacement for the market revenue insurance fund, and self-directed risk management.

So we are moving forward. We're working in conjunction, we are consulting, and we are going to have a new generation of safety nets for the farmers of this province.

Mr Hardeman: Minister, you said that part of the 20% budget cut was safety net bridge funding that had come to an end, but farmers have yet to see a penny of that money. Some \$45 million should have already been paid out on last year's, never mind the \$45 million owed this year. Industry leaders are saying your safety net distribution process is a mess and is overwhelming you. We see that you've promised \$186 million worth of safety net programs, and you can't even deliver the \$90 million of old money to those who desperately need it. Is this what the industry should expect from your tenure as minister: a messy, overwhelmed system with a government that can't make sound fiscal decisions?

Hon Mr Peters: I can tell you what the farmers of Ontario are going to get from this government, and that's a commitment to do things differently. Not across-the-board, and I think it's important, reduction—this is when they were in government. They reduced genetic improvement transfers, \$1.2 million; field services, \$4.8 million; reduced the safety net program budget by \$22.1 million; reduced ministry administration, \$4.4 million; \$7 million in spending cuts to the University of Guelph. So don't stand up and criticize us for what we are doing. We're moving forward.

As a result of the agricultural policy framework, there's what is known as transition dollars. That's \$173 million that is going to be moving forward as we transition from the existing programs that we have. We are going to move forward. We have been working with the Ontario Agricultural Commodity Council.

You know darn well, member, that we have been working with them and we're ensuring that we consult with farmers, unlike you, who just arbitrarily cut that budget without standing up and your rural caucus not standing up—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, you will know

that hospitals across northern Ontario like Sault Ste Marie, Timmins, Hearst, Smooth Rock Falls, Kapuskasing, and the list goes on, are all struggling to balance their budgets this year. All of them are saying that unless you find the money to shore up their budgets, they're going to have to lay off full-time staff and cut services in an area that is already very underserved.

I want to draw your attention to promise 126 of your election platform in the last election, that hospitals need immediate relief and long-term stability so patients can get better care. My question is simply this: Are you prepared to live up to your campaign commitment and fund hospitals so they don't have to lay off staff and cut services in northern Ontario?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The member will know that Ontario hospitals are to submit their plans, and the ministry and the government will have the opportunity to review those and work with hospitals on getting them into balance. We inherited a situation where hospitals were in a chronic situation of needing bailouts at the end of the year. The fact of the matter is that in less than a year in office, we've contributed \$385 million to base funding and a second contribution, \$469.5 million, to base funding for Ontario hospitals. We've acknowledged working capital deficits—operating bills unpaid by that party while in government—totalling \$721 million, and we've made the largest single investment in community-based care designed to divert traffic from our hospitals.

We recognize they have challenging work to do. That's why we're going to work with them, starting on the 15th, when they submit their plans. I make the commitment to the honourable member that I'm mindful of the particular challenges in northern Ontario, especially for those small hospitals which have a smaller administrative base, and will be looking very, very carefully at the information as it comes in from Ontario hospitals. I look forward to continuing to hear from him on this matter.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have received a number of petitions over the summertime. I have a petition to do with taxpayer protection.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the McGuinty government's 2004 budget will break the taxpayer protection law by not conducting a referendum on tax increases; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty signed an election pledge on September 11, 2003, not to raise taxes without the explicit consent of voters through a referendum; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised in TV ads not to raise taxes by one penny on working families; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty pledged in writing to obey the taxpayer protection law, which requires a referendum before increasing taxes;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To ensure that all of the McGuinty government's tax increases are put before the people of Ontario in a referendum."

I support this petition and affix my signature to it.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I would ask the members, as they leave, to leave quietly so I can hear the petition being read.

OPTOMETRISTS

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislature.

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario will be considering a private member's bill that aims to amend the Optometry Act to give optometrists the authority to prescribe therapeutic pharmaceutical agents for the treatment of certain eye diseases; and

"Whereas optometrists are highly trained and equipped with the knowledge and specialized instrumentation needed to effectively diagnose and treat certain eye problems; and

"Whereas extending the authority to prescribe TPAs to optometrists will help relieve the demands on ophthalmologists and physicians who currently have the exclusive domain for prescribing TPAs to optometry patients; and

"Whereas the bill introduced by New Democrat Peter Kormos ... will ensure that patients receive prompt, timely, one-stop care where appropriate;

"Therefore, I do support the bill proposing an amendment to the Optometry Act to give optometrists the authority to prescribe therapeutic pharmaceutical agents for the treatment of certain eye diseases and I urge the government of Ontario to ensure speedy passage of the bill."

Signed by hundreds and by myself as well.

1500

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL PARKWAY

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Alexander Graham Bell, renowned inventor of society-altering technological inventions, such as the telephone, greatly revolutionized the daily lives of people in Ontario, Canada and indeed the world; and

"Whereas Alexander Graham Bell's contributions to science, technology and society as a whole, were in part developed and tested while he lived in Brantford, Ontario; and

"Whereas Brantford lies at the heart of the section of Highway 403 which runs from Woodstock to Burlington;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To adopt and pass into law Dave Levac's private member's bill, Bill 44, the Alexander Graham Bell Parkway Act, renaming Highway 403 between Woodstock and Burlington as a tribute to this great inventor" and resident of Brantford.

I sign my name to this petition and give it over to Kathryn.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas recreational trailers kept at parks and campgrounds in Ontario are being assessed by the Municipal Property Assessment Corp (MPAC) and are subject to property taxes; and

"Whereas owners of these trailers are seasonal and occasional residents who contribute to the local" tourist "economy ... without requiring significant municipal services; and

"Whereas the added burden of this taxation will make it impossible for many families of modest income to afford their holiday sites at parks and campgrounds" in Ontario;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That these seasonal trailers not be subject to retroactive taxation for the year 2003; and that the tax not be imposed in 2004; and that no such tax be introduced without consultation with owners of the trailers and trailer parks, municipal governments, businesses, the tourism sector and other stakeholders."

I am pleased to endorse and sign this on their behalf.

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have petitions that have been sent to me by M^{me} Louise Marois of St Charles, Ontario. They read as follows:

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government is cutting provincial funding for essential health care services like optometry, physiotherapy and chiropractic care;

"Whereas this privatization of health care services will force Ontarians to pay out-of-pocket for essential health care;

"Whereas Ontarians already pay for health care through their taxes and will be forced to pay even more through the government's new regressive health tax;

"Whereas the Liberals promised during the election that they would not cut or privatize health care services in Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We demand the McGuinty Liberal government keep its promises and guarantee adequate provincial funding for critical health services like eye, physiotherapy and chiropractic care."

I agree with the petitioners; I've affixed my signature to this.

SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANT

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I have a petition on behalf of the constituents of Kingston and the Islands.

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Amherstview water pollution control plant in Loyalist township discharges effluent into the Bayview bog, which drains into Glenvale Creek, Westbrook Creek and Collins Creek into Lake Ontario;" and

"Whereas the sewage effluent nutrient, metal and sulphur oxide contaminants have adversely affected water quality, sediment quality and biota diversity in the watercourse;" and

"Whereas the sewage effluent volume and constant flow has flooded farmland, destroyed hardwood forests and terrestrial habitat, and magnified the impact of seasonal floods on the downstream residences;" and

"Whereas the sewage effluent pathogenic and organic contamination poses unacceptable human health risk to recreational activity and potable water supplies along the watercourse;" and

"Whereas Loyalist township has the option of discharging the effluent directly into Lake Ontario, as cited in the consultant's June 2004 environmental study report;

"We, the undersigned citizens of west Kingston residing along the watercourse, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to consider the deleterious impacts of the current and proposed increased effluent discharges on the downstream landowners and residents, hitherto excluded from the recent municipal class environmental assessment."

HEALTH CARE

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Liberal government has announced in their budget that they are delisting key health services such as routine eye exams, chiropractic and physiotherapy services,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To reverse the delisting of eye exams, chiropractic and physiotherapy services and restore funding for these important and necessary services."

I'm pleased to sign this petition.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay, including seniors, low-income families and the working poor, will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"The elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

LANDFILL

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

"Whereas, as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to the design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on water source protection, which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented under Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of site 41 and the nearby water sources."

I'm pleased to sign that.

TUITION

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that's been sent to me by the students' general association of the Canadian Federation of Students, Local 30, which is at Laurentian University. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal government took an historic step forward by funding a tuition freeze for two years; and

"Whereas the majority of Ontarians support increased public funding for colleges and universities, as well as reduced tuition fees; and

"Whereas increasing student debt through income-contingent loan repayment schemes or raising loan limits only increases the cost of post-secondary education for students from modest means; and

"Whereas per student investment in Ontario still lags gravely behind the vast majority of jurisdictions in North America;

"Therefore we the undersigned, supporting the Canadian Federation of Students' call to increase funding for colleges and universities and reduce tuition fees for all Ontario students, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to (a) reduce tuition fees for all students in Ontario, (b) increase public funding for post-secondary education to at least the national average, and (c) implement an upfront, needs-based grant system for Ontario full-time and part-time students."

I agree with the petitioners and I add my signature to this.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly from a group of homeowners in the Lisgar area of Mississauga, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

"Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their county of origin; and

"Whereas Ontario, its businesses, its people and its institutions badly need the professional, managerial and technical skills that many newcomers to Canada have and want to use;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the other institutions and agencies of and within the government of Ontario, undertake specific and proactive measures to work with the bodies regulating access to Ontario's

professions, trades and other occupations in order that newcomers to Canada gain fair, timely and cost-effective access to certification and other measures that facilitate the entry or re-entry of skilled workers and professionals trained outside Canada into the Canadian workforce."

I am one of those residents of Lisgar. I absolutely agree with this, and I'm affixing my signature.

1510

LESLIE M. FROST CENTRE

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): A petition to save the Frost Centre:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Leslie M. Frost Natural Resources Centre has a long history in the county of Haliburton and provides an important historical link dating back to its use in 1921 as a chief ranger station; and

"Whereas the history in the use and management of natural resources in Ontario stretches back to the 1600s and forms an integral part of the overall history of the province and Ministry of Natural Resources, and the history of the ministry and the Frost Centre itself easily qualifies as a significant historic resource; and

"Whereas the Minister of Culture, Madeleine Meilleur, has said, 'The McGuinty government values and is committed to conserving Ontario's heritage for the enjoyment and benefit of present and future generations'; and

"Whereas the Frost Centre is an important educational resource for the community, being described on the Ministry of Natural Resources Web site as 'Ontario's leading natural resources education, training and conference centre'; and

"Whereas closure of the Frost Centre would cause economic hardship in the local communities of the county of Haliburton and district of Muskoka due to direct job losses and loss of tourism dollars spent in local communities; and

"Whereas the local community has not been consulted about the closure plan;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"The Dalton McGuinty Liberals should not close the Leslie M. Frost Centre."

SENIOR CITIZENS

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The member from Brant.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Speaker, I would defer to the other member, if you wish. Too late? OK.

This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas elderly citizens living in retirement homes have no provincial legislation to protect them. Retirement homes are uninspected, unmonitored and unregulated. The quality of care varies widely. We are asking for provincial legislation to implement regular inspections,

with the authority to impose violations, charges and penalties, and to establish and ensure set standards for retirement homes that must be met and adhered to.”

I sign my name to this petition and support it wholeheartedly.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Having missed a round, the member from Nickel Belt.

EYE EXAMINATIONS

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

“Whereas the 2004 provincial budget was not clear on whether adult optometry patients who ... are at risk for medical conditions such as diabetes, glaucoma, macular degeneration and clinically significant cataracts would continue to be covered through the Ontario health insurance plan; and

“Whereas Ontario’s optometrists strongly feel that Ontario seniors, those under 20 and those with chronic sight-threatening diseases must continue to receive primary eye care services directly from Ontario’s optometrists; and

“Whereas forcing patients to be referred to optometrists through their family physicians ignores the years of specialized training optometrists undertake to detect, diagnose and treat eye conditions; and

“Whereas almost 140 communities across the province have already been designated as underserved for family practitioners and the government’s approach will only exacerbate the problem unnecessarily;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care immediately clarify that the eye examination services they provide to patients at risk for medical conditions will continue to be covered by OHIP and the coverage for these services is not dependent on a patient being referred to an optometrist by a family physician.”

I agree with the petitioners. I have signed my signature to this.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LIQUOR LICENCE AMENDMENT ACT, 2004 LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES PERMIS D’ALCOOL

Mr Watson moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 96, An Act to amend the Liquor Licence Act /
Projet de loi 96, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les permis
d’alcool.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Mr Watson.

Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): Mr Speaker, I’ll be sharing my time with my new parliamentary assistant, the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot.

The purpose of this legislation is to—

The Speaker: Thank you very much. Mr Watson has moved second reading of Bill 96. Is it the pleasure of the House—sorry, I’m actually way ahead now. Mr Watson?

Hon Mr Watson: Thank you, Mr Speaker. The purpose of this legislation is to balance consumer choice in liquor service with stronger enforcement measures to increase public safety.

Ontario’s Liquor Licence Act was originally enacted in 1944. It sets out rules for the sale and service of beverage alcohol in the province of Ontario, and the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario is responsible for the administration of the act.

Over the years, amendments have been made to the legislation to improve economic opportunities for the hospitality sector while strengthening social responsibility requirements. The last significant reform to the statute took place, actually, when the current finance minister held my portfolio in 1990. Since then, the act has become increasingly outdated and out of step with the evolving and maturing hospitality marketplace.

By modernizing the Liquor Licence Act, we’re taking the first step toward bringing Ontario’s liquor laws into the 21st century. The process of modernization obviously can’t be accomplished overnight, and our government is committed to future stages of Liquor Licence Act reform in consultation with stakeholders and the public. However, the bill before us, Bill 96, represents the first stage of that reform. It’s the first step in our overall strategy to modernize the Liquor Licence Act by increasing consumer choice, strengthening enforcement tools, and reducing administrative burden.

Let me remind you again about the two components of the bill.

The first component would lay the groundwork for Bring Your Own Wine, also known as BYOW.

Le projet de loi propose une définition du terme « approvisionnement » afin d’indiquer clairement que le terme ne désigne pas uniquement les cas où un client achète de l’alcool chez un titulaire de licence. Si le projet de loi est adopté, le terme « approvisionnement » englobera également les cas où un client apporte du vin dans des débits de boissons.

While the change itself appears relatively minor, if passed by this Legislature it will lay the important social responsibility groundwork for future changes. If passed, this bill will maintain current social responsibility requirements if Bring Your Own Wine comes into effect. There will be no questions or ambiguity about responsibility. Licensees would still be responsible, as they are today, for making certain that liquor is not supplied to an intoxicated person or to someone under the age of 19, whether that person purchased the wine from the licensee or brought the wine into the restaurant with them.

If this bill is passed, the government will then proceed with regulatory changes to introduce Bring Your Own

Wine to Ontario. The Bring Your Own Wine idea really is about choice—a new consumer choice in liquor service, and a choice for licensed establishments on whether or not to offer this service. The BYOW service would allow patrons to bring bottled wine into licensed restaurants and consume it there. Participation by licensed restaurants would be entirely voluntary. This is very much a piece of legislation that one would consider libertarian, because no businesses would be forced to offer this option. Participating restaurants would simply apply to the AGCO for a special endorsement to their liquor sales licence. Only commercially made and unopened wine would be allowed. Homemade wine and previously opened bottles would not be permitted.

While the quality of homemade wine continues to improve across Ontario, BYOW will be limited to commercial wine, as labels of store-bought wine must clearly state the alcohol content. This measure, requested by the Ontario Community Council on Impaired Driving, OCCID, will assist licensees in their social responsibility duties. I want to thank OCCID for their very constructive and valuable input.

The restaurant would also have the option to establish and charge a corkage fee or service charge.

In other words, if a restaurant does not want to offer this service to its patrons, it doesn't have to, but we shouldn't prohibit a restaurant that wants to offer it by a competitor, saying, "I'm sorry. I don't want you to offer this service." This is all about consumer choice, and it's about the rights of businesses to choose their own type of service in their own establishment.

It's pretty evident when you look at the research on this issue that we're not in uncharted waters. The Bring Your Own Wine option has been successfully offered in other areas of Canada as well as in parts of the United States and around the world. In fact, I believe there are over 30 different jurisdictions—Australia, New Zealand, Massachusetts, New York, Quebec, Alberta, New Brunswick, France, Italy, a number of jurisdictions—that clearly feel this is a service that consumers appreciate.

1520

The owner of Infusion Bistro in Ottawa was quoted in a recent newspaper article as saying, "Anything that's going to enhance the consumer's perception or experience at a restaurant is good." I also agree with the restaurateur quoted in another newspaper recently who said, "What's good for the patron is good for the restaurant."

Correspondence to my office is about 75% in favour of this initiative, and I appreciate the feedback I've received from so many forward-thinking licensees who see BYOW as a great new opportunity and not a threat to their business, people like a restaurateur I recently met with in Windsor who wants to strike a deal with wineries in the Pelee Island region to encourage tourists and visitors alike to purchase a bottle of wine and bring it to her restaurant.

Another Toronto restaurateur wants to offer BYOW to his customers on their slow night, Mondays. They do this

quite often in New York. On a Monday night, which is traditionally a slow night in the restaurant industry, they would offer BYOW just on that particular night, which is completely permissible under the legislation.

Many of us remember Rod Seiling, a great player with the Toronto Maple Leafs and a member of the 1972—

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): The New York Rangers.

Hon Mr Watson: He was with the Leafs. Rod is now president of the Greater Toronto Hotel Association, and he said, "These changes are progressive and will enable the industry to better serve its diverse customer base."

Stephen Beckta, one of the restaurateurs who is listed, I believe, in *enRoute* magazine as one of the top restaurants in Canada, said, "I'm all for allowing customers the option to bring their own wine into our restaurant for a corkage fee. This practice allows people to dine out more often and with greater flexibility. Having worked as a sommelier and restaurant manager in New York, I know first-hand that this can be beneficial to guests and restaurants alike. That's why I'm a firm supporter of this initiative." That's a fine restaurant in Mr Patten's riding that I'm sure he's familiar with.

If the bill is passed, the government has also announced our plans to introduce another consumer choice to Ontario, the option, Take Home the Rest. The initiative would allow patrons to remove an unfinished bottle of wine from licensed establishments, as long as the licensee had properly resealed the bottle. Again, participation by licensed establishments would be entirely voluntary, another aspect that people should keep in mind.

British Columbia, by the way, introduced this option in 2002. Take Home the Rest has gone very smoothly. Likewise, in Alberta they introduced it last year.

For participating restaurants, Take Home the Rest would apply to bottles consumers brought with them or to ones they ordered from the restaurant itself. If customers were able to take home what they didn't drink, they might be more inclined to dine out in the first place, increasing restaurant revenue, but more importantly they wouldn't feel compelled to finish the whole bottle on-site, encouraging responsible drinking, obviously.

The social responsibility benefits of Take Home the Rest have also been highlighted by the Ontario Community Council on Impaired Driving.

I had the honour for several years of being the president and CEO of the Canadian Tourism Commission. I saw first-hand, particularly post 9/11, the challenges that face the hospitality industry. Of course the challenges have compounded in recent years with the SARS outbreak, the rising dollar, heightened security concerns and other issues. I know our great Minister of Tourism, Mr Bradley, is working hard to encourage tourists to come back to great parts of this province, whether it's northern Ontario, the Niagara region, eastern Ontario or right here in Toronto. I remain firmly convinced that if you want to build your business, you

simply can't go wrong by offering consumers more choices.

But liquor reform is more than about giving consumers and businesses more choices. It's also about social responsibility and public safety. That's why we're balancing increased consumer choice with stronger enforcement measures. We're proposing changes to give regulators and law enforcement officials new tools to protect our communities. One amendment would allow the registrar of the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario to immediately suspend a liquor license, if necessary, in the public interest; that is, where there is a threat to public safety.

Currently under the act, two board members can order an interim suspension of a liquor licence, if necessary, in the public interest. This procedure takes time as two board members must be found to deal with the matter. Meanwhile, dangerous or disruptive situations can continue. This government is concerned about liquor-related violence. If passed, this amendment to the Liquor Licence Act would enable the alcohol and gaming commission to take quick action to address these urgent problems as they occur.

An immediate interim suspension of a liquor licence by the registrar would be followed within 15 days by a full hearing by the board to review the suspension.

Currently, the Registrar of Alcohol and Gaming has the power to immediately suspend a registration under the Gaming Control Act, but not under the Liquor Licence Act. The reform we're proposing would provide comparable powers regarding liquor licences and would quickly address public concerns. This change would be an important step toward equipping the alcohol and gaming commission with modern tools to enforce the liquor laws effectively and take quick action to protect the public.

Here's another problem we intend to fix: Under the current Liquor Licence Act, police can order people—and this is something I had no knowledge of until it was brought to my attention—to vacate licensed premises where the act or regulations have been contravened or public safety is threatened; however, it is not an offence, ironically, to either fail to leave the premise or to come right back. We want to close this loophole by making it an offence to fail to leave a licensed premise if ordered to do so by a police officer, or to return the same day after being asked to leave. Police could lay charges against people who thwart their efforts to clear premises in disruptive situations. The Toronto Police Service, for instance, recommended this change as far back as 1997, and action is long overdue. We all know the circumstances. Often people are asked to leave a licensed establishment for inappropriate or rowdy behaviour, and when they come back they are not in the kind of shape or frame of mind where they should be involved in coming back to the licensed establishment.

Finally, the issue of underage drinking remains a serious concern. We propose to double the minimum fines for offences relating to liquor and underage persons.

Nous prévoyons doubler les amendes minimales, c'est-à-dire qu'elles passeront de 100 \$ à 200 \$ pour une personne qui n'a pas de licence et de 500 \$ à 1000 \$ pour un titulaire de licence. Nous montrons ainsi que nous ne plaisantons pas en matière de consommation d'alcool chez le mineurs.

Notre gouvernement croit que la modernisation du système de licence pour débit de boisson doit établir un juste milieu. D'une part, il doit améliorer le choix offert au consommateur et le service à la clientèle, et, d'autre part, il doit fournir des instruments d'application plus puissants et plus efficaces.

One of the issues we'll be looking at is the streamlining of the liquor licence application process. The current application system assumes one size fits all. The Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario evaluates all applications through the same process, regardless of the applicant's size or track record. For example, a family restaurant and a megabar go through an identical process, which doesn't seem to make much sense. We're interested in changing this by evaluating applications on the basis of their risk to public safety.

There are a number of other items that we'll be looking into in the future to continue to bring our liquor laws into the 21st century, but that's down the road. I was in Peterborough this morning, and I talked to a number of licensees. They're very excited about the opportunity to have participation in a series of round tables that my parliamentary assistant and I will be leading sometime early in the new year.

The proposed Liquor Licence Amendment Act, 2004, is the foundation we'll build on; it's our first step. We propose to give consumers and licensed restaurants new options in liquor service while maintaining social responsibility in the service and consumption of alcohol. We understand that today's hospitality marketplace is based on choice, and we also understand that strong enforcement of liquor laws means safer communities. That's why we're balancing an increase in consumer choice with tougher enforcement tools. We want to give businesses new opportunities to serve their customers and to make our quality of life that much better in the province of Ontario, and we want to protect the public from the harm that misuse of alcohol and liquor can cause.

We're confident that the outcome of these measures will be real, positive change, change that will make our economy stronger through the hospitality industry, the public safer, and our communities more dynamic and more prosperous.

I'd like to thank all of those who have voiced their support on this piece of legislation. I know my predecessor, the member for Erie-Lincoln, was quoted just after I introduced the legislation, saying, "I am in favour of bring-your-own," as it will be good for tourism. He understands the economic benefits, as a result of being a former tourism minister, and he certainly understands the importance of the wine industry in his backyard.

The legislation before the House would help make all of this possible. I urge all members to lend their support,

and I look forward to a standing committee of this Legislature hearing from the public on these proposed changes.

Thank you, and I pass it to my parliamentary assistant.

1530

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): The Chair recognizes the member from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I'm honoured to rise in support of this proposed legislation. I really appreciate the minister's comments and his great leadership on this file.

Since this issue was first broached a few months ago, a lively debate has ensued in the media, among the public, and now, certainly, in this House, where it's quite proper. That's good. It speaks eloquently to the issue of people starting to pay attention to the need to modernize the Liquor Licence Act and to bring Ontario's laws into the 21st century. That's exactly what we're doing.

That said, whenever a new issue appears on the scene, a certain amount of misinformation can easily slip into the debate. Predictably, this has happened with proposed liquor law reform. Even in this House, I've heard some surprising statements. Minister Watson has done an excellent job of providing useful information about this bill and what it includes. He has explained how it will build the framework for future changes and how it will, indeed, benefit our communities.

The bill is the first step in an overall strategy to modernize the Liquor Licence Act. It's only the beginning of what we want to do. If you were a theologian, you'd say it's a bit like baptism. It's not the end of a journey, it's the start of a journey. That said, there are still lots of myths about where we'd like to go with this strategy, should this bill be passed. I want to take the next few minutes to dispel a series of myths that have cropped up, and, as usual, I intend to do that with facts.

These myths fall into two broad categories: first, how these initiatives would affect the restaurant consumer; and second, how they would impact on the hospitality business itself. One myth is that these changes would loosen the controls that prevent excess drinking. That's not true. As my colleagues have said time and time again, the fact is that responsible liquor service remains a top priority for this government. In this regard, the dining environment would not change. The licensee, in fact, would continue to be accountable for complying with the liquor laws. Even if patrons bring their own wine, it would be up to the licensee to ensure that over-consumption or consumption by minors does not happen. With take-home-the-rest, existing controls on transporting open liquor and the ban on consuming it in public areas would remain in force; in fact, they would be strengthened.

Specific features of the bring-your-own-wine initiative would support responsible conduct. Each bottle must be opened by the licensee or by a server, who would keep track of how much was being consumed, and only un-

opened, commercially made wine would qualify. The minister has outlined some of the reasons for that.

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): A very responsible act.

Mr McMeekin: Indeed, as my colleague says, it is a very responsible proposal.

Establishments offering the take-home-the-rest option would be required to reseal the bottle in such a way that it could not be readily reopened and consumed while in transit. And taking your wine home will mean less consumption, not more, as people would not feel compelled to finish the bottle at the table. Frankly, it's an issue of trust. On balance, I trust that most of my constituents want to drink responsibly, not irresponsibly. This will provide choice options for them which I think are prudent and timely.

A related myth is that people would be able to bring in as many bottles of wine as they want and not have to order anything from the restaurant. That's not so. It's just not going happen. In fact, we're confident that licensed restaurants, based on their experience, would be entirely capable of managing these details themselves. We think that's the way it should be.

Licensed restaurants would have the ability to determine the number of bottles the patron could bring on to the premises on any one occasion. Establishments could choose to set such a limit—and, I suspect, most will. Restaurants would also have the option of setting a minimum food order if they wish. I think that's reasonable; you're in the business.

The point I want to stress is this: Licensed restaurants would remain responsible for keeping people from consuming too much liquor.

Hon Mr Watson: As they should.

Mr McMeekin: That's right. As the minister points out, they'd remain accountable and responsible, as they do today, and they're very good at their job.

I've even heard it said that some might show up at any bar or restaurant with a bottle of wine, even fast-food restaurants. Let's get serious. Someone showing up at McDonald's with a bottle of wine under their arm just isn't going to happen. In simple fact, Bring Your Own Wine would apply only to licensed restaurants, those that have obtained a special endorsement to their liquor licence from the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario.

Participation in the bring-your-own-wine initiative will be entirely voluntary—the minister mentioned that; I'm repeating you, Minister; sorry for that—on the part of the restaurant. As I understand from my research, in Alberta, which introduced Bring Your Own Wine last fall, about 6% of the eligible restaurants opted in, and their experience has been a very positive one. While this rate could translate into hundreds of participating restaurants in Ontario, it's also obvious that many restaurants will not be offering this service, and we certainly would not force them to do so. That's not the government's intent.

Yet another myth is that allowing customers to have open wine bottles in the car would just encourage more

people to drink and drive. The fact is, establishments offering the take-home-the-rest option would be required to reseal the bottle in such a way that it could not be readily reopened and consumed while in transit. I think that's another good thing, isn't it.

Mr Ramal: They'd have to be pressured to drink all the bottle.

Mr McMeekin: They would; that's right. We don't want to do that, as my colleague points out. We don't want to pressure anybody to consume more alcohol than they're comfortable with.

Some say that resealing the bottle won't stop patrons from drinking on the street or behind the wheel. The fact is, existing controls on transporting open liquor and the ban on consumption in public areas would still apply. For example, it's the law that open bottles of liquor must not be readily accessible to people in a vehicle, so a take-home-the-rest bottle would likely have to be carried in the trunk, certainly legally out of the reach of any driver. It would be the same as if you were bringing an open bottle home from a party at a friend's house. You would have to transport it in a way that makes it hard to get at. That just makes sense.

There are also some who say that the consumer won't really benefit because the corkage fee would far surpass the cost of the bottle of wine. Again, this is a matter of choice. The fact is, whether to have a corkage fee or not is a question for the individual restaurant operator to decide. It would be a business decision. The government isn't interested in controlling either the minimum or maximum charge, or telling the restaurateur how to make his meat loaf. Over time, the marketplace would determine the level for these fees. Again, "choice" is the operative word.

Now let's turn to some myths about the effect of these initiatives on the restaurant business. One myth is that Ontario is jumping the gun. Some people seem to think, in spite of the evidence, some of which the minister outlined, that Quebec is the only place where these services are available. The fact is, Ontario's playing catch-up, not leading the pack. Bring Your Own Wine is available in New Brunswick, Alberta and Quebec in this country, as well as Australia, several US states and many places around the world. Take Home the Rest is offered in British Columbia, Alberta and Quebec, with very positive feedback.

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Then you hear a claim, by some, that these changes will be another regulatory burden on restaurants. That's simply not true. The fact is, these initiatives will enable licensed restaurants to do more, rather than making them do less. Of course, there will be rules surrounding these new services, but I don't think most licensed restaurants will find it an undue burden to comply with requirements such as getting a special endorsement of a liquor licence or ensuring that servers open any bottles that patrons bring with them and reseal them when they leave, or any training that's involved in that whole process. Any licensed restaurant that finds the rules burdensome could

simply choose not to get involved with these initiatives. Participation will be entirely voluntary.

Mr Patten: Who could be opposed to that?

Mr McMeekin: As my colleague from Ottawa points out, who could be opposed to that? It just makes so much sense.

Of course, with Bring your Own Wine and Take Home the Rest, the current rules for the responsible sale and service of alcohol would continue to apply. But those are existing requirements, not new ones.

Another myth is that if patrons brought their own wine, licensed restaurants won't be able to monitor how much they've had to drink. The fact is, restaurants would continue, as they have always done, to be responsible for ensuring that overconsumption, and consumption by minors, does not occur.

Interjection.

Mr McMeekin: I know the member from Ottawa agrees with that.

Licensees would continue to be accountable for responsible liquor service, just as they are now.

Then there are some who say that we're solving the wrong problem; the real need is not more choice but better enforcement of existing laws. The fact is, our package, the package that the esteemed Minister of Consumer and Business Services outlined, does both: It balances new choices for consumers and licensed restaurants with stronger enforcement measures.

We're proposing, for example, to allow the Registrar of Alcohol And Gaming to immediately suspend a liquor licence, if necessary, in the public interest—not have to wait for the next board meeting to do that—as in situations where there is a threat to public safety. We want to do away with delays that may allow dangerous or disruptive situations to affect community and public safety. We'll make it an offence to fail to leave licensed premises when required by a police officer or to return the same day after being asked to leave. We want to do what we can to facilitate the police when they are trying to clear a premise.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Then you should consult with them.

Mr McMeekin: We have, at some considerable depth.

Finally, we'll double the minimum fines for offences relating to liquor and underage persons to show we mean business when it comes to underage drinking.

We fully recognize that stronger enforcement means safer communities. We intend to give police and the alcohol and gaming commission more up-to-date tools to protect the public.

To those who say that this package doesn't go far enough and there's more to be done, we agree. The process of modernizing the regulatory system for beverage alcohol can't be completed overnight. The bill before us today represents but the first stage of reform. Our government is committed to further stages of Liquor Licence Act reform, in consultation with stakeholders and the public.

The package before us today is but the foundation upon which we must build. If enacted, it will open up

new opportunities for the hospitality industry to serve consumers and it will give consumers new choices. In the process, it will make our communities safer.

I urge all members to support this bill and join in our effort to bring Ontario's liquor laws into the 21st century.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): The member opposite raised a very important issue. He made mention of drinking and driving in his explanation of what he refers to as myths with respect to, in their view, making alcohol more accessible. This does make alcohol more accessible and hence there is a safety concern with respect to bartenders and other servers being able to monitor what's going on with people bringing booze into their restaurants. I wish to make it very clear to the government that with respect to alcohol and drinking and driving, it doesn't matter whether it's a beer or a shot of rye or rum or gin or scotch or a glass of wine, it's all alcohol.

I've just received a letter written by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. Their Addiction Research Foundation predecessor did an awful lot of work on drinking and driving. They responded in a letter to the editor of the *Globe and Mail*: "CAMH is concerned that public health and safety considerations have been largely absent from the discussions about the possibility of patrons bringing their own wine to restaurants."

Mothers Against Drunk Driving—I think we'll hear a bit from this organization during this debate—sent out a news release titled "Real Concern for Increase in Impaired Driving." They did a survey. "Almost half of the public has concerns for drinking and driving and an increase in impaired driving incidents, according to a recent SES opinion poll commissioned by MADD Canada," with respect to this BYOW legislation. As MADD has indicated, and I concur, "The Ontario public is not screaming for BYOW and there isn't the overwhelming support of 9-1 that Minister Watson suggested at the launch of the bill."

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): New Democrats are going to be speaking to the measure. It's remarkable. Here we are after how many weeks, months of break and this is the government's top priority: Bring a jug of wine to Harvey's or to the Kentucky Fried Chicken diner with you. It is remarkable that this government—when seniors are getting whacked left and right; when their drug benefit plan is now under attack by this government; when this government is hell-bent on and has privatized increasing areas of health care like chiropractic, like optometry, like physiotherapy; when this government dismisses persons with disabilities with a mere 3% increase in their income after—what?—eight, nine years of zip, zero; when this government downloads yet more and more on to hard, cash-strapped communities, this is what we get after weeks and weeks of summer break: Bring your own wine to Al's Diner. Give me a break. It's the silliest darned thing you ever saw.

What it does is illustrate the disdain that this government has, that the Liberals have, for the people who are

hurting out there, the disdain this government has for the people whose auto insurance premiums are skyrocketing, never mind two consecutive promises of 10% reduction each. Not a penny in reduction, more increases for the vast majority of all car drivers, car owners, here in Ontario. This government gives a paltry few cents an hour increase to minimum wage workers who are already finding themselves living in poverty, notwithstanding they're working 40- and 50-hour weeks. And this is the best they can do: Bring your own wine when you drop in at Al's Diner for your roast beef sandwich and fries with gravy, corn or peas on the side?

I think Ontarians are particularly disappointed. This is the sort of frustration they've been experiencing now for a year plus a few days, a government that's broken every promise it ever made. Promises the moon when it's running for election; delivers zip once it's elected.

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): Those in Ontario who enjoy a bottle of wine are quietly optimistic that the era of neoprohibition in alcohol-related laws in Ontario is finally relaxing its regressive grip. The Minister of Consumer and Business Services has brought forth a proposal of such breathtaking good sense that one wonders why debate is even necessary.

1550

My friend Clinton, who's a connoisseur and a collector of fine wines, often patronizes restaurants whose wine lists are nowhere near as extensive as his own cellar. Clinton and his wife can, if this bill is passed, look forward to having dinner together, even in a modestly priced restaurant, and augment their choice of entrée with a vintage wine from Clinton's cellar, if the mood suits them and if the restaurant participates.

I have an acquaintance who owns a fine restaurant. He's all in favour of this proposal. As he sees it, a party of several people can choose a few bottles of wine and bring them along, if they choose. For a standard per bottle corkage fee, his staff will uncork, serve and remove the bottles. As he sees it, if he wants to participate in the bring-your-own-wine program, he can. If he feels uncomfortable with it, or even if he tries it and changes his mind, he can opt out.

Bill 96 offers Ontario wine producers another market channel. That's good for Ontario agriculture, that's good for consumers and that's also good enough for the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, one of the many groups consulted by the ministry.

The bill closes some obvious loopholes in the Liquor Licence Act, and says to responsible people that they can expect to be treated as adults in a restaurant, just as they would be treated as adults if they brought the same bottle of wine to a friend's home for a private dinner.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): Mr Speaker, I'm going to join my colleague from Niagara Centre. I am shocked that this is the best the Liberal Party can do in its first week back. You'd think that after listening to constituents, they would be bringing the case, their plight of the priority issues for them, to this, the people's chamber.

During our break, I had the opportunity to visit the May Court hospice and learn about the tremendously important work they do for people who are gravely ill and in the final stages of their life. The morning that I visited the May Court hospice, two people had passed on. This government has cut the funding for the May Court. This government has cut the funding to the May Court, and then they had to come in, due to public embarrassment, and give them some makeshift funding until the end of the fiscal year while they sort out the mess they caused.

The most astonishing thing about it, what this Liberal government has done with the May Court is that they've pushed them in front of a bus and then grabbed them at the last minute to try and rescue them, and ask to get some credit for the bailout. That's the kind of bill they should be debating in this House. That should be the priority for the people of Ontario, dealing with real concerns that matter to people, like our failing health care system and the May Court hospice.

We're going to be debating palliative care tomorrow during private members' hour. I wonder if the member presenting that motion knows about the May Court Hospice and the looming cuts put on by the Minister of Health, George Smitherman. I say to the Minister of Health—Jason or Ken, if you're watching—think about the May Court Hospice and do the right thing: Restore stable funding so that they can continue to do the best thing for people in my community.

The Deputy Speaker: The Minister of Consumer and Business Services.

Hon Mr Watson: I want to thank the honourable members from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, Niagara Centre, Mississauga West and the junior member from Nepean. The gentleman from Nepean is a born-again health advocate, because all of a sudden he's found religion. He's found the May Court convalescent home, of which he never darkened the doorstep before a couple of weeks ago. I was very proud of the McGuinty government providing bridge funding to the May Court hospice to make sure that we clean up the mess from the previous government.

I also want to thank the members for their support of Bill 96, because that's what we're here to talk about. The honourable member from Simcoe says we haven't consulted the police. In fact, I had a very good conversation with the president of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police. I've talked to the deputy chief of Toronto and the deputy chief of Ottawa. We've consulted AMO, the Greater Toronto Hotel Association, the Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association, the Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association, the cities of Ottawa, Windsor, Kingston and Toronto, the Ottawa Gatineau Hotel Association, numerous restaurants, the legal community, the wine council, OCCID and MADD, just to name a few.

The fact of the matter is that this is a piece of legislation that is wholeheartedly supported by the member from Erie—I wish the Conservatives would get their act

together—a great, young, vibrant member who has taken the lead to say this is the right, progressive thing to do. It is not revolutionary; it is evolutionary. This is going to give individual restaurateurs the choice whether they want to offer BYOW. If they don't want to, they don't have to. It gives choice.

The member from Lanark had the vision to allow beer to be served on golf courses; that's going to go on his tombstone, one of the great initiatives by the member from Lanark. This is another initiative that is not revolutionary. It's something that is quite reasonable.

In the hospitality industry, the people I've spoken to, because it is voluntary, think it's a reasonable idea. I urge the Legislature's support.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I will be sharing my time today with the member for Simcoe North and the member for Leeds-Grenville.

I am honoured to deal today with Bill 96, An Act to amend the Liquor Licence Act, which passed first reading on June 10, 2004. The bill consists of about seven sections, and all are enforcement sections, except for section 1, which reads:

“Section 1 of the Liquor Licence Act ... is amended by adding the following definition:

“‘supply’ includes a licensee's permitting the consumption on licensed premises of wine that a patron has brought onto the premises, in accordance with the regulations, for the patron's consumption, alone or in the company of others....”

The plan is voluntary. Similar programs have already been instituted in Alberta, British Columbia, Quebec and New Brunswick, among our provinces, and in a number of states, as has previously been related.

The government has also announced some changes permitting patrons to take home open but unfinished bottles of wine. They will be introduced, but these provisions are not contained in the present Bill 96.

This legislation raises a number of important issues. The first issue is, of course, the impact on the hospitality industry, an industry that has met with unfortunate results since the SARS concerns were raised in Ontario. It is most important that we have full committee hearings in regard to this bill to determine what the impact will be. Second, it is voluntary inclusion, which is interesting because there's likely to be some confusion on the part of individual consumers, at least to start with, as to which restaurants are part of the program and which are not. Third, the ever-important safety on our roads and drinking and driving has to be explored in committee so that we can determine whether the concerns of groups such as MADD are valid. MADD has indicated there is research that would indicate that cheaper liquor or liquor products would mean greater consumption, and this might translate into adverse safety on our roads. Again, it is something to be explored in committee. Lastly is the liability that will arise from this, whether, in fact, the courts will hold the individual proprietor liable or the individual who brings the wine to the drinking establishment.

What's really interesting, however, in the timing of Bill 96 is the priority of this government. I noted yesterday during question period that the Premier proudly stood in this House—as a matter of fact, he chastised Mr Runciman at some length in regard to the content of a question directed to him, and he said that the main issues are not what Mr Runciman was raising but in fact health and education. Those are the primary matters that our citizens in this province are concerned about. Yet the second bill before this House at this time is a bill dealing with taking your own wine to restaurants. Why has this government put this bill forward at this time?

1600

A cynic might recall that Karl Marx asserted that religion is the opiate of the masses, but in Liberal Ontario it would seem that wine is that opiate. The new motto is, "If you can get them to drink enough, they'll forget your broken promises." And they weren't just election promises.

Recently the government announced a \$100-billion capital spending program. I really took a look at that, because I considered it a hoax, and I use the word advisedly. In reality, it was just the usual annual announcement of a capital allocation of \$3.1 billion. But it was announced as a 30-year plan, and this resulted in a \$100-billion announcement. I still haven't figured out how they arrived at \$100 billion over 30 years. If you take \$3 billion and then multiply by 10, you get \$30 billion. If you multiply it by 20, you get \$60 billion. If you multiply it by 30, you get \$90 billion, and you're up to 30 years, but that's not \$100 billion. As a matter of fact, if you just took inflation at 2% a year and multiplied it by 30 years, you're well over \$100 billion. You're probably closer to \$120 billion, and that is for level spending. I have this picture in my mind that all the communications people in the Premier's office were sitting around one night saying, "How can we take a \$3-billion announcement that nobody is going to print because it's of no importance—it's the usual announcement—and get some press on it?" They said, "Well, we could have a plan for 30 years," knowing full well that they had no power—absolutely none—after their first three years, because even if there is another Liberal government, which is highly unlikely, that Liberal government would not be bound by this plan. So knowing full well that this plan was meaningless, they multiplied by 30 years and came up with \$100 billion, which is an incorrect amount as far as their arithmetic goes.

But they did it, and it worked. That's the great part. It was a very clever move. Bylines across Ontario trumpeted \$100 billion in spending. Unfortunately, those bylines are sometimes all ordinary Ontarians have a chance to read as they're skimming through the paper. The interesting part is that the hoax was bought by the newspapers too. I look at these high-priced political pundits and their acumen, their political will, and yet, they bought it too. So they got suckered. Here we are at \$100 billion, which was made up of whole cloth.

Not all the promises we are trying to cover up by our new wine bill were election promises; some of them were

post-election. We can still talk about the broken promise in regard to chiropractic services, but of course, if you have two or three drinks, maybe you'll forget it. We can still talk about the elimination of eye examinations for the people who are most vulnerable, but take your own bottle. You'll be able to drink more at the restaurant, so maybe you'll forget it, and of course, physiotherapy. I've got so many seniors in my riding. Physiotherapy is keeping them mobile, it's keeping them ambulatory, and all of a sudden, it's being taken away from them. I don't know what they're going to do. They could end up in our already overburdened hospitals, so there is no savings there. I get concerned when, willy-nilly, by a stroke of the pen and by a broken promise, services are reduced.

Our local hospital has been severely impacted by the cuts that this government has introduced into the health care field. Again, we're dealing here with wine and Bill 96 when we should be talking about the health care system. As the Premier has properly pointed out, that is the priority that we have in Ontario.

The government has cut back funding to my Cambridge Memorial Hospital that we've worked so hard to build up. Our hospital was chronically underfunded. My predecessor tried to bring it into par and worked hard at it. I continued working hard to do that, and we did get substantial increases in funding for our hospital. In one year it was over 30%, as a matter of fact, just to bring us, not in the lead in hospitals, but to a state where we had parity with other community hospitals of the same size in Ontario. Then all of a sudden the cutbacks have started by this Liberal government.

What's the result? We're going to lose 27 full-time staff members from our hospital as a result of Liberal government cutbacks. They are going to be lost as of October 29, 2004. This is not something that's going to happen down the road; this is something that is going to impact my rapidly growing city and the township of North Dumfries and the south part of Kitchener that is part of my riding. There's going to be a severe impact as a result of these cutbacks.

We're going to have to cut back 10 alternate-level beds. This is of great concern. I think we're about the fourth-fastest-growing city and maybe the first-fastest-growing area, if you take the whole region of Waterloo, in the province of Ontario—one of the fastest-growing and yet we are cutting beds. I get complaints from individuals who arrive at the hospital and end up in the hallway because no beds are available, and yet this government is cutting 10 of our beds in this hospital. I don't know what the result of that is going to be, except pain and hardship on many of the good citizens of Cambridge. That's not counting the pain and hardship that the staff is going to go through, trying to cope with this situation.

We started, a few years ago—not that long—a cardiac rehabilitation program to ensure that people who have gone through a cardiac procedure are brought back to full standing. That is going to be eliminated as of October 29. Have another drink of wine, because that's what we're supposed to be talking about.

We used to have fitness appraisals. That's now gone on October 29 of this year.

We have health and wellness consultations, which have proved very valuable at our hospital. That's gone as of October 29, 2004.

We had a menopause clinic to assist individuals going through the menopause period, which can be most difficult for some. They will no longer have the benefit of that service and that program.

Gone, as of October 29, 2004, is our nutritional counselling service. It's gone.

Osteoporosis program, October 29, 2004: It has been eliminated.

The physiotherapy clinic, as of October 29, 2004, will no longer be available to the residents of Cambridge, North Dumfries and south Kitchener.

The speech therapy practice group will be eliminated as of October 29, 2004.

Worst of all: the chronic pain clinic, which has proved most valuable to many individuals, will be eliminated as of November 30, 2004.

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A rather plaintive letter was in the paper the other day. An individual wrote after the announcement of all these cuts at our hospital:

"I came to attend the pain clinic in September 2004 after being referred in October of 2003. There has been a wait list due to the demand and need for the program. I have been unable to work since September 2003 due to my health condition, of which pain is a major component. Being a single" mother "of two young children, ages three and six, finding a way to cope with and manage my pain has been a key issue to enable me to continue in my role as a parent to my children."

That service and that program will no longer be available to this individual or 110,000 individuals—

The Deputy Speaker: Member from Cambridge, I know you want to try and end with Bill 96, so I'd appreciate that.

Mr Martiniuk: I shall mention Bill 96 soon, Mr Speaker. Thank you again for having the courtesy to point out my failings in that regard.

As the Speaker has pointed out, I have wandered a little off the topic. However, I was dealing with the priorities of this government, and I personally think it's an absolute shame that we have pressing issues in this province in regard to health, in regard to education, in regard to policing, and we are dealing this evening with a bill permitting the use of home brew in—

Hon Mr Watson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I've listened to the honourable member and I wonder if there's unanimous consent to refer this immediately to committee.

The Deputy Speaker: Are you asking for that?

Hon Mr Watson: Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: The minister has asked for unanimous consent to refer this to committee. Is there unanimous consent? I heard a no.

Continue, member for Cambridge, please.

Mr Martiniuk: Now that the minister has cleverly interrupted me to throw me off the scent—he has done a good job. Between you and the Speaker, I'm speechless.

The Deputy Speaker: I'm not sure you were on it.

Mr Martiniuk: I'm sorry. OK, as I was saying, you've got your priorities wrong. This is not what the people of Ontario want to see. On that basis, I will sit down.

Mr Dunlop: I'm very pleased to follow the member from Cambridge and his comments on Bill 96. I guess I have to start out by echoing some of the things that the member from Cambridge actually mentioned. I'm wondering what the screaming demand is for this particular piece of legislation. We know that the government wants to make some good-news stories and all that sort of thing, and I would think that if I were the minister in this particular case, this would be one of the better stories I'd want to announce, and I'd want to see this legislation debated. And I do appreciate his comments today, and the parliamentary assistant's comments as well.

I have a number of questions around the legislation, and the first thing is, I'm wondering why it wasn't something they campaigned on. I brought along a copy of the Liberal platform from last summer, the plan, and I couldn't find one thing in there about bringing your own wine to dinner. I haven't found one—not one thing—in there. I never heard of a consultation process that wanted that, but on 147 pages of literally hundreds and hundreds of promises to the citizens of the province of Ontario, there's nothing about bringing your own wine. So I guess that's my first concern, that they never campaigned on this, and second, that there's really no demand.

As the critic for corrections and community safety, I have to oppose this piece of legislation. I think our government, when we were in power, and I'm hoping this government, and even going back to the days of the NDP—I was hoping and I was under the impression that we were all in favour of keeping a strict control on drinking and driving and dealing with our stakeholders in that area when it came to any type of legislation.

I can tell you, I went on the Web site today for Mothers Against Drunk Driving and pulled off the information. I'd like to read that into the record because Mothers Against Drunk Driving is an organization that helped me with my private member's bill, the ignition interlock device bill. Both the government and the opposition consulted with them on that particular piece of legislation. I just want you to know that I think they are a stakeholder that the government should listen to very, very carefully. Hopefully, the government will listen to them and Mothers Against Drunk Driving will get an opportunity to speak to the bill in committee.

I'd like to read what Mothers Against Drunk Driving said in their press release:

"Ontarians are divided in their support for the Ontario government's new 'bring your own wine' ... to restaurants law. Almost half of the public has concerns for drinking and driving and an increase in impaired driving incidents, according to a recent SES opinion poll commissioned by MADD Canada.

“On the question of support for BYOW, the Ontario public was split down the middle. Less than half of Ontarians—44%—support the new BYOW initiative. That is only slightly more than the 41% of Ontarians who oppose the initiative.

“When asked about their concern for an impact on people who drink and drive, 43% of Ontarians agreed with MADD Canada that there is a concern for impaired driving—responding that BYOW would ‘increase the number of people who drink and drive.’

“‘There is a real concern for the increase in impaired driving incidents that will accompany this BYOW law,’ says Andrew Murie, national executive director for MADD Canada. ‘We want the government not to press forward with this isolated policy change and rethink their agenda to implement a full and comprehensive review of the province’s liquor laws.’

“‘The Ontario public is not screaming for BYOW, and there isn’t the overwhelming support of 9-1 that Minister Watson suggested at the launch of the bill,’ says Mr Murie. ‘If anything, these numbers tell us that the government needs to proceed with greater caution on these reforms and they must address the public’s concern for drinking and driving.’

“‘The BYOW legislation shouldn’t be a priority for this government,’ adds Mr Murie.”

I repeat that: It’s not important enough and it certainly shouldn’t be a priority, particularly at this very early stage of this fall session.

“MADD Canada is against the BYOW proposal because there will be a higher likelihood that more people will drink much more wine than currently is the case. The organization is urging Consumer and Business Services Minister Jim Watson to review the recommended reforms of the province’s liquor law task force and bring forward a comprehensive liquor law reform package instead of piecemeal reform initiatives.

“The SES poll questions read: ‘As you may know, the Ontario government is proposing new liquor laws that will allow people to take their own bottles of wine to restaurants. Do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose a “bring your own wine” policy for restaurants in Ontario?’ and, ‘Do you think a “bring your own wine” policy for restaurants would increase, decrease, or have no impact on the number of people who drink and drive?’

“The results of the poll: There were 19% of Ontarians that strongly support BYOW; 25% who somewhat support; 14% who somewhat oppose; 27% who strongly oppose; 9% were unsure of their support/opposition; and another 7% had no response....

“On the second question: There were 43% of Ontarians who felt there would be an increase in the number of people who drink and drive; 2% who felt there would be a decrease in the number of people who drink and drive; 48% who felt there would be ‘no impact’; 6% who were unsure; and 1% who had no response for the question.

“SES polled a random sample of 500 Ontarians, 18 years of age or older,” and I’m saying this because I think Mothers Against Drunk Driving is a very important stakeholder on anything to do with the laws of drinking and driving on the highways, and obviously they’re not supporting it.

As well, the two police associations—I know the minister said he was talking to the chiefs of police and he mentioned some names, but my understanding, as we speak today—and this comes recently in the last couple of hours—is that the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police has not taken an official position on this bill. We’ll have to listen to what they say.

1620

I can tell you as well, I did more research into this. The Police Association of Ontario, which represents 21,000 uniformed officers, including the Ontario provincial police officers, has not got a position on this bill either. So, basically, what you’ve done is introduced the bill and then gone around to the stakeholders and said, “Do you support this or not?” The ones who want to be on your side will kind of come to you and say, “We’ll support you on this.” But there was no pre-consultation on this piece of legislation that arrived at an official position on it.

Another point I wanted to bring up that I think is important—and it was raised by the government members earlier—is that we do have a difference of opinion in our caucus on this. There are some people of the 24 members in our caucus who do support this. We’re not being told in any way whether we’re supporting it or opposing it. Our leader has come forward and said, “You know, guys, this is not a priority piece of legislation. Speak your mind on it.”

Certainly, we’re not being like the Liberals. We’re not being told we have to vote in favour of this piece of legislation. I did want to put that on the record, because I think it’s very important that it is on the record. As I said, I will be voting against it, and I mentioned the police consultations, because I think that’s very important.

I don’t know if anybody in the room is aware of or has travelled much on Highway 11 in the past, but most people in the province of Ontario who have travelled to Muskoka or into the north will have heard of the Webers chain of restaurants. The one restaurant on Highway 11, just north of Orillia, was owned previously by Paul Weber Sr and was operated until just recently by his son Paul Weber Jr and his brother John. I talked to John. John’s a friend of mine, and he’s a person who now has two large dining room restaurants that are licensed in Orillia and Barrie. They’re called the Webers Downtowners.

I have a lot of respect for these people. They are entrepreneurs. Over the years, the Webers have employed literally hundreds and hundreds of people in the Orillia and Barrie areas. I’ve got to tell you, I have a lot of respect for them, and I want you to know that Mr Weber approached me and he is adamant. As a restaurant owner, he is very much opposed to this piece of legislation. He’s

worried, first of all, about the abuse of his staff, because he's not sure how many people will understand this. How many people will come into the restaurant now with a bottle of rye or a case of beer and say, "I thought I could bring my own booze"? Instead, it's bring your own wine.

Where is the government going with the next step? Are we going to have specialized beer or the small-brewery-type beers? Will that be allowed next? Where are we going with this in the long run? Is it only wine? It's only wine right now, but if there's some kind of pressure on the government, will they cave in to specialized scotches and rums, etc? They may very well do so, and that is a problem. That's a very serious problem, and Mr Weber is opposed to that.

My understanding is that it will actually cost you money in the taxes. You'll lose tax revenues as a result of this. If you do the math, that's my understanding. If we do anything, I would like to know how much it will cost the taxpayers of Ontario by eliminating this.

Second of all, you'd almost think, to listen to the minister and the parliamentary assistant, that these restaurants were all making a fortune. They're working on a very fine line. The business world works on a fine line of 5% or 6%, and this is taking away from any profits they might have. I think, in Ontario, we've done a really good job of promoting our wine industry.

I think that under Andy Brandt the LCBO has done a fantastic job. They've revitalized it. You may not even want to sell it now. But I'm going to tell you, I think the LCBO has done a great job. They really promote our wines. And now we're saying that they're a second-class citizen: Bring in wine from any other place in the country.

Interjection.

Mr Dunlop: No, I'm not trying to be any part of the LCBO. I just happen to think that the Liquor Control Board of Ontario is very well run. I'm someone in my caucus—I don't believe in privatizing it. I know other people do; there's no question about that. We've heard from members from both sides, but I like what LCBO has done.

Now, if LCBO could do anything, if the minister and that government over there could take the lead on anything, why don't we work with the LCBO and pass Norm Miller's bill on recycling bottles? That would be a step in the right direction. OK? Let's pass that bill. I heard Mr Tory speaking about it last night on Goldhawk, and I've heard Mr Miller's bill being discussed in this House. It's very important that we look at our landfills.

I think if we do anything in the liquor industry, we have to get the LCBO to recycle. I'm a strong supporter of that. I know there's been opposition from the LCBO as well as both governments, but I think that would be a step in the right direction for our landfills and will set a great example for the citizens of Ontario. It would set a lot better example than mom and dad heading out for dinner with a bottle of wine and then coming home later in the evening with 99% of it drunk, with a cork in it. I think that's important.

But what about the priorities? I guess I'm going to go back to the priorities for a moment and talk about why—I know it's controversial, but there are so many other things we could be discussing. Someone earlier had mentioned health and education. For example, we've got a late show tonight because the Minister of Education couldn't tell us how much the capping is going to cost. He doesn't know. Either he doesn't know or he just refused to answer, but I think that's an important thing. That's a \$700-million difference in what the minister calculated and what the bureaucrats have said in their report that we finally got through freedom of information. It's terrible that we have to bring in a late show to get an answer as simple as that. I suspect even when he comes in at 6 o'clock, if he even shows up, he won't give us an answer either. It's important that we deal with questions like that.

I asked the minister on one occasion, and wrote to him, about the students in the Trillium Lakelands-Simcoe County District School Board dispute. We've got 150 kids out in the Carden and Dalton area who needed an opportunity. Their families have historically gone to the Orillia and Brechin schools for over 50 years. Suddenly, now they're being told they have to go back to an hour-and-a-half drive to Kirkfield or Lakefield or all these places down in Miss Scott's riding. The families don't want to go. Miss Scott and myself are in favour of it. But the minister's response was pathetic. It was some kind of a bureaucratic letter that said, "We've got a transportation funding formula, and too bad." So he's completely left them out.

Health care, another priority that I think we should be discussing: Why would we not take some time in this House and discuss the need of a children's treatment centre in York-Simcoe? The only area in the province of Ontario that doesn't have a children's treatment centre and the resources for funding is York-Simcoe. The Minister of Finance's own riding is included in that area. We need to have that. We need to have that in Barrie, Orillia, Midland, Newmarket, York region etc, but we're not hearing anything about it. Instead, we're debating on whether we can bring our own wine to dinner.

What about reporting gunshot wounds? There was a piece of legislation that I waited for in the last two sessions in the House. In the last fall and spring sessions, I waited for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to bring forward a piece of legislation—anything would have been OK. He finally did, just before the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police conference in Windsor. He finally walked in with a bill—yes, he's going to bring in mandatory reporting of gunshot wounds. I would hope that we'd be debating something like that, so that doctors and emergency wards etc could get to work on this.

Mr Runciman introduced a resolution last year that was completely ignored. But these are the kinds of things that I think should be debated. Then Bill 88, my own private member's bill, that's an amendment to the security guards act. The Shand inquiry called for 22

recommendations last year. The first recommendation was for an immediate response to an immediate recommendation.

Interjection.

Mr Dunlop: Bill 88. Mr Levac's laughing over there, but Bill 88 brought into account or addressed all the recommendations of the Shand inquiry. There's a bill that the minister says he's going to bring in this fall. I don't know if he will or not, or he'll bring in a government bill, but basically it's the same bill I had. That's what it will be. But we've already been told that. We know that the bureaucrats are worried about that. We should be in here addressing that. The Shand inquiry called for immediate recommendations. Instead, what are we doing? We're talking about bringing our own wine to our restaurants.

1630

There are other things we can talk about. I've got to leave some time for my colleague from Leeds-Grenville. There are a lot of other things I'd like to address in the little bit of time I have left. One thing is this whole idea of something being optional. Someone told me today that if something is optional, it's almost an admission that the program is wrong. It's almost admitting that the program is wrong, because if you leave something optional, half the restaurant owners and people with licences don't like that. What we're seeing now is that apparently it is optional. I'd like to get some clarification on the bill on just what kinds of bars and restaurants are actually included. For example, are strip bars with little dining rooms attached included in this legislation?

Hon Mr Watson: No. Read the bill.

Mr Dunlop: No, I need to you stand up and say that. I need you to go through the list and say exactly what's included, because there will always be somebody trying to abuse this, as far as I'm concerned. You'll see people from all over the country walking in, on the backs of their Harley-Davidsons or with their bike gang, with a wine bottle strapped to their backs and hoping they can get in—they're bringing their own wine at this time to the particular dining room, restaurant or whatever you want to call it.

Hon Mr Watson: What do you know about strip clubs?

Mr Dunlop: I know quite a bit about them, but I haven't done anything since 1998.

The Deputy Speaker: I think the member should get back to Bill 96.

Hon Mr Watson: Do your voters know that?

Mr Dunlop: Oh, yes, they know that.

I've enjoyed speaking to this bill, to this point. It's a very interesting bill but I can't support it. When it comes to dealing with impaired drivers, I have a concern. I have to support Mothers Against Drunk Driving. I think they're on the right path.

I'm going to be very interested in the outcome of the consultations. I know we're probably going to see a wide variety of people at those meetings. Obviously the government will line up the agenda with a lot of supporters of the bill—I think there will be other people who will be

opposed to the bill—and in the end the government will win this vote, there's no question about it. But I want to be on the record for being opposed to it at this point.

I want to say that I'm also supportive of people like Mr John Weber from Weber's restaurant who has told me he hasn't had anyone come forward to talk about how much they support the bill. Most people who go to their type of dining room enjoy the great wines they have there. They don't mind paying for it and they like to have a fine meal with their wine. He's not getting a lot of people coming and screaming to bring their own booze.

I'm not sure how many people we are seeing across the province demanding that. We have a few noisy people who are making some comments to the minister's office, but other than that I can't see a great demand for it. With that, I would like to turn it over to my colleague for Leeds-Grenville who will bring out some other very interesting points on this piece of legislation.

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): I really appreciate the opportunity to speak to this legislation. At the outset, I want to compliment my colleague Mr Martiniuk, the member for Cambridge, who is as of a week or so ago the critic for this ministry. I know he will do an outstanding job, as we all in this caucus know he will do. He has an outstanding reputation in his own community. He is a solid individual. I can assure you, Mr Speaker, that when the political winds start to change, he doesn't change political parties, unlike a certain other individual in the House.

Mr Kormos: Who's that?

Mr Runciman: He's sometimes referred to as the junior member for Nepean. He also worked for a former federal member of Parliament, Otto Jelinek. Do you remember him? So I think we know who I'm referring to. We're referring to the now Minister of Consumer and Business Services, certainly a nice fellow. But I always have difficulty with people who sort of put their finger up to see what the wind is like in terms of the political feelings of the voters of the province and then jump into that particular corner of the room. I hope that when you get into this business, you do so on the basis of strong principles, strong beliefs and obviously wanting to do the right thing for the people you represent. I'm not questioning the minister on those completely, but certainly there is some doubt with respect to commitment when you change political philosophies. At some point in your—

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): Something like Winston Churchill.

Mr Runciman: I suppose there's some truth to that as well.

I had the opportunity to serve as the consumer minister, and interestingly enough, there are three of us in this row who had that opportunity: the House leader for the NDP and the member to my right, the dean of the Legislature, Mr Sterling. All three of us had the opportunity to serve in that ministry. I want to take this opportunity to say that, of my eight or nine years in government, if you go back to the Miller government, I

think my time in that ministry was perhaps the most enjoyable. The bureaucracy, the civil service in that ministry are outstanding people who really—

Mr Dunlop: They write great speeches.

Mr Runciman: Well, they do write great speeches, among other things. They certainly served me well, served our government well and my predecessors and successors well. I suspect they had very little to do with this initiative other than receiving direction from the current government, the minister responsible, that “We have to get this in quickly. We want to distract attention from this horrific budget that our government presented, breaking all kinds of solemn and significant promises to the people of Ontario.” The bureaucrats and civil servants, good people that they are, will do what they are asked to do by the government of the day, and we respect that. But certainly this is not something that, in my day, was really ever recommended or promoted by the civil service in the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services.

I also want to mention that during my time, I think Mr Sterling’s time, and that of the member from Niagara Centre, I believe it is, Mr Hudak, we were all served by a wonderful deputy minister, Sandy Lang, who retired and then came back to serve your government briefly to help establish the new children’s ministry, because that was always an interest of hers and part of her background.

I now learn that Ms Lang is very seriously ill, suffering very significant health challenges. I want her, her friends and her family to know that those of us who know Sandy and had the opportunity to work with her are praying for her. We wish her well with the challenges she’s currently facing.

Back to this legislation. We’ve heard a lot today from my colleagues, and I’m sure we’ll hear more from the NDP as well, with respect to priorities. We’ve heard the minister yell across the floor, “If you don’t think this is a serious priority, let’s send it off to committee. Let’s have minimal debate.” The minister, although he’s a relatively new member, should know that’s not the way this place works. The government sets the agenda. We come in here and we debate the legislation you put in front of us. We have a responsibility as the opposition to make sure that all of these issues are thoroughly discussed, thoroughly reviewed. All the points that you and members in support of you raise, Minister, are scrutinized as well and commented upon. That’s the job of Her Majesty’s loyal opposition and we take that responsibility very seriously. So we are going to give this legislation, I would say, extensive scrutiny, extensive investigation.

We’re going to review all of the implications. We heard about liability. We heard about public safety. We heard about impact on small businesses and large businesses as well. I don’t think that they should be excluded from this discussion.

1640

We heard the minister when he made the announcement—I guess it was in June they gave out a press release—and we’ve heard that extended here today by

some of his backbenchers and perhaps by himself—I didn’t catch all of his comments—about extensive consultation. When he had an opportunity to respond to some of the criticisms, I heard him read off a long list of stakeholders, and I think left the impression that these people were all consulted, that they were all part of this process.

That’s not what we’re hearing on this side. In fact, I believe many of the stakeholders who have a serious interest with respect to this kind of initiative felt that they were blindsided, that their trust was abused by the minister and by the government. In fact, when they heard about this, it was when it was announced to the public. There was no consultation for most of these folks. They were told after the fact, “This is a done deal. Get on with it. Enjoy the rest of your life. Let’s talk about other issues.” That’s what happened when they went in to see the minister. I’m very concerned about this. “Look, there’s no point in talking about this. We’re going ahead with it.” That was the approach, not consultation, not an effort to engage these individuals in serious discussions about any concerns they and their organizations might have. No. “Ram it through. Don’t talk to them. Tell them what’s good for them. Tell them what’s good for their own stakeholders. Tell them what’s good for the province of Ontario.”

We’ve been told that this is a pretty sexy piece of legislation. We can dump this out. Any time you talk about sex or booze, the media are going to be very interested. They’ll be covering this story intensively if we’re talking about sex or booze. That’s sort of a given around this place. In fact, I think there’s an assumption on the part of the government that this is a very popular measure as well.

I wonder if I could get a glass of water, please.

Thank you, the senior member for Nepean.

I think that clearly, as one of my colleagues referenced a poll done by SES Research, a very respected polling firm, Ontarians are pretty much divided on this issue. The reality is that this does have surface appeal. It appeals to me on the surface. This issue was raised when I was the minister, and I’m sure it was raised when Mr Sterling was the minister. I’m not sure if Mr Kormos was in the seat long enough to have it raised, but if he had been there long enough, it would have been raised by someone and suggested that this was a sexy thing to do. “If we’re bringing in something that’s unpopular, if we’re bringing in something that’s really negative and nasty, the serious violation of promises that we made to the people of Ontario, this might be something we can slip in and distract the press gallery and the public at large.”

It’s pretty cynical politics, very cynical politics. It hasn’t worked. We’re going to make sure, from our side of the House, that there is a lengthy discussion and that the people who have, I think, in many respects, very legitimate concerns are going to have the opportunity to be heard and to put those concerns on the record. The minister has indicated a willingness to go to committee, and that’s fine because certainly we will be insisting that

it go to committee and that we have full public hearings. Anyone who has a real interest, a legitimate interest in being on the record on this issue will have the opportunity to express that.

We haven't heard a lot of that from the government. They've been shutting out stakeholders, not giving them an opportunity. We hope that when this goes to committee, they will take the opportunity to appear and not be intimidated by this government or by this minister.

We know. We see it in the health care sector where the minister is constantly berating and taking on the health care sector stakeholders. I think, in many respects, they are intimidated by this individual and are not coming out and speaking out in the way they should. We encourage them to do so, to step back and take a look at this individual. His conduct is not appropriate. I'm not suggesting the Minister of Consumer and Business Services is approaching his stakeholders in the same way. I don't think that's his personality. But certainly his reference to some of the stakeholders was that, "We're not going to talk about this. The decision has been taken; live with it. Let's get on with life. Let's talk about other issues, other concerns." Despite the tone, which may be congenial, which this member is known for, it's the nature of the comment, the nature of the shutting the door on real discussion and debate on this initiative.

I want to take this opportunity to put a few things on the record, quotes and concerns from people who haven't been listened to and in fact whom the public was led to believe were onside in support of this initiative.

Again, Mr Dunlop, the member from Orillia, Simcoe, was talking about the SES survey. I had a press release provided me by MADD Canada which came out on June 10, right after the minister made the announcement in the House. It was headlined "MADD Canada 'Very Disappointed' in Minister's Broken Promise," another broken promise.

"Mothers Against Drunk Driving sees Consumer and Business Services Minister Jim Watson's BYOB bill as another broken promise" of this Ontario Liberal government. "MADD ... fears this legislation will lead to increased incidents of impaired driving on Ontario's roads.

"We are very disappointed in Minister Watson's irresponsible actions with this issue," says Andrew Murie, national executive director of MADD Canada. "He has ignored the recommended reforms of the liquor law task force and is moving forward on his own personal BYOB agenda. It is not good public policy to revamp the province's liquor laws piecemeal." I would call it seat-of-the-pants, but we're seeing more and more of that from this government.

We saw it with respect to the agricultural sector, and I want to mention that in a few minutes, in relationship to priorities. When the Premier attended the plowing match—

Interjection: He got booed.

Mr Runciman: He got booed. He said, "We have no money for you folks," and he got booed. But a week or two weeks later, he came up with \$30 million which two

weeks before at the plowing match he didn't have. He got booed. What do we call that? We call that government by crowd reaction. This is seat-of-the-pants government as well. MADD calls it piecemeal legislation and the breaking of a promise.

This government had just come into office, and it met with the stakeholders. That's part of the process when you come into government: A new minister meets with the stakeholders. He met with MADD, and I'm quoting again from Mr Murie, the executive director of MADD:

"When we met with the minister, he stated his ... initiative would be part of a bigger liquor law reform package. It appears Minister Watson was making another promise this government wasn't going to keep."

Mr Baird: Who said this?

Mr Runciman: This is the national executive director of MADD Canada.

Going on with quotes from Mr Murie, "What is irresponsible with this legislation is that the other reforms recommended by the task force have been ignored so that the minister could cherry-pick this more seemingly popular initiative."

I wanted to put MADD's press release on the record, the comments from Mr Murie. Certainly the minister, when he made the announcement, was indicating that the groups that are opposed to drinking and driving, and do an excellent job in this province—OCCID, MADD and others who have lost loved ones due to impaired driving—were certainly not happy with the way this minister conducted himself with respect to this file and the way he blindsided stakeholders with this announcement: no notice, no consultation. "This is it, folks. We're going ahead with this."

1650

I also want to talk about a column that didn't get a lot of publicity. It was buried in the June 17 edition of the National Post. It's an article by Jacob Richler. He's quoting some of the businesspeople in the Toronto area, which I again find interesting. These are quotes, comments, feelings, sentiments that haven't really gotten a lot of play. These are business owners.

There's a quote from Mark McEwan, who is a very well known restaurateur in the Toronto area. He's the owner of two of the better-known restaurants, North 44 and Bymark.

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): That's Bigliardi's.

Mr Runciman: No, not Bigliardi's. Anyway, Mr McEwan has this to say: "We've been embattled for three years now."

Mr McMeekin: Cam Jackson likes steak.

Mr Runciman: Well, I wonder what the people who attended Mr McGuinty's fundraiser in Windsor and paid \$5,000 a ticket to go in and convince the minister or the Premier of their positions on health care or whatever it might be—you know, one of our members might like steak, but you're selling access to the Premier and to ministers of this government for \$5,000. Is that appropriate? I don't think too many Ontarians, too many hard-

working Ontarians who can't afford a \$5,000 ticket to a Liberal shindig in Windsor, would agree with the approach. In fact, most Liberal—what are they saying here? Local party members didn't even know about it. You had to have pretty deep pockets. I don't know if the Speaker knew about this going on. I suspect he didn't. This was only for the real heavy wallets to come in and influence Liberal policy.

I didn't get Mr McEwan's comments on the record. "We've been embattled for three years now,"—this is Mr McEwan, owner of two top Toronto restaurants—"... an industry sideswiped by 9/11, SARS, soaring insurance rates"—which this government doesn't want to do a damned thing about—"and mad cow disease," speaking of steaks. "So what does this government do?"—this Liberal government—"First they ban smoking. Then they're in the ..."—you know what—"because of their budget"—

Mr Baird: Banning sushi.

Mr Runciman: Trying to ban sushi too—"so they throw this thing out without even thinking about it just so they can look better to the average Joe."

Here is a gentleman, Marc Thuet, one-time co-owner of Centro, now consulting at the Rosewater Supper Club. He's quoted, "If you cut profits from wine, the quality of our high-end restaurants is going to drop—they won't be able to afford the two extra guys in the kitchen and the extra waiter up front." This is a concern they have in terms of employment.

Interjections.

Mr Runciman: Well, you can scoff at it. These are people in the business who have legitimate concerns. You don't want to even listen to them. That's the minister: shut them out, closed the door on them, blindsided them with his initiative without even talking to them, without even listening to their concerns. That's the kind of initiative we get from the Liberal government.

Now we have another individual—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Runciman: We've been talking high-end; now we're talking about the mom-and-pop operations, the ones that quite frequently have a real tough time surviving, frequently see bankruptcies. "And those are the places where people are going to start turning up with \$10 bottles of wine." This is another quote. "Your average trattoria is going to get hurt badly by this," and they may not survive. Well, that may be a stretch, but certainly they are going to have real problems.

I suggest to the minister that he be nice to his stakeholders for a change. Talk to them before you bring an initiative into this House.

Hon Mr Watson: We told them—

Mr Runciman: No, you didn't. We've talked to them. You told them what you were doing, not, "What should I be doing?" You said, "This is what's going to happen, folks. Live with it. Get on with life."

We talked about priorities. Let's see the junior minister in here tomorrow when we're talking about

hospital funding, talking about the Queensway-Carleton Hospital, the Ottawa hospitals, getting less than 1%, is it?

Interjection: Zero point six.

Mr Runciman: Zero point six per cent—

Hon Mr Watson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The Queensway-Carleton Hospital—

The Deputy Speaker: It's not a point of order. Minister, take your seat, please. Member?

Mr Runciman: If the member feels strongly about this, he has an opportunity. Come here tomorrow and debate the issue.

Again, we're talking about priorities. One thing I'd like to quickly put on the record in the remaining seconds is rural Ontario. We should be in here talking about rural Ontario. There's a real crisis in many parts of rural Ontario today, not just with BSE and cattle farmers, but it has a ripple-down effect with all of the businesses impacted with respect to the problems in rural Ontario. High suicide rates, poverty, people losing their farms, losing their businesses, and what does this government want to talk about early on in the agenda of this House when they say, "We have this significant agenda to bring to the people of Ontario"? What do they want to talk about? Bring your own booze into a restaurant. While people in rural Ontario are suffering—a real crisis in rural Ontario, in small-town Ontario, and you guys have the nerve, the gall, to bring in Bring Your Own Booze into this House. You should be ashamed—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr Kormos: The leader of the official opposition brings his historic passion to this issue, and I, for one, who have known him for a long, long time, am pleased to see him in this position of leadership with this caucus. His performance over the course of yesterday and today has probably caused a whole lot of his caucus-mates, and indeed members of his party, to reflect on who should have been the real candidate in a leadership convention. I'm proud to see Bob Runciman leading this group of what is undoubtedly a united, cohesive, speaking-with-a-single-voice, ready-to-move-forward group of parliamentarians. I congratulate him.

I'm going to have a chance to speak to this bill in around eight minutes' time, and Mr Bisson from Timmins-James Bay is going to do a two-minute response as well. We're concerned about the fact that, is this it? Is this as good as it gets? Here we are, day two after a hiatus that was incredibly lengthy, a summer break extended for an extra few weeks—the government wanted to make it even longer than it would have been otherwise—and we come back on day two and this is it: Bring your own wine. I suppose the problem is, who in fact—other than Rod Seiling. I don't quarrel with the fact—I'm not sure that he even requested it. Where is the drive coming to get this bill passed and enacted?

I've reflected on that a whole lot. I spent a whole lot of time this past few months reflecting on Bill 96 and, just in my own mind, weighing the pros and cons and considering what some of the dialogue there is that could

be had about it. So I'm going to look forward to the hour that I've got coming up in a few minutes' time. I encourage folks to listen to hear what Mr Bisson from Timmins-James Bay has to say because he's been away from here for a couple of months too.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I'd like to add my couple of minutes and compliment the minister for bringing this forward to the House. I have to say that he hasn't done it solely on the spur of the moment; he has already spent considerable time assessing the situation.

What is missing in this debate, in this early debate—and I can see that the members are saying, “Yes, I'm looking forward to speaking on the bill later on,” and stuff like that. What we have missed today is to hear from the opposition that this is voluntary. It's the opportunity to give Ontarians a choice to choose if they want to bring their own. It's also to give our business community, especially the small business community, an opportunity, if they choose, to offer that particular service. What the minister is saying is that we will have enough standards, enough guidelines, to make sure that those who want to do it comply. They can do it in a very safe manner, both for the public and for the business owner.

We are well behind other jurisdictions in Canada, so I have to compliment the minister for bringing this forward—

1700

Interjection: They've had this for 25 years in Quebec.

Mr Sergio: Over 25 years, yes. I would say to the opposition that that is one more reason why they should support this bill: so we can send the bill on the road for consultation, as the minister has expressed, and hear the people, the community and the business people out there and then bring it back into the House for a final decision. But at this stage, I think we should give the bill every opportunity to bring it outside and bring it to the public for consultation. I applaud the minister for bringing this to the House today.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): First, before I go on, I'd like to thank you for coming to my area and leaving me that note, even though I don't work on Sundays. I'm sure the Liberals are out every Sunday working very hard to get bills like this through. You must be working hard on Sundays to put something like this up. It is a bit of a joke.

You had a year, a whole year, and we got this one. That's pretty good, fellas. I can tell you've been working hard for the last year. You came up with this so we can drink our own wine in a restaurant. Isn't that amazing? What do you do with the bottle after? Do you finish it? I guess that must be what you've got to do.

If you talk to the people in the restaurants—this will be another one of the things where you widely consulted with some of your friends, and that'll be the end of it.

I wanted also to congratulate Bob Runciman. As Mr Kormos mentioned, he's back here with his fire, and I was thinking that as I was coming down the steps. I could

hear you outside, Bob, and I was impressed. You're back here to put the Liberals in their place.

You guys got lucky. You've had an easy time of it. We gave you an easy time to get started. We thought, “Well, you had some good ideas.” You had all those promises: 231. I think there were 232, but they argue with that, and we might go on. You had all those promises, and we were waiting: “When are you going to start coming forward with these promises?” And you come up and tell us that we can drink a bottle of wine in a restaurant. I'm sure the people are so disappointed.

I missed a lot of you at the plowing match. I thought you would have been there with your leader to champion the promises. “We will not raise your taxes.” That's a good one. I'm going to always remember that my taxes won't be raised. You know that thumb that we get from your Premier? Other people give different fingers; I've seen the thumb coming from your Premier, and I noticed all those guys along the front row start getting their thumb up. I don't know what it means, fellas, but be careful.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): It's always a pleasure to follow my good friend from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. This summer, like all of you, I was out there in my riding consulting with voters, the people who bring us to this chamber, and I remember some of the discussions. I remember, for example—and the member from Welland-Thorold or Niagara Centre or whatever it's called nowadays probably would relate to this—a woman in Kapuskasing came to see me and she said, “Gilles, my insurance bill has gone from \$114 a month to 900 bucks a month”—900 bucks a month—“and the only way we're able to deal with it”—do you know why? Because her son who lived at her house happened to get a driver's licence, even though the kid couldn't drive the car. So we had to deal with that. Do you know what she was saying? “Gilles, make sure you go to the Legislature and pass Bring Your Own Wine.” No, I didn't hear her say that. No, she was really interested in doing something about auto insurance.

I met with other people in the riding and they had other issues. For example, many people who are going to be losing their chiropractic services next month were saying, “Jeez, I'm going to have to go to the emergency room if I get into a crisis situation and I don't have the bucks to go to my chiropractor,” and they said, “Gilles, don't forget to come back to the Legislature and debate Bring Your Own Wine.” Every time, they said that.

I've got to say, everybody I talked to in the riding, if I talked to them about hydro, if I talked to them about chiropractor services and if I talked to them about revenue-sharing for First Nations—if I talked to them about anything, the first thing that came out of their lips was, “Bring Your Own Wine: That's really important legislation.”

That's probably the furthest thing from the truth I've ever said around here. I've got to say, guys, is this the best you can do on the first week back in the House? There are all kinds of issues that we've got to deal with,

and I would hope we would take our legislative time to deal with them.

As for the bill, my good friend from Niagara Centre will speak to it, and I will have an opportunity to do so, as will other members of my caucus later. But I just say, let's get back to the real issues, the ones that are front-line for the people of Ontario—not this one.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Questions or comments?

Minister?

Hon Mr Watson: Thanks for the input we received from a number of members.

As my former parliamentary assistant indicated, it was quite clear that the legislation that is before you first and foremost is on a voluntary basis. If a restaurant doesn't want this particular type of service, then quite frankly they don't have to offer it. Secondly, the indication was that the names I read out were supportive. No, these individuals and these groups were consulted because we are a government that believes in consulting stakeholders from a wide variety of different organizations. We offered today to seek unanimous consent to pass this at second reading and send it to committee right away if the opposition wanted to deal with other legislation, and it was the Conservatives and New Democrats who said no to that. You can't push and pull at the same time.

The fact of the matter is that this is legislation that also talks about social responsibility, that doubles the fines for serving underagers. Are the Conservatives, the so-called law-and-order party, against the public safety measures of this legislation? Mr Runciman rants and raves about this not being important legislation. Where was Bob Runciman when they were discussing the great issue of beer on golf courses or extending bar hours? He was right there, front and centre, acting as a cheerleader to the member from Lanark-Carleton.

The fact of the matter is, this is a piece of legislation that is ready. We are quite willing to bring it to committee for public hearings. We look forward to receiving input and any suggestions that members of the public have.

The Deputy Speaker: Thanks for your indulgence. I was looking to my left and nobody was moving anywhere, so I went a little out of the bounds. So now you have two minutes, the member for Cambridge.

Mr Martiniuk: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I'd just like to take this opportunity on behalf of myself, the member from Leeds-Grenville, the most popular acting leader ever, and the member for Simcoe North to thank all the comments from the member for Niagara Centre, the member for Thornhill, the member for Timmins-James Bay, the minister of consumer affairs and, of course, my friend, colleague and seatmate, the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, who always has a pungent comment to deliver to this House.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Kormos: First of all, New Democrats are insistent that this bill go to committee, and not only that this bill go to committee, but that the committee hearings be

adequate enough to hear from a broad range of interested parties in this matter.

I am extremely concerned that MADD, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, for whom I have had and continue to have the greatest regard, were not actively consulted before the preparation of this bill. This government knows, or certainly ought to know, that Mothers Against Drunk Driving has been an eager participant in any number of consultations around legislation and policies that affect, impact on, the consumption of alcohol. I find it outrageous that MADD was not consulted with respect to this legislation. I think it's incredibly important that MADD have certainly more than a 15-minute slot at a cramped committee hearing. I find it imperative that MADD have an opportunity to express its views.

I've got a letter here that Shelley Martel, the member from Nickel Belt, gave me earlier today. It's a letter addressed to the minister from the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce. Here are folks who have concerns about this legislation. They're the kind of folks who certainly ought to be involved in committee hearings. I've made reference to the letter. I suppose I better tell you what's in it. It's addressed to the minister.

1710

It says, "Re: Liquor Licence Amendment Act, 2004.

"Dear Sir:

"The Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce represents over 800 businesses in the Greater Sudbury area. Recently, we were approached by a group of chamber members concerned about the proposed changes to the Liquor Licence Act which would allow patrons to bring their own wine to a restaurant.

"These restaurant owners are concerned with this legislation and do not support it for the following reasons:

"The liability of restaurant and bar owners and related insurance costs are already onerous. Patrons bringing in and consuming their own wine raises questions of liability that the government and insurance companies have not fully answered. A full explanation of how this change to legislation will impact the exposure of restaurant owners and the potential increase to insurance costs is required for these businesses to have an understanding of how they will be affected by this initiative.

"It is the opinion of these restaurant owners that the 'Bring Your Own Wine' plan will not result in increased meal sales in their establishments but rather a decrease in wine sales. The resultant loss of profits could only end in reduced employment.

"Inventory management for a restaurant's wine cellar would become extremely difficult when the owner would not know whether patrons would be buying wine or supplying their own.

"Restaurant owners already have strict compliance and reporting requirements. This initiative would likely result in even more paperwork, equipment and reporting, none of which would serve to increase a restaurant's profitability.

"The government has not provided sufficient reasons for changing the legislation to include the 'Bring Your Own Wine' idea. Restaurant owners want to know why the change is being made and who is behind the promotion of this idea.

"The Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce would appreciate your response to our members' concerns as soon as possible and we thank you in advance for your co-operation in this matter.

"Sincerely,

"Michael Luciw."

If a page could come here, I'll send this letter down to Hansard so that the incredibly hard-working people in Hansard can refer to it while they're preparing the transcript.

I don't know where this government gets the idea that somehow it is introducing the concept of bringing wine to restaurants. I mean, I remember Ideal Fish and Chips down in Welland on East Main Street. Louie, who ran Ideal Fish and Chips, came back from the war in 1945-46 and fell into, if you will, the fish and chips business. I remember that place even in the 1950s as a kid, picking up a cone of French fries on my way back from the Capitol or Park theatre with my sisters and brothers. It was a dime on a good day.

Louie was a gruff guy who put on quite a bit of weight. It was an old house that had been turned into a fish and chips joint, and Louie would sit at the fryer and he acquired something of a belly over the course of the years. Louie would sit by the fryer and he'd direct his staff—all young women, all of whom loved him but put up with his temperament. Louie, however politically inappropriate it is nowadays, would say, "Girls, a single order of fish and chips," or, "A double order of fish."

There were a couple of backrooms in Louie's Ideal Fish and Chips, right beside the Welland Tribune on East Main Street in Welland. Once I got back to Welland from university and started practising law, I realized that Ideal Fish and Chips was a hangout for judges and lawyers and magistrates and the ilk. As I had been to Ideal as a kid and had eaten takeout on Friday afternoons, Friday evenings for supper, I soon became one of, God bless him, Louie's favoured patrons.

I would be offered a room in the back, one of two backrooms. Louie's instructions to the girls, as he called them: "Girls, Mr Kormos would like a soda pop." It meant that one of the girls—they were hard-working young women—went and got a jug of Louie's homemade wine and poured it into a very cheap and scarred cup. Louie didn't charge for the soda pop. There was no LCBO label on the wine because of course Louie made it at home. The wine ranged from—well, I suppose the wine was fine. I suppose if you really wanted to know what the definition of "fine" meant, if it was any worse, I wouldn't have drunk it; if it was any better, Louie wouldn't have given it to me.

Ideal Fish and Chips had been doing a variation of Bring Your Own Wine for decades. The fish and chips shop burned down some time ago and Louie died. I was at his funeral.

I don't know how this government gets the idea that somehow it's pioneering anything new at all. I'm sure that in posh restaurants here in Toronto, favoured clientele bring their bottles of vintage—some people, and you may know about this, belong to wine clubs. They ship you bottles every month of something that isn't available through the LCBO. I have no personal experience myself, but I'm sure that in any number of posh restaurants here in the city of Toronto, if a patron who's going to drop \$300, \$400 or \$500 on a meal wants to bring his or her own bottle of wine—I suspect that from time to time it happens. I can't say that I've ever witnessed it, I can't say that I've ever been a party to it, but my suspicions are that from time to time it happens.

I am intrigued by the survey that's been referred to. I'm also interested in the, oh, very casual inquiries I made of any number of restaurants that I'm familiar with. As a matter of fact, I think the minister, when he made his announcement, went to a very fine restaurant, a very good restaurant. I think a whole lot of people in this place have been there: Mammina's. You know Mammina's down on Wellesley Street, the north side of Wellesley just west of Yonge Street? It is an excellent Italian restaurant. It is a family-run place. I'm in there from time to time. Outstanding food, excellent prices, and they have established themselves and have become well-known for the fact that they sell LCBO wine for, I think, about five bucks over LCBO prices. So they have sort of broken the standard or breached the standard among restaurateurs. And as I recall, Mammina's endorsed this proposition. Again, I don't begrudge them their position, their opinion, and I certainly don't begrudge them the fact that they've made themselves reasonably popular by selling wine and becoming well-known for selling LCBO wine at but \$5 over LCBO cost. But I do know they serve excellent food and at a very reasonable cost as well. I encourage anybody who wants a decent Italian meal to stop in at Mammina's, just west of Yonge Street there on the north side of Wellesley. But you see, that's Mammina's.

Now, just around the corner from Mammina's is an outstanding Spanish restaurant called Segovia. You know it, don't you, Speaker? And you know the chef-owner, just a wonderful, hard-working—great paella. I've never been able to finish, even with two or three people there, an order of paella, but it makes great take-home fried up the next day with some hopefully Spanish olive oil. Works out just fine. I hear what the owners of Mammina's have to say, but I'd really be interested in what the owner of Segovia has to say. Here's a guy with his staff, who work hard. They work incredibly hard. And they work with a very narrow profit margin. You know that last summer was a deadly one here in Toronto and across Ontario for restaurateurs, for the whole hospitality industry. You also know that in the restaurant industry—and if I'm wrong, somebody's going to correct me. I know that. People don't hesitate to correct me even when I'm right. But I'll tell you, as I understand it, the restaurant industry is so competitive and costs for res-

taurateurs have escalated so much—things like insurance, things like electricity costs and heating costs—that the profit margin on food is very slim, if any at all, and the profit in the restaurant industry is made on wine and spirits. So how are we doing that industry a favour by developing a bring-your-own-wine policy, especially when I haven't heard a public outcry? I haven't received a single letter from a single resident of the riding of Niagara Centre, or any other for that matter, saying, "Oh, please, by all means pass bring-your-own-wine legislation in the province of Ontario."

1720

These folks up here may be supporters of the proposition. They may be here, anxious and eager to see Bring Your Own Wine pass. But I suspect that they're far more interested in what's happening to health care in this province. I suspect they are. I suspect that the folks up here in the visitors' gallery, and other folks who might be watching this right now, are far more interested in the Liberal government's privatization of health services like chiropractic, optometry and physiotherapy. I know that folks where I come from, and I suspect across the province, are far more interested in the Liberal government's refusal to treat kids with autism once they reach the age of six years. I know that folks down where I come from, and indeed across this province, are far more interested in the fact that this government refuses to fund Visudyne treatment for all victims of macular degeneration.

I was more than a little taken aback yesterday when the minister joined with the Premier in announcing Ontarians with disabilities legislation. This is the same minister who is litigating—fighting parents in court—to prevent their kids from getting treatment for autism once they reach the age of six. And it's the same Premier of a government that refuses to fund Visudyne treatment for a large chunk of those victims of macular degeneration. Do you understand what macular degeneration is? I think you do. Macular degeneration causes people to go blind. It is not just a seniors' disease, and it wouldn't matter if it was. Do we somehow do cost benefits and say, "Well, you're over 60, you're over 65, you're not worth investing any health treatment money in because, heck, your days, your years are numbered anyway?" Sorry, don't buy that.

Why would we, why would this Legislature, why would this government—in very clear control of this Legislature—not want victims of macular degeneration, who, sure as God made little apples—guaranteed—are going to lose their sight, are going to go blind if it's not treated—why is this government not funding Visudyne treatment for a big chunk of victims of macular degeneration when a whole pile of other jurisdictions across North America are? You see, that's what folks have been talking to me about, and they've been talking to their friends, their families, their co-workers and their neighbours about it too.

The dropout rate that's increasing—alarm bells should be ringing. When all of the hard work that was done—well, quite frankly, the Hall-Dennis report—over the

1960s into the 1970s to increase and improve the retention rate in high school and to democratize post-secondary education—I remember it well. There are more than a few of you my age who remember it too. Call it the democratization of post-secondary education, so that kids like me from working-class, ethnic, immigrant backgrounds could go to college and university too. The growth of community colleges, the growth of university campuses beyond the big-city Ivy League—those WASPy bastions—and we reach a point where we're starting to make real headway in terms of young people being able to access post-secondary education, and now we see doors slammed in their faces across this province.

I suspect that you, all of you as members of this Legislature, like me, have had occasion to talk to families, like I have, who have talked about children, youngsters, investing one year, two years or maybe three years in an honours BA, but then dropping out, not because they can't handle the work, not because they don't still aspire to have a post-secondary education, not because they don't have the talent, the skill and the drive, but because the debt they've accumulated over the course of one, two or three years they felt to be crushing, and the burden they put on their families, maybe with another one, two, three or four more kids left at home ready to go, has been overwhelming for them.

What lost opportunities. We all know that it's skyrocketing tuitions.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Frozen.

Mr Kormos: "Frozen," Mr Levac says. Yes, freeze them when they're sky high. Young people need relief. Young people and their families need support so that kids from other than the richest families in this province can go to college and university. What lost opportunity.

I remember the Liberals' first announcement—oh, man. Within days of forming the government they were going to reduce auto insurance premiums by—well, let's settle on the conservative figure; most appropriate, we're talking about the Liberal government—of 10%. Do you see any decrease in insurance premiums? No. Another promise to decrease premiums by another 10%—even less results. Yet what we've seen is an attack on benefits payable by insurance companies to innocent accident victims. Now we've got a proposal being put forward by this government that, oh, people should be able to waive their income replacement benefits. People should be able to waive their drug treatment plan benefits.

As if we haven't got enough of a crisis with as many as 10% of vehicles on the road being uninsured, we're now going to have the balance of drivers grossly underinsured in their pursuit of anything akin or close to affordable auto insurance premiums. That's what folks down where I come from are talking about.

I'll tell you this, like I've had occasion to tell it to you before: I am witness to, and I believe more than a few of you are as well, in contrast to when we were young and people's concern was about not living long enough, senior citizens who are worried about living too long.

We're witnessing people who have worked hard all their lives, who have made significant sacrifices, who have scrimped, who have gone without, who have saved as much as any family possibly could, but in their senior years find themselves unable to afford to live in the home they paid for at least once, probably two or three times if they financed the kids' post-secondary education.

The Deputy Speaker: Member, it's been some time since I heard reference to the bill that's under debate. I'd appreciate it if you'd refer to it on occasion.

Mr Kormos: Bill 96. I'm talking about what is a priority for the people of Ontario. I want to hear where it is in the province of Ontario that Ontarians, wherever they are, the north, small-town Ontario or perhaps here in Toronto, big city Ontario, are clamouring—where are they?—for it.

He talks about choice. Please, choice. Give me a break. I would rather have folks with the choice of sending their kids to a college or university without having to worry about how it's ever going to be paid for because of higher, ever-escalating tuition fees.

Choice? I'd rather have a government understand that it has been a complete and dismal failure at in any way controlling or containing automobile insurance premiums to the point where we will—look, we're suffering a renewed crisis in retention rates in secondary school, a similar crisis in participation in post-secondary education, and now a renewed crisis in uninsured vehicles, and we will soon be introduced, as I said, to the under-insured driver—an innocent victim—as they are lured naively into waiving significant benefit coverage in their pursuit of anything close to affordable insurance premiums.

1730

I'm interested in small-town Ontario. I want to know what the chef-owner of Segovia, a wonderful man, would have to say about this. Heck, there are enough people in this room who frequent the joint, with or without a minister's credit card. Let's hear what George Bigliardi has to say about it over on Church Street at a darned good steak house. Don't get me wrong; as much as we often despair about the incredible amount of public monies that have been invested in Bigliardi's, I want to tell you that—

Mrs Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): Haven't eaten there.

Mr Kormos: Well, look, you know who you are, because I've run into more than a few of you there, on more than a few occasions.

Mrs Mitchell: Oh, you can afford to eat there.

Mr Kormos: You're darned right. It's good steak and George Bigliardi is a hard-working restaurateur. George Bigliardi will tell you—and I know I'm not speaking out of turn—that it's been a tough couple of years for his business as well. He's worked harder than he has ever had to for a thinner and thinner patron base. I'd be interested in seeing what George Bigliardi has to say about Bring Your Own Wine. That's why we need committee hearings.

But heck, don't stop there. What about folks down at the Blue Star in the south end of Welland, King Street? What about that family? It's the third generation of a family working hard, keeping that restaurant going. They make a few bucks' profit selling beer, wine and spirits. I would like to hear what they have to say. More important than what they have to say to me, I'd like to hear what they have to say to the rest of this Legislature. That's why we need broad-based committee hearings.

One thing I do know is this—and I don't know if any members of this Legislature have ever worked as wait staff.

Mrs Mitchell: I have.

Mr Kormos: Be it behind the counter or on your feet waiting tables, it is an unenviable job. It really is.

Mrs Mitchell: A tough job.

Mr Kormos: It's an incredibly tough job, it's an incredibly demanding job and it's an incredibly thankless job. I have nothing but the highest regard for women and men in this province anywhere who work as wait staff. I don't know if you've read a couple of books I've read. One was called Nickel and Dimed. Have any of you read that book? It's by a journalist down in the United States who was doing very 1960s sociology, this participatory research stuff. You're familiar with that, I know. She went to work as a waitress in a joint in Key West, then moved up north and worked for a Wal-Mart, then worked for a Molly Maid type of operation, and one other, a fourth one; but just discussing the plight of women, minimum wage workers, in these particular types of industries. Nickel and Dimed—a great study. I just finished another book, a memoir called Waitressing, not by anybody who became famous after she waitressed but just about her waitressing years—incredibly skilfully and well written.

This much I know: 15%, if a waiter or waitress is so lucky, on a \$25 or \$30 bottle of wine is a lot more than 15% of a \$5 corkage fee, if indeed patrons will be inclined to include a corkage fee in the total upon which you calculate a tip. I suspect that most patrons, shame on them—well, I just find it incredible.

You talk about Nickel and Dimed. I find it incredible how many people weave, bob and cheat and do internal revisionism when it comes to calculating the tip. If you've got enough money to go and eat out, by God, you should have enough to leave at least a 15% tip. I believe that. And don't tell me about how the food was no good, because the waiter or waitress didn't cook the food. Tell the waiter or waitress that the food was crappy but give the waiter or waitress 15% for working hard getting that crappy food to you.

Don't weave and bob, like, "Should it be 15% of the total after taxes or 15% of the total before taxes? Well, the bottle of wine was \$50, so we shouldn't really give 15% of the \$50 because it really only cost \$22 in the liquor store." Do you understand what I'm saying? "We'll calculate the 15% on the liquor store price." No. If you can't afford the tip, you can't afford to eat in the restaurant.

You know darned well that I'm quite prepared to debate minimum wage and the adequacy of it, and to talk about a regime wherein tipping wasn't necessary because people received fair wages. The fact is that, heck, this government has done nothing in terms of minimum wage to change the phenomenon.

So I say to you, I'd very much like to hear from wait staff about the impact of this legislation on their lives, to wit, their paycheques, their incomes, their day-to-day, week-to-week realities. I would also be very interested in hearing from wait staff and bar staff about what they would understand by the impact of somebody who brings two bottles of plonk with them into the restaurant—as compared to having to buy it a bottle at a time—who is told they are cut off. Do you understand what I'm saying? It's one thing, after you're served one bottle of wine and the waiter or waitress says, "I'm sorry, sir/ma'am, I really can't serve you any more." The Liquor Licence Act prohibits it, doesn't it? The customer may not like it. If they are a smart drunk, they'll simply say, "Yes, it's for my own good and will you please call me a cab."

Interjection: "Smart drunk" is an oxymoron.

Mr Kormos: Is "smart drunk" an oxymoron? OK.

But I've got a feeling that the patron who brings two bottles of wine in with him, who doesn't have to rely upon the waiter or waitress to bring the second bottle, is going to be a lot more aggressive and insistent about being served that bottle of wine. I've got a feeling that a patron who brings their own wine is going to be a lot more adamant about their own—well, they do own it. You're going to see this legislation—and I stand to be corrected. If I'm wrong, somebody please say so. What an invite. But I can envision scenario after scenario of waiter/waitress having to get into real tussles with patrons who say, "Well, it's my wine. I brought it. I can darn well drink it if I want to, and if you won't pour it, I will."

I'm very interested in what MADD has to say about this. I know there have been mixed reports on the proposition, which isn't in this legislation—make that very clear. Let's understand this absolutely. This legislation does not include a provision for taking home your unfinished wine.

Let's understand the context of this thing. We have a government here that's put liquor stores and maintained liquor stores in corner stores. This government, through the back door, has pursued and maintained the Tory policy of putting booze in corner stores, in 7-Eleven, Avondale types of stores. Don't shake your head, Speaker. I can show them to you. Take a drive with me. See the Avondale sign and the LCBO sign right beside it. These are the southern emulations of the northern—what do they call the stores up north?

Mr Bisson: Northern stores.

Mr Kormos: Besides that. The small kiosk-type of stores. Everybody has understood the need for those in the northern part of the province. You've got a Liberal government that has such little regard for controlling

access to booze that it has carried on the policy of putting beer, wine and spirits in corner stores.

Mr Bisson: In agency stores. They're called agency stores.

1740

Mr Kormos: They call them agency stores up north. They've adopted that policy down in southern Ontario. The Tories introduced it; the Liberals have gone hell-bent for election in pursuit of it. That is a dangerous and regrettable change of the landscape for those of us—oh, and far from it, teetotalers, please—but for those of us who have great concern about proliferating the access to booze, especially the increasingly unregulated access to booze.

Let's talk about taking your bottle home. I know the argument that if you take the balance of your bottle home, then you're less inclined to want to drink it, so you'll be a little more sober. Let's put this into context. After drinking a substantial part of a bottle of wine, you have no business driving anyway. Maybe you think you do, but you probably don't. At that point, heck, what does it matter if you finish the last third of the bottle, assuming you're not going to be driving?

We have a pretty clear standard now. If this minister, this government, is proposing an abandonment of the standard that a bottle of booze in a car, in this case a bottle of wine, has to be sealed before it can be carried around in a car or a vehicle—in other words, not in your home residence—I want to hear how it proposes to achieve that end.

I've got 20 minutes, and I do want to mention this in the context of Bill 96.

The summer went quickly, didn't it? Down where I come from, down in Niagara Centre, we had all of the summer events. We had the Rose Festival parade and the Pelham Canada Day parade. The folks over at David Chev-Olds on Niagara Street in Welland were their usual generous selves in assisting me with a vehicle in these respective parades, always a North American-made General Motors vehicle. Cathy Robertson, who's a very good friend, just an incredible salesperson, whom I trust absolutely and always have—I've bought cars from her for at least 25 years now—has always been out there driving the David Chev-Olds car with me in that vehicle, walking alongside it, within those parades. In that respect, the summer was a positive one: wonderful ethnic festivals, as you well know, down in your neck of the woods too. I know that for a fact. But a whole lot of fear, a whole lot of concern.

We are, because of rising electricity costs and the government's commitment to the privatization of electricity, witnessing an ongoing hemorrhage of industrial, value added manufacturing jobs from this province, a process that was started with the Brian Mulroney-Ronald Reagan free trade agreement, a process that was aggravated and accelerated with the Jean Chrétien NAFTA agreement, the extension of free trade. You combine free trade with electricity prices that are skyrocketing and that are showing no promise of ever being brought under control

by this government, because this government persists in the Tory policy of privatization of electricity generation for profit.

How do you like Highway 407 so far? If you like 407, you'll love Dalton McGuinty's electricity scheme. If you like being grabbed by your ankles, turned upside down and shaken out of every last nickel, dime or penny that's in any of your pockets, if you like being taken to the cleaners like that, you'll love deregulated, for-profit, privatized electricity generation. If you like having the free trade gun held to your head, should any subsequent government ever try to restore public control and ownership over hydroelectricity generation, then you'll love the Liberals' privatization agenda. We've only had little tastes.

Just as I ask, "Where's the clamour for Bill 96?"—I'm good for five more minutes. Just as, "Where is the public clamour for Bill 96?"—I suppose it has the same volume and intensity as the public clamour for higher insurance rates. Mr Chudleigh's here. He may be speaking—

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Thank you for pointing that out.

Mr Kormos: Well, you are. Here we are late into the afternoon. He could be on his way, but he's not.

Mr Chudleigh: No, sir.

Mr Kormos: Mr Chudleigh's here and Mr Chudleigh is, like every other member of this Legislature, looking for that person, that Ontarian, who has been pleading for higher insurance premiums, and is hard-pressed to find him or her.

Look as you might, as well, for the person who is pleading for higher and higher electricity rates, and natural gas is following on its heels. It's going to be a tough winter. It is going to be literally a deadly winter. I feel sorry, although sorry isn't good enough, for seniors this winter who are going to have to turn the heat down, literally, in their own homes because they can't afford the natural gas, propane or electricity rates that are being charged.

And this government talks about smart meters? There's nothing particularly smart—smart meters is a dumb idea. First of all, industry understands full well, because they already have metered electricity. They know when they're paying high rates and low rates. I come from a place where I have pipe workers who show up to work and are being told their shift has been cancelled because the electricity rates are too high for that shift. What good does a smart meter do for a family that has to keep a fridge running 24 hours a day? You can't just plug the fridge in at midnight when the smart meter says it's a little more affordable than during the daytime. That refrigerator, the single largest consumer of electricity, has to run all the time.

The second-largest consumer of electricity is your furnace motor. You knew that, didn't you? So what do you do in wintertime when you need your furnace motor blowing the hot air through the house to try to keep it a little bit warm? Do you say, "Oh, let's only turn the furnace on at midnight when the smart meter says it's

cheaper"? You can't do that. There are going to be seniors this winter suffering because of this government's creation of a regime of unaffordable electrical power costs.

They won't find any relief in their chiropractor or physiotherapist either, because it will be but a few weeks' time when seniors start being forced to pay for privatized chiropractic service. These are the same seniors who fought and sacrificed so much for so long to build public health care. Do you understand what I'm saying? These are the people who are grandparents, some of them great-grandparents. The young pages who are here, these are the people who are their grandparents and great-grandparents, who built public health care in this province, just like they did in other parts of Canada; who built it with vision and passion for their kids and their grandkids, for their community and for their country; who created something distinctly Canadian. And here we have a government that's dismantling public health care, oh, not in a slow, surreptitious way but in a rapid, passionate way.

Mr Chudleigh: That was in the red book, wasn't it?

Mr Kormos: Yeah, P3 hospitals, sure. I'll tell you what was in the red book: They weren't going to have anything to do with P3s. Once these Liberals get elected, all hell-bent for election, it's P3s all the way. Let her rip. Let her roar. Put the pedal to the metal. That's what we've got. They weren't going to privatize electricity either, were they, Mr Chudleigh?

Mr Chudleigh: No, they weren't.

Mr Kormos: Boy, when the Liberals were in opposition and the Tories were proposing the privatization of electricity—well, first of all, Liberals were all over the map.

Mr Chudleigh: They were cruel.

Mr Kormos: No, they weren't. Mr Chudleigh says, "They were cruel." They weren't cruel to the private energy sector. Somebody was sitting at that keyboard typing the fundraising letters out to those private energy sector guys, sealed with a kiss, XXOO. Dalton was like a little rabbit, jumping from—

The Deputy Speaker: I just remind the member from Niagara Centre that your five minutes are up. You now have to refer to Bill 96 again.

Mr Kormos: I never knew you for a clock-watcher, but here it is, Wednesday afternoon, close to—of course we're talking about Bill 96. We're talking about exactly what it is that the people of this province want. I'll tell you what's not in the bill: that the minister told us he was doubling the fines for violations. That's just simply not the case. Indeed, if you take a look, you'll see that all that's being changed is the minimum fine, not the maximum fine. That doesn't mean doubling the fine. The fact is, under the Provincial Offences Act, as you well know, a justice of the peace can still suspend sentence or impose a fine lower than the minimum fine—they can. Minimum fines mean nothing in provincial offences legislation—zip, diddly-squat—because the Provincial Offences Act specifically gives a magistrate, a provincial

court judge, a justice of the peace the power to impose a fine lower than the minimum fine. So talk about doubling the fines is simply not the case. Nothing has been done with the maximum fine—that's what doubling the fine means. In the case of one offence, the minimum fine has been increased from \$100 to \$200—ooh—and in another case from \$500 to \$1,000. That's not even keeping up with inflation in terms of the age of these particular statutes.

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The other thing that the statute doesn't do is change the police power to vacate a licensed premise. Somehow the people who want to brag about this bill talk about their amendment—section 3 of the bill, which will become new subsections 34(3.1) and (3.2) of the act. The police already have the power to clear a licensed establishment. They have the power to arrest—an arrest for a breach of the peace, or apprehended breach of the peace, of a licensed establishment. It's one of the ace cards that police officers keep up their sleeve, the old arrest with no charge. And it surprises the daylighters out of most people who get arrested, because they think they have to be charged, but the old police officer, or young one, arrests to prevent a breach of the peace—common-law arrest powers—escorts the person out, and doesn't have to lay a charge. Now, mind you, I can imagine an experienced police officer, who was using his authority under the Liquor Licence Act as it exists now, clearing a place because there have to be certain pre-conditions. He has to fear or apprehend a significant breach of the peace. He can't just go in there willy-nilly, arbitrarily, and say, "I don't like the kind of beer you're serving. You've got to clear this joint." The police officer has to exercise that power in the Liquor Licence Act with certain prerequisites, but I have a feeling that a well-educated and well-trained police officer—and the cops I know are—would interpret somebody's refusal to abide with their lawful order, the authority given to them by the Liquor Licence Act, as maybe even—dare I say it?—"obstruct police." You'd think about it, wouldn't you? You'd try it. You'd say, "Okay, now you're not busted for a breach of the peace, you're busted for 'obstruct police' and you're charged with it and we'll let the judge decide whether this one's going to stick, after, of course, you appear in front of the JP tomorrow morning at bail court."

So I don't know where the ministry is coming from, saying that the amendments to subsections 34(3.1) and (3.2) are somehow new law. What is going on here? It's the second time this week that this question will be asked, but what is this minister smoking? Not of the same minister, mind you. To talk about section 3 of the bill amending the act in an imperative way is just absolute nonsense. There isn't the youngest rookie out of Aylmer who couldn't tell you about the existing powers that a police officer has to enforce his or her request that the patrons of a bar clear it and clear it now, because that request is a lawful order made under the Liquor Licence Act. The law permits that police officer to do it, and that police officer has certain recourse if people don't obey

his lawful order. So that leaves us with precious little else.

We've got no substance to the claim that these important amendments radically rectify a lapse, a shortcoming, in the bill. I'm hard-pressed to understand how the minister talks about doubling the fines, when in fact the maximum fines, which is the critical part, remain unchanged, and when even doubling the minimum penalty, which doesn't amount to doubling the fines, doesn't change anything because the Provincial Offences Act—maybe this government—let's hear some legislation. Well, no, let's not. Because if you start out talking about legislation to eliminate a JP's or a magistrate's or a judge's power to overrule the minimum penalty, you're going to have police officers increasingly reluctant to lay the charge because they don't want—cops by and large use good common sense and don't want to unduly punish somebody with an irrational or unreasonable minimum fine that they know can't be superseded by a justice of the peace.

I've spent a good five minutes on Bill 96 now. I figure if that ratio of five to one is any good at all, that's good for perhaps 20 minutes of not direct on 96. We're getting close to the hour. Look, as it is, I'm going to have a remnant of time left over.

New Democrats want to make it very clear. This bill has got to go to committee. MADD, the Police Association of Ontario—not the chiefs of police. Heck, if I remember correctly, at one point they were the guys who were recommending the decriminalization of marijuana, a position that of course I didn't dispute, but they're not the ones, the chiefs of police, who are out there on the street doing this work. Talk to a cop who has got to go into a licensed premise problem place. There is probably nothing, short of domestic disputes, more dangerous than going into—is there anything? One and two?

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: They rank pretty darned close, don't they, in terms of—this is not funny stuff in terms of risk to the police officer, in terms of unpredictability, in terms of traps and hidden dangers.

Mr Chudleigh: Drug busts.

Mr Kormos: I'd say not. It can be. But I don't envy the cop who goes into a licensed premise dealing with drunks and who has to, for instance, order them to clear the joint because that police officer apprehends a breach of the peace. I've seen and known far too many police officers who, quite frankly, have been seriously injured. It's one of the prices of playing poker for police officers.

We need broad-based public hearings. The chiefs of police—there's nothing wrong with their comments on it, if in fact it was a formal comment. We still have to resolve this little contradiction here. The minister says one thing and my colleague over here in the official opposition, the leader perhaps, the august leader of the official opposition, for whom I have great regard, says another.

I want to hear what real cops have to say. I want to hear what real restaurateurs have to say about this, what small town has to say about it, as well as big city.

Let's not talk about voluntary because the fact is, if restaurants—it's like Sunday shopping. Oh, yes, Sunday opening is real voluntary. Ask the small business people. Ask people like Pupo's Supermarket down in Welland if it was voluntary for them to open on Sunday—a small family-run operation—when all the big supermarkets are open on Sunday. It's no longer voluntary. You've got to do it if you're going to stay alive. This isn't voluntary. If restaurant A is going to provide bring-your-own-wine, then restaurant B is going to be hard-pressed not to. It's no longer voluntary.

I find this government's acquiescence to some master as yet unknown around this issue to be very interesting. Was it one of the people paying those five-grand-a-pop admission prices to a golfing tournament or to a boating trip? How do you get the ear of this government to persuade them to bring stuff forward without effective consultation with the people to be impacted? Who do you pay? There are people out there who would like to know because they're clearly not on the invite list.

So let's have broad-based hearings and then let's have third reading debate, because I'll bet you, dollars to doughnuts, that those committee hearings are going to provide a lot of fuel for third reading debate, that those committee hearings may well persuade those who are soft on the bill now to oppose it, may well persuade those

who are agnostics, if you will, on the bill to take a firm stance, and may well even convince more than a few Liberal backbenchers that the stuff that's put to them as being innocuous fluff can have significant impact on people's lives.

I understand the minister's enthusiasm in getting this turned into law. It's like the untrained puppy at the door anxious to get out, bouncing from paw to paw before it wets the floor. This minister's at that door, eager to get out. It's scratching away at the screen on the aluminum storm.

But I say, whoa, let's invest in committee hearings. That's the democratic way to do it, real committee hearings, broad-based committee hearings. Let's make sure that all those people who have bona fide concerns and important things to say about this legislation get a chance to say those things, and let's ensure then that we have a real third-reading debate, because it's only after that committee hearing process, a real committee hearing process, that the debate can become pertinent and meaningful.

The Deputy Speaker: It now being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 of the clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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