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of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 26 October 2004

Mardi 26 octobre 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 26 October 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 26 octobre 2004

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SIR SANDFORD FLEMING COLLEGE

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): I rise today to draw the attention of this House to two significant events that happened recently in different parts of my riding. Both involved expansions of Sir Sandford Fleming College.

The first was the opening of Fleming college's new Haliburton campus. The new campus, which includes a school of fine arts, is located in one of the most beautiful parts of the province. There are many players in the community who made this dream come true, but I want to mention the four main believers and drivers: Barb Bolin, principal of the Haliburton campus; Brian Desbiens, past president of Sir Sandford Fleming College; Murray Fearrey, a strong municipal leader, past warden and present reeve of Dysart, et al; and my predecessor, the Honourable Chris Hodgson. The Haliburton Fleming College is a one-of-a-kind facility with its big, open, spacious studios. What started from a few courses has developed into a full-fledged school of the arts. It is helping the area realize the dream of becoming the Banff of the east.

The other event I want to speak about today is the opening of Fleming's new environmental technology wing at their school of environmental and natural resource sciences. It is located at Sir Sandford Fleming's Frost campus in Lindsay. It is named after Leslie Frost, one of our province's greatest Premiers. This wing will help them to stay at the cutting edge of the movement to embrace green technologies. It's very easy to talk about incorporating green technologies into our everyday lives, but this new wing shows that it is possible to do. From the green roof to the wind turbine and the specially constructed wetlands, the students and staff are helping us all to learn more about environmental technology.

I encourage everyone to visit these new facilities. I am proud to have both the new Haliburton campus and the environmental technology wing located within my riding.

HYDRO RATES

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): Last week, Energy Minister Dwight Duncan held a press conference

in Hamilton unveiling a new design for Ontario energy bills. He said this would make things easier and simpler for hydro users, but will a shiny new bill in the mail help those residents of Hamilton East whose electricity and gas are disconnected because they can't afford to pay the bills? Will it help consumers in Hamilton East, and across the province, who have to pay exorbitant security deposits just to get their hydro and gas switched back on?

The winter weather is coming, and heating and hydro costs are rising. Many people in my riding will be without heat and power. Why? Because gas and hydro companies are facing rising costs and passing these costs on to consumers by becoming increasingly inflexible with regard to security deposits. In addition to the overdue amounts, those who have their heat and power disconnected also have to pay huge sums, upwards of \$500, to get it reconnected. Those people cannot afford energy-saving devices like the minister suggested they undertake to solve their problems.

The people who call my office every day simply want affordable hydro. That's the solution they're looking for. If they can't pay their arrears, they can't pay security deposits and they absolutely can't pay for new energy-saving devices, like furnaces and appliances.

There's no question that people will be left without places to live or will be living in homes and apartments with no heat and no hydro over the winter. The only question is, how many people will this be? Meanwhile the energy minister is distracting people with toothless pleas for conservation and newly designed hydro bills.

I call on the government to address the issue of security deposits immediately and to act today to ensure that no one is left in the cold and the dark this winter.

SIR FREDERICK BANTING

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): I'm honoured to stand and speak about a famous Londoner, Sir Frederick Banting, who was born in 1891 in Alliston, Ontario.

Banting completed his medical studies at the University of Toronto and practised medicine in London. It was in London that he conceived a technique which might permit the isolation of the anti-diabetic component of the pancreas. By the middle of 1921, he and Charles Best had isolated insulin.

On the CBC program, The Greatest Canadian, Banting is one of the top 10 finalists. In London, people are rallying to the Frederick Banting cause.

For example, Sir Frederick Banting Secondary School in London West, the other five Banting schools in Canada and one in the USA will launch a fundraising campaign for the Canadian Diabetes Association as they solicit votes for Banting. This will help further the fight against diabetes.

Many businesses in London are rallying around Banting, asking people to vote for the famous Londoner, because they know that building strong communities starts with honouring community pioneers.

I am happy to support the Sir Frederick Banting cause. Along with my London colleagues, I ask for your support for the great Londoner and a great Ontarian in the CBC's quest for finding the greatest Canadian.

FABRY DISEASE

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): Today and tomorrow, Fabry's patients, doctors and other health care professionals from across Canada will meet in Toronto to discuss a proposal to manage Fabry disease treatment.

During the last session of the House, I asked the Minister of Health on several occasions to provide reassurance to patients with the life-threatening Fabry disease that permanent funding of enzyme replacement therapy, ERT, for Fabry disease would be provided. This therapy is available in about 30 countries today, including the United States. However, despite the many letters and desperate pleas for permanent funding from Fabry patients, their families and friends, no response has been provided by the minister.

Minister, I remind you that on April 19 you stood in this Legislature and offered "the strongest possible assurance to the member and to those suffering with this illness that their government is working aggressively with a view to responding to the call that is required.... I'm very confident we will find a resolution that is up to the standard we all expect to deliver in Ontario."

Unfortunately, Donna Strauss lost her husband to Fabry disease. Minister, you gave your personal assurance to Donna Strauss in a handwritten letter on July 3, and I quote, "I wish to assure you that I will make certain of coverage for Fabry."

I urge the minister today to not keep these patients waiting any longer. End their anxiety and commit that permanent funding for ERT will be provided.

MINISTER OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH SERVICES

Ms Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): I am proud to rise today to inform the House that our colleague the honourable Dr Marie Bountrogianni was recognized this past Friday for her advocacy on behalf of children and youth. At their 25th anniversary celebration, the week of the child and youth committee of Hamilton presented Dr

Bountrogianni with an award for her long-standing commitment to enhancing the lives of children, youth and their families. This group, whose mandate is to celebrate young people, acknowledged the minister for building community awareness around children's issues.

1340

Dr Bountrogianni's enthusiasm for issues affecting young people began long before she became Ontario's Minister of Children and Youth Services. Before she entered politics, she helped her mother operate a child care centre. She also earned degrees in early childhood education and child psychology. She went on to become chief psychologist for the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board. All these efforts earned her a reputation as a valued advocate for children and youth. Without a doubt, she is the ideal person to take on the challenge of building the new ministry.

She has already begun to stabilize the child welfare system, she's begun to expand the child care system by creating 4,000 new subsidized child care spaces and she has made the first significant investment in children's mental health services in 12 years, just to name a few things. When the Premier appointed Dr Bountrogianni to this new ministry, it was a match made in heaven, a little bit of heaven for the kids of this province.

SOUTHLAKE REGIONAL HEALTH CENTRE

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): Yesterday, I was very pleased to stand beside Frank Stronach, chairman of Magna International, as he announced an \$8-million investment toward the cancer centre in Newmarket.

This represents the largest corporate donation to a hospital outside an urban area in Canadian history.

The new cancer centre, originally announced by Health Minister Tony Clement in 2003, will serve one million people in York region and southern Simcoe county.

Residents will be able to access life-saving diagnostics and therapeutics much closer to home, instead of having to make a lengthy trip to downtown Toronto.

Frank Stronach and Magna deserve our thanks for their commitment to the local community.

All the staff at Southlake Regional Health Centre, including the president, Dan Carriere, and all the doctors, nurses and medical and non-medical staff deserve our thanks for the care they provide every day.

The people of my community want this cancer centre. The doctors and staff of Southlake have stepped up to the plate, and Frank Stronach and others have given their support. The PC government gave its support, and I know our caucus still stands by this commitment.

It is time for the Liberal government to take a stand and commit the dollars needed to make this cancer centre a reality.

HAWKESBURY AND DISTRICT
GENERAL HOSPITAL

HÔPITAL GÉNÉRAL DE HAWKESBURY

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell):

Mr Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today to recognize the outstanding fundraising efforts of the Hawkesbury and District General Hospital Foundation.

On October 3 of this year, a telethon helped raise close to \$380,000 for the purchase of a CT scanner.

L'Hôpital Général de Hawkesbury est un centre hospitalier moderne, bilingue, innovateur et bien aménagé.

Please join me in congratulating M. Jean Sirois, the director of the foundation and organizer of the telethon, along with co-chairs Eva Levesque, Dr Simon McCall and Hugh Brown.

I would also like to thank the co-hosts, Tanya Lapointe from Radio-Canada, Gaetan Pilon and Johanne Nolin, as well as well-known violinist Bobby Lalonde.

J'aimerais aussi remercier les groupes et personnes suivants pour leurs contributions exceptionnelles :

Les amis et les bénévoles de l'Hôpital Général de Hawkesbury pour leur disposition de 50 000 \$;

M^{me} Drova Zvoulum, une ex-patiente de l'hôpital, pour son don de 50 000 \$;

L'Association d'investissement industriel de Hawkesbury pour leur don de 25 000 \$; et

La Fondation de la famille Robert Campeau pour leur donation de 25 000 \$.

I congratulate everyone who helped make this telethon a success and who made possible the purchase of the CT scanner.

Je suis fier de mes commettants et mes commettantes de la région de Hawkesbury.

Long live the Hawkesbury and District General Hospital.

MEMBERS' CONDUCT

Mr Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): Mr Speaker, I haven't seen Mr Tory around here lately.

Now, I know he said that being here was at the bottom of his list of priorities, as he stated in Tandem News, but I'm sure he'd be interested to know that things seem to be falling apart in his absence.

Last night, as I'm sure you're well aware, Mr Speaker, was a clear example of just how far down the rabbit hole of disorganization this PC caucus has fallen. Who's running the show? Is it John Tory, or is it the member from Oak Ridges? All told, the member called for adjournment of the debate three times, leaving the division bell ringing for an hour and a half. Clearly, the opposition isn't interested in debating. That is irresponsible opposition.

When his first motion to adjourn debate was passed, neither he nor his party's whip seemed to have an idea of what was going on. They were completely unprepared to debate the subsequent bill. However, leading the charge,

he continued to blunder along, debating the previous bill he'd called to adjourn. I'd really like to know who is running the show over there, Mr Speaker, because whoever it is was sure dropping the ball last night.

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I rise today to express my displeasure with the shenanigans by the members of the New Democratic Party. For a party that advocates on the side of the worker, that was certainly not evident in the House last night.

Last night in this House, we attempted to debate Bill 63, the Employment Standards Amendment Act, an act which, if passed, would eliminate the 60-hour workweek. Bill 63 would give back workers the right to work for no more than 48 hours a week unless the workers had agreed to do so in writing.

The national representative of the Canadian Auto Workers' Union, Joe McCabe, has said about Bill 63 that "it will bring more fairness to workers in general." But what happened last night? The NDP voted in favour of adjourning the debate. Clearly, the opposition is not interested in debating. Instead of working with our government to help the working men and women in Ontario, they're playing politics with the lives of those Ontarians, just like happened in June when they blocked the passage of the family medical leave act over franking privileges, forcing the recall of this House, a move with a cost to the taxpayers of more than \$100,000.

But then again, what can one expect from a party that in 1990 campaigned on the promise to rebalance labour relations and then introduced the social contract, which was the largest single violation of workers' rights in the history of this province?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PUBLIC SAFETY RELATED TO DOGS
STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA SÉCURITÉ
PUBLIQUE RELATIVE AUX CHIENS

Mr Bryant moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 132, An Act to amend the Dog Owners' Liability Act to increase public safety in relation to dogs, including pit bulls, and to make related amendments to the Animals for Research Act / Projet de loi 132, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la responsabilité des propriétaires de chiens pour accroître la sécurité publique relativement aux chiens, y compris les pit-bulls, et apportant des modifications connexes à la Loi sur les animaux destinés à la recherche.

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

Minister?

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for

democratic renewal): I'll make comments during ministers' statements, Mr Speaker.

1350

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

PIT BULLS

LE PIT-BULL

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I rise today to introduce legislation that, if passed, would ban pit bulls in the province of Ontario.

This action responds to the growing alarm of Ontarians over the aggressiveness and danger of these dogs; the danger that these dogs pose to public safety; the danger that these dogs pose to other animals; and the imperilling of the safety of our streets, our parks and our communities.

This is real; it is not just fear. It is fear based upon real harm caused by pit bulls against animals and victims.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Bryant: I hear from the opposition something about fearmongering. I'd like him to say that to some of the victims who are in the gallery here today who have been attacked by pit bulls. This is real, and we are going to protect Ontarians in the province of Ontario.

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I just ask that the members in the gallery please do not applaud.

Hon Mr Bryant: Pit bulls have been responsible for some horribly vicious attacks on Ontarians. Since August, barely a week goes by where there's not another pit bull attack reported in the media, and my experience has been that there are many, many incidents that simply go unreported: a child playing, a man going out for an evening stroll, an infant being pushed along in a stroller, a family enjoying some peace and quiet in their backyard—all of these circumstances and more—a woman delivering mail to a house. It goes on and on, and we see the incidents and we see the damage done and we see the fear that it causes and we see that people don't go to certain areas or parks and streets because of this.

This government is saying enough is enough. It's time that we make amendments to the Dog Owners' Liability Act that make our streets safer. Ontario breeders would not be allowed to breed them. Future purchase and imports of pit bulls would be banned if this bill passes. There will be strict new requirements for people already owning pit bulls, though they won't be new for the responsible dog owner, because a responsible dog owner is already leashing and muzzling their pit bull. We are just requiring that all dog owners of pit bulls act responsibly.

Let me be clear, and this is important: Those who currently own pit bulls will, of course, be able to keep their dogs. We have said that all along. Under the regulations, each existing pit bull would also have to be leashed and muzzled when in public. The pit bull would also have to be neutered or spayed. Municipalities will be able to prescribe additional requirements in their own bylaws to reflect citizen concerns.

Our government recognizes that most dog owners are very responsible. Unfortunately, there are irresponsible dog owners in this province as well. This proposed legislation would forestall potential attacks by prosecuting owners of any dogs—any dogs—that pose a menace to society. An owner of any dangerous dog that bites, attacks or otherwise poses a menace to public safety could be subject to fines of up to \$10,000, and for the first time, a jail term of up to six months. The legislation would also allow fines up to a maximum of \$60,000 for corporations who own such dogs. The court would also be able to order the owner to pay restitution to the victim.

Notre gouvernement est résolu à édifier, dans tout l'Ontario, des collectivités fortes, à l'abri du danger. L'interdiction des pit-bulls répond justement à un besoin urgent de sécurité publique. Si cette loi était adoptée, les pit-bulls seraient bannis en Ontario.

We've seen positive results from similar bans in other jurisdictions. The most relevant and telling is the Canadian experience: 14 years ago, Winnipeg became the first Canadian city to ban pit bulls. Winnipeg was experiencing over 30 serious reported pit bull attacks a year; today, zero. Kitchener saw 18 pit bull attacks a year, and in a few short years since the ban came in, thanks to the leadership of their mayor and to Councillor Berry Vrbanovic, who is in the gallery today, they now have about one pit bull attack a year in Kitchener.

This means that people in those cities who otherwise would be subject to the repeated attacks of pit bulls are instead spared serious injury, and the same goes for their pets. Even more interestingly, dog bites in Winnipeg went down over the course of the pit bull ban, refuting the hypothesis that pit bull owners will turn to other dangerous dogs. Similarly, in Kitchener, no other breed has filled the gap left by banned pit bulls.

In Ontario, in addition to Kitchener-Waterloo, Windsor has a ban in place, and Brantford is moving toward one after its city council voted to ban pit bulls. Toronto is re-examining the issue following a recent and particularly horrifying attack, as are other municipalities.

I've heard from municipal leaders from Windsor to Wawa, all asking for the provincial government to show leadership on this public safety issue, and your government is answering that call today. I'm thinking of people like Kitchener Mayor Carl Zehr, who said, "Every Ontarian in every city across Ontario deserves the same level of safety that we have in Kitchener. That's what this legislation would do."

Toronto Mayor David Miller has said that he supports the province's swift action. He said, "This problem is not exclusive to any single municipality; it is a province-

wide issue and therefore the best solution is a province-wide strategy to keep Ontarians safe from dangerous dogs.”

Mayor Rod Morrison from Wawa has said, “Protecting the public from the menace of pit bulls and toughening up on owners of dangerous dogs that attack is in the best interest of all people in every town, city and community across Ontario.”

Chief Fantino has said, “This proposed ban will help my officers and police services across Ontario keep our community safe from dangerous dogs.”

Ontario municipalities are speaking out. They’re saying they don’t want a patchwork of pit bull bans across Ontario. They need province-wide leadership so there is not one level of public safety in one area and one level of public safety in another. Instead, what we need to have across the province is the kind of safety these mayors and leaders have shown and that this government is attempting here in this Legislature today.

There is support across the province. It’s not unanimous support, but let’s hear about some of it. This is from the *Hamilton Spectator*: “The broader public interest is well served by the proposed ban.” The *London Free Press* said, “We’ve seen enough,” and it’s time for a ban on pit bulls. The *Toronto Star* said it’s time to ban pit bulls. Jim Coyle wrote, “Amen to the ban on pit bulls.” *Toronto Sun* columnist Bob MacDonald said it’s “doing the right thing to ban pit bulls in Ontario.” The *Globe and Mail* said, “...implementing the ban will be difficult. Public safety is worth the effort. It’s a move long overdue.” The *National Post* said the “suggested ban should be enacted.”

With this legislation, our government would set the province-wide standard and eliminate the need for a patchwork of municipal bans. We would be the first province or state across the continent to put this ban in place. I believe we are showing leadership here, and it is to the safety of all Ontarians. While municipalities would maintain principal authority for dog control, as they do, the province will ensure that all Ontarians will receive uniform protection. This will protect municipal authorities while protecting Ontarians. I thank municipal leaders for their support.

We are continuing discussions with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and with the city of Toronto to ensure that working together will make the proposed ban work effectively for all.

The reaction to this debate has been overwhelming. I’ve received more than 5,000—almost 6,000—e-mails and letters about pit bulls. The message is clear: A majority clearly support pit bull bans. Hearing from the public was a really powerful and influential factor in the decision to ban pit bulls. Clearly, there are many unreported pit bull incidents, and clearly, there is not just fear over it, but justified fear. There is a great silent majority that is being heard on this issue and their government is listening.

That said, it was a compelling debate. I heard from all sides. I met with municipal authorities, police officers,

animal experts, groups like the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association and the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. I met with national coalitions representing humane societies, veterinarians and animal control experts. I met with victims and with citizens, those great non-experts who are all experts about dogs. We’ve heard first-hand the accounts of many victims and the suffering experienced by their families.

I want to acknowledge and thank some people who courageously came here to Queen’s Park, who have been waiting, for a long time in some cases, for this ban to be put in place, if this should pass: Darlene Wagner, Angela Joyce, Karl Vaartjes, Steven and his daughter Lindsay Grandy, Louise Ellis and her daughter Lauren, Maria De Zorzi, Diana Fischer and George Gooderham; as well, sitting in the gallery is Councillor Berry Vrbancovic, who has been a real leader in this. Thank you to all of you for coming here today.

So we’ve heard from the victims, we’ve heard from those who were opposed to pit bull bans and we’ve heard from the people of Ontario. This debate comes to this House as this province considers whether it will be the first to ban pit bulls, in Ontario. I would say to all honourable members in this House that I don’t think any of us want to open our morning paper and see yet another picture of a young child who has been harmed, a pet who has been harmed, resulting in a pit bull being put down. We’ve seen enough, and enough is enough. It’s time for action.

The Speaker: Response?

1400

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I wish to express, from our party, our sympathy to the victims of dog attacks, and share the desire to stop attacks in future, but we have concerns about how the Attorney General went about developing this piece of legislation.

My office has received dozens of e-mails, and almost everyone agrees that action must be taken to prevent innocent people from being attacked by dogs. Everyone is asking, what constitutes a pit bull? Experts say that the pit bull is really a breed unto itself, but refer to a number of breeds, crossbreeds, hybrids, etc.

For the purpose of enforcing this politically charged ban, how does one determine what is a pit bull? Who will be responsible for making the determination and will it stand up in court? There are people who suggest the government is taking this strong stand on pit bulls not because it feels the law will be enforceable, but because it will convince people it is taking action on a serious problem. Many pit bulls, or for that matter dogs in general, are not registered, especially in rural areas. When someone sees an unleashed dog, they might think, is it a pit bull? Who do they call? Assuming someone catches the dog, what happens next?

Many municipalities in Ontario do not have facilities to detain stray animals. Some have financial arrangements with the SPCA shelters, run principally by volunteer organizations, but these groups often operate on

shoestring budgets and can't be expected to take on the responsibility of dealing with a huge influx of what your government refers to as dangerous animals. Minister, you'll have to explain to us how this ban you propose will be effective and enforceable to protect the public.

Early this morning in Toronto a 28-year-old man is recuperating from serious injuries to his hand and arm after being attacked by a dog. While police are still investigating, this report appears to support your call for a ban on pit bulls. Well, not quite. The dog involved was not a pit bull; it was a Rottweiler.

Pet owners and animal experts believe a ban on pit bulls will be just the start, that more breeds will be added as other dog attacks are reported. Over time, you might be able to include every breed in the ban. Banning the pit bull breed will not protect the public from other aggressive breeds such as Rottweilers and Dobermans. My own experience is of having being bitten by a dog in the hand as a young child, by a German shepherd. Are we going to ban that dog also? What will be the criteria in the future for banning other breeds?

In Italy, they have banned in excess of 90 breeds, and it has not solved the problem of dangerous dogs. The Attorney General says this comprehensive approach of a provincial ban will avoid a patchwork of bans by municipalities. Municipalities, I would argue, are capable of determining their community's safety, and were acting; for example, the city of Windsor. What municipalities need are the tools to do the job. Muzzling and leashing pit bulls or other dangerous dogs in public is warranted, but will not protect victims from dogs that bolt from their owner's house or property and attack a human being or other creature. Police will not charge criminally unless it be proven that the dog owner was negligent.

An example is that no charges were laid by the OPP in a recent pit bull attack where the dog bolted from a house, killing a small dog, because they could not prove owner's negligence. The Dog Owners' Liability Act does not impose strict liability offences on a dog owner whose dog bites, attacks or poses a threat to public safety. There is always the defence of due diligence, so heavier fines and jailing of dog owners are meaningless tools to protect the public if a dog owner cannot be held accountable under the law for their dog's actions.

I would say to the Attorney General that this is another example of your seat-of-the-pants approach to government. This is ill thought out, you didn't consult and you don't know how it will be policed or what it will cost. Admit it, Minister: this is a public relations show designed to give people the impression that you are doing something and to get your mug on TV.

I will say this to you, Mr Attorney General: This bill should go to committee. You should face the public in terms of what you are trying to do. Make sure that it's enforceable and that you're accountable to the public. The people in this audience here today deserve to know that this is not a sham, that they will be protected.

We have sympathy for anyone who has been bitten by a dog. We want to make sure they are protected by the

law. We don't want this to be no more than the public relations exercise it already is. Do the job, Minister: Respect the public and protect them.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to offer the government that we in the official opposition would certainly be prepared to give unanimous consent to waive the printing of this bill and to begin debating it this afternoon, if you'd like.

The Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent? I don't think there's unanimous consent.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order, government House leader. Unanimous consent means all, and I heard a no. Response from the member for Niagara Centre.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): This bill purports to address what we all acknowledge as a very serious problem, a problem that has taken its toll of victims, not only across Ontario but throughout North America. I have no hesitation in acknowledging that. Our exposure to this is primarily anecdotal and I think it's fair to say that the information we receive through the news media is perhaps but the tip of the iceberg. I say to this government—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'll give you your time. I'm just going to say that when the Attorney General was reading his statement, it was quiet, people were polite and they were listening. Now the response from the member for Niagara Centre is not receiving the same courtesy. I ask the member from Niagara Centre to respond.

Mr Kormos: This is a serious problem that warrants serious consideration in a disciplined way in the context of this chamber and the rules and procedure of this chamber. It's far too important a matter for anybody to attempt to short-circuit the process. It's far too important a matter to folks across this province, to ensure that there is a full debate, that there is a thorough and intelligent consideration of all the data and evidence.

I don't doubt the sincerity of the people who advocate this bill as it stands now, and I would ask them not to doubt the sincerity of those who want to ensure that whatever legislation is eventually passed in this province is the most effective law, with enforceability and the capacity to have a meaningful impact on vicious dogs and attacks by vicious dogs, be they pit bulls or be they others.

I tell you, there has been serious conflict and contradictory statements made about who has and who hasn't been consulted. I'm not in a position—nor would I want to at this point—to identify any of the parties as being anything less than truthful from their particular perspective. But I'm concerned about the letter that appeared in this morning's Toronto Star from the president of the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association, one Tim Zaharchuk, who says that organization wasn't consulted.

I'm concerned there's a suggestion—a number of columnists and journalists have been cited—that for as many as there are who support the ban being proposed and the manner it's being proposed, there are an equal

number of observers and journalists who express concerns. I'm concerned about the observation that the US Centers for Disease Control has not been adequately consulted. I'm concerned about the observation that the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals has not been consulted, that the Canada Safety Council has not been effectively consulted. The people of this province deserve to hear from those parties, deserve to know what the data are, so that we as legislators can develop the best possible legislative response to, I repeat, this most serious problem.

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We believe as well that this matter should go to public hearings. There ought to be public committee hearings so that all parties can express their views, so that there could be a public airing of the data and the evidence and so that there can be a legitimate consideration of the effect of breed-specific bans in other jurisdictions.

I'm concerned about the conflicting reports about the effectiveness of the breed-specific bans in the United Kingdom. I'm concerned about the conflicting reports coming about places like Cincinnati or Denver, where there is some suggestion that breed bans were attempted, failed and then abandoned; if they have been, we want to understand why. If there are better ways to approach this than the manner in which this legislation does it, then we're prepared to work together to ensure that that better way is implemented.

We're concerned about municipalities and their ability to enforce this legislation. It's quite clear this is legislation that has to be enforced at the municipal level. Down where I come from, and in fact across this province, municipalities are hard-pressed to keep animal control officers on duty any more than five days a week, eight hours a day. To have a breed ban or a vicious dog ban in general is meaningless unless you've got people out there prepared to do the hard, nasty and dirty work in terms of picking up this breed.

Also, the bill clearly provides for at least one more decade of so-called pit bulls in Ontario. We're talking about the so-called grandparenting. I understand why the government would want to include that in their legislation, but I very much want to understand how that jibes with their expression of such serious concern with this one specific breed.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In light of the spirit of co-operation that has been offered, I seek unanimous consent to put a motion, without further debate, that when this bill is called, any time this bill is called, no party can put a motion to adjourn the House or adjourn the debate without unanimous consent.

The Speaker: The government House leader put a motion forward to have unanimous consent. Do I hear unanimous consent? I heard a no.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): You're an idiot.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member from Toronto-Danforth has used unparliamentary language. Would you stand and withdraw.

Ms Churley: I withdraw, Speaker.

VISITORS

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask the members to recognize constituents of mine, Chester and Grace Baarda, and their son, Ted, who are joining us in the gallery today.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): That's not a point of order.

It's time now for oral questions. The leader of the official opposition.

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): Thank you, Mr Speaker. In the absence—

The Speaker: I would ask for your indulgence for a second. Let me take a moment before we start question period to recognize Brian Coburn, a former member for Ottawa-Orléans who was part of the 37th Parliament. Welcome.

Sorry about that.

Mr Runciman: A very justifiable interruption, Mr Speaker.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH PREMIUMS

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): In the absence of the Minister of Finance, I'll direct my questions to the Acting Premier.

Minister, when your government introduced the Liberal health tax in May, you maintained it was not a tax, it was a premium. You claimed your government hadn't broken your promise not to raise taxes on hard-working families. In May in this House, the Minister of Finance said, "The budget included an Ontario health premium. It is not linked to the rates of personal income tax. It's a unique, hybrid premium." We now know that to be false.

Yesterday, the Minister of Finance repeated three times in response to my question, and I'm quoting, "The Ontario health premium is an individual tax levied under the income tax system of the province, and it remains a personal obligation of individuals."

Dalton McGuinty looked people in the eye last year and said, "I will not raise your taxes." This is such an obvious flip-flop, it's astonishing, even for a Liberal. People have lost faith in the word of your Premier. People are justifiably cynical about any of the promises made by Dalton McGuinty. Who's right, Mr Sorbara or Mr McGuinty? Do you continue to maintain this is a tax or is it a premium?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): There have been numerous

statements by the finance minister, starting in the lock-up at the presentation of the budget where this was described as a tax. That has been the position of the budget. It started prior to the introduction of the budget. That was during the lock-up that occurred in the Whitney Block, and I believe the opposition were present in that lock-up. That was followed by a statement in the House which was, in turn, followed by a number of statements that clearly reaffirmed that this was, in fact, a tax.

Now, the finance minister said yesterday—and it's entirely correct—that it was not related to the Income Tax Act, as the member indicated. But I think the government has been clear on this matter right from the beginning, starting in the media lock-up, followed by the budget speech, followed by the budget motion, followed by the debate on the budget, that this in fact was a tax.

Mr Runciman: Now we have it confirmed that the Premier wasn't straight with the people of Ontario about raising taxes.

Minister, this speaks to the very competence of your government and of Dalton McGuinty. You've implemented a tax that hits personal pocketbooks hard after you said you wouldn't raise taxes. But what's more galling is that you guys can't even break a promise without getting it wrong. We have an arbitrator's ruling that shows a public sector employer will now have to pay the health care premium on behalf of its employees. Once one union wins this right for its employees, it will become a pattern for future labour negotiations. How will you act to protect the rights of all taxpayers, so that hard-working taxpayers are not forced by your legislative screw-up to not only pay their own Liberal health tax, but also pay the freight for public sector workers? How will you do that?

Hon Mr Duncan: I would re-emphasize for the member opposite that we, in fact, have conflicting arbitrators' decisions. The Air Canada Jazz decision is precisely the opposite of the one he has referenced.

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): He didn't raise that.

Hon Mr Duncan: Yes, and he didn't raise that. There is a right to judicial review. I believe that judicial review will occur, and I believe the judicial review will confirm the position of the government at this point. We have to wait and see. The position of the government has been clear. We see this as a tax. We have conflicting arbitrators' decisions. We await the decision of a competent court of jurisdiction.

Mr Runciman: I'm glad the minister raised the issue of the court's involvement here. Clearly you have an option: Either you can demonstrate leadership and clarify that this is a personal tax that must be paid by all taxpayers, or you can continue to stumble down the path of broken promises, blindly hoping that other arbitrators and court decisions don't rule that some taxpayers have to pay the premium and others don't, and that isn't difficult. It's a basic test of competence.

In the absence of direction from your government—and you've confirmed that that direction isn't there

today—will you at least intervene in all such cases that go before the courts in order to ensure that you don't create a two-tier taxpayer system?

Hon Mr Duncan: We demonstrated leadership by beginning to address the problems they created in the health care system. You want to talk about broken promises? What about a \$5.5-billion hidden deficit that your party left this government with?

1420

What we're doing to show leadership is funding 2,400 full-time nursing positions, trying to make up for the abuse and neglect of the health care system under that government. Some 21,000 more Ontarians will receive home care this year as a result of this government's leadership decisions.

The only incompetence was the incompetence of a government that compared nurses to Hula Hoop workers. It was the incompetence of a government that said it wouldn't close hospitals and then closed 39 of them. It was the incompetence of a government that laid off thousands of nurses and then had to spend valuable taxpayers' money on severance to bring them back.

Premier McGuinty and his government are showing the leadership they didn't show. We are showing competence by revealing the true facts around your deficit. We're going to clean up the mess you created and we're doing it expeditiously, in the interests of the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question.

Mr Runciman: The minister had better get a new scriptwriter. People are sick and tired of that cop-out. That's what it is—a cop-out. You've been in office for over a year. Check the calendar and start doing your job.

First, your Liberal government said you wouldn't raise personal taxes. Then in May you did, but called it a health premium. Now you say it's a personal tax that must be paid by individual taxpayers. Arbitrators across Ontario are working overtime on cases about just who has to pay the Liberal health tax.

According to the latest labour force survey data from Statistics Canada, one in five people in Ontario works in the public sector. The vast majority of those employees are unionized. That means that 20% of the revenues you intend to collect from your Liberal health tax are in jeopardy. Because of your lack of foresight, public sector employers could be on the hook for \$500 million for contributions on behalf of their employees by the time the next election rolls around.

Minister, if the court upholds this decision, what will you do? What services will you cut to meet a possible \$500-million obligation?

Hon Mr Duncan: First of all, this government is funding 2,400 full-time nursing positions; 21,000—I repeat, 21,000—more people are receiving home care; 1,600 more front-line staff for long-term care; nine new MRIs; three more repatriated community health care investments, the first time in 12 years; free vaccines for kids; and we're restoring standards for seniors in long-term care.

Nobody tires of the truth. The truth is that this government has moved expeditiously and prudently to address the situation in our health care system, to put the needs of individual Ontarians ahead of the blind partisan attacks this party makes that aren't based on fact. I note too that we now have the lowest unemployment rate since 2001 in this province, and that's part of the entire issue.

Courts of competent jurisdiction will hear appeals on this. We'll await their decision.

Mr Runciman: This is the head-in-the-sand approach to government. The potential cost of public sector employers having to pay this tax is \$500 million by the time the next election rolls around. That's \$500 million that will no longer be available for front-line patient care in our hospitals and long-term-care facilities, money that won't be available for our classrooms. The list is endless.

In your drive to raise taxes, you were dangerously negligent with the details. You didn't do your homework. The potential cost to taxpayers is massive. Not only will some taxpayers have to pay the premium, they'll also have to pay \$500 million for those who don't have to pay. In light of these problems, Minister, will you now admit that your tax was a mistake and scrap this tax?

Hon Mr Duncan: Again, the member opposite conveniently ignores the Jazz airline arbitrator's ruling that says, in fact, this is a tax. That has been the government's consistent position from the beginning, and the position of the Premier and the Minister of Finance. The only group that had their head in the sand was a party that could promise to balance the budget when it left a \$5.5-billion deficit. It's a party that said it could cut corporate taxes at a time when you had a deficit of this size, was a party that laid off nurses, was a party that failed to deal with the crisis that was in front of the people in our hospitals.

We are taking a responsible, prudent position. We have introduced this tax in order to properly fund the new nurses, the new services we need. We believe that in the long term the people of Ontario will see the wisdom of those decisions, and are beginning to understand the positive outcomes of those decisions: better front-line health care, better health services to the people of this province.

Mr Runciman: That's a depressing response from a one-note-Johnny minister. He gets up and says the same thing time after time, despite the gravity of the implications regarding this issue.

Minister, our party leader, John Tory, has promised to scrap the tax when the Progressive Conservatives are elected in 2007. Unlike you, we will keep our promise. You have so badly implemented this tax and have not thought through the obvious consequences. Will you now answer John Tory's challenge and scrap this tax, yes or no?

Hon Mr Duncan: The only thing I would like to hear from John Tory is how he will pay for scrapping the tax. Will John Tory lay off 8,000 nurses the way previous Conservative governments did? John Tory will close

hospitals. John Tory will lay off nurses. John Tory talks a good game, but he doesn't defend his arguments. John Tory has no more credibility on this issue than that bunch over there does, a bunch that said they had a balanced budget, not in the ancient past but in the last fiscal year. John Tory ought to tell the people of Ontario how he will address the health care issues.

The real leader in this province, the real leadership being shown is by Premier Dalton McGuinty for taking the tough choices, making the decisions. We put the health care needs of Ontarians ahead of tax cuts for corporations. We put the education needs of students ahead of private school tax cuts. I challenge John Tory to say how he'll pay for this—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health. All across Ontario, people are scrambling to make appointments with their optometrists. That's because, as of Monday, the McGuinty government will cut the eye exams provided by optometrists from OHIP coverage. You are reducing direct access to eye exams, because tens of thousands of people will not be able to meet the McGuinty government's restrictive new conditions, people suffering from eye impairment, vision impairment, people who need help.

Optometrists are primary health care providers. They have an important role to play in sustaining people's health. Patients should have direct access, and that access should be paid for through OHIP. Minister, will you do the right thing and reverse the McGuinty government's cut to optometrist services?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): It's noteworthy that the honourable member who for five years served in a government that did nothing on an annual basis to increase the amount provided to optometrists, followed by eight years of—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order.

Hon Mr Smitherman: I know they don't want to hear. Neither of them wants to be reminded of the fact that from 1989 until 2004, 14 years largely during which these two parties held office in our province, optometrist fees were not increased. As a result of that, our government received an enormous bill for an unfunded liability. The challenges we face as a government—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Smitherman: Yes, I do recommend that you should get lethal injection for yourself.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. That's not parliamentary at all, Minister of Health. Would you mind withdrawing?

Order. Let me see if I can get some order into Parliament today.

Minister?

1430

Hon Mr Smitherman: I apologize. I thought the honourable member was heckling that I—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr Hampton: Well, now the people of Ontario have the logic of the McGuinty government. Because optometrists felt that they were underfunded, what the McGuinty government means by “Choose change” is “Cut them altogether.”

Here’s the McGuinty logic, but it’s not just optometrists. Then we have the case of chiropractors. In one month, as of December 1, tens of thousands of Canadians will be cut off from the helpful health care services of chiropractors. Why? Because the McGuinty government is cutting that too. And we know that especially for people who work in the construction industry, the manufacturing industry, having access to a chiropractor is essential if people are to be able to work on an ongoing basis and avoid, in some cases, a lifetime disability. That’s why it’s absolutely wrong to cut this.

I’ll give you another chance, Minister. Will you recognize that the McGuinty government has made a mistake by cutting these services, and will you restore the health care services provided by chiropractors?

Hon Mr Smitherman: With respect to the first question that the honourable member asked, I think it’s important to note that governments must have priorities. Ours have been fashioned after a commitment to address key wait times in areas like cardiac and cancer, and to deliver more doctors to communities again after years and years of decline.

With respect to optometry, hundreds of thousands of visits will continue to be funded for people in Ontario. We’re making sure that the program we have developed with optometrists in mind is designed to ensure that those people most vulnerable in our society continue to have access to these things, not just young people and not just the elderly, but for people with diseases, with eight classes of disease that have a dramatic impact on the eye, we’re enhancing the coverage to an annual visit, where heretofore it’s been once every two years. We have made every effort within available resources to make sure that optometry services are designed in a fashion which has provided for those people in our society who are most vulnerable. I think that’s the appropriate public policy response.

Mr Hampton: I think it’s important to hear from the president of the Ontario Association of Optometrists, who says that in fact there was never a formal consultation process, which explains why “obvious things to us optometrists” do not make sense in what the government is doing. In fact, what the president of the optometrists’ association of Ontario says is that literally hundreds of thousands of people need that annual eye exam because it will help protect their health; it will put them in a situation where they can avoid getting more serious afflictions, afflictions that will put them in hospital, afflictions that will result in surgery. That’s what you’re cutting.

You claim to be a health care government, but in fact this cut makes no sense, because if you follow it down the road a couple of years, it results in more costs for the health care system. So while you talk about transformational change, Minister, here’s your opportunity to protect services that really matter to people. Will you stop the cuts to chiropractors, the cuts to optometrists’ services, cuts that don’t make any sense?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I do think it’s important to keep in perspective the broad range of investments that our government is making with respect to health care. I recognize, of course, there are challenges there. There are obviously, Mr Speaker, every single day, initiatives that we wish we had more resources to provide for. But in keeping with our desire to drive more resources to the community level, we made a \$103-million investment in home care this year, a \$400-million investment in long-term care this year, \$600 million over four years to deliver more doctors into local communities—essential, obviously, to a well-functioning health care system; significant new volumes related to five key areas, including MRIs and CTs, access to cataract care that’s enhanced, hips and knees, cardiac and cancer.

I take my honourable member’s point, of course. I recognize there are challenges we have that we are not addressing as fully as we would like, but I think it’s important to recognize we have made an almost \$2.2-billion investment in the expansion of health care services as a dedication and commitment to the people in the province of Ontario.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): To the Minister of Health: What we see is health care services that matter to people, health care services that make a real difference in people’s lives, health care services that can help them sustain their health rather than become more seriously ill, that you’re cutting.

Meanwhile, you spend \$200 million of the new health tax on sewer pipe. And as we saw yesterday, you spend \$15 million of the new health tax on a promotional campaign.

Explain it to me. You’ve got new money under the health tax, people are paying more, but they’re getting services cut. Can you explain the logic of that to all those people who are losing their optometrist services, who are losing their chiropractic services and who stand to lose their physiotherapist services? Why are they paying more, watching the new health tax money go to sewer pipe, and you’re cutting the health care services that really matter to them?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I think it’s important to remind Ontarians—although I think they know rather well by now—if you talk about a health care service that is fundamentally important to Ontarians, it is access to a doctor in your local community.

And it was that party, while in government, that shut down medical schools because they felt that the appro-

priate way to deal with health care in the province of Ontario was to stop doctors from practising. This is the party that, while in government, cut funding for the Ontario drug benefit one year. This is the party that, while in government, for two or three years running cut funding to Ontario's hospitals. This is the party that, while in government, cut funding for OHIP services like access to doctors in our local communities.

I stand behind a government plan that has invested \$2.2 billion in the expansion of essential services to make them more available to people in local communities. And all across the province, communities are seeing these benefits every single day.

Mr Hampton: Well, the Minister of Health, rather than answer the question, wants to pretend he can give the people of Ontario a history lesson. I want to remind the Minister of Health it was a Liberal government in 1993 and 1994 that said to health ministers across the country, "There are too many doctors; start cutting medical school places." The Chrétien government, Paul Martin, remember them? It was Paul Martin who, in the 1994 budget, cut health care funding and put every province in a difficult spot.

But I want to return to today. I want to return to the issues this health minister is so desperate to avoid. You've got \$2 billion in your budget squirreled away in contingency funds; you're going to take \$6.5 million in the new health tax out of people's pockets every day; you've got \$825 million of new federal money; you've got over \$4 billion. Why are you cutting chiropractors? Why are you cutting physiotherapists? Why are you cutting optometrists?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I find it very interesting that the honourable member's using the defence, "Some other level of government told us to do it." In the face of all of the evidence about Ontario being a growing population, this member clings to the idea that someone told him to do it. I wonder what other kind of advice he's following on that basis—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I'm having difficulty hearing the Minister of Health because of the noise coming from the opposition.

Interjections.

Order. Let me give the member from Toronto-Danforth a moment to vent.

Minister of Health?

Hon Mr Smitherman: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I'm pleased to stand behind those commitments that we've been able to fulfill on behalf of Ontarians: In very sharp contrast to that party while in government, this year alone, an additional \$250 million in the Ontario drug benefit to give Ontarians the access to those drugs which enhance the quality of their life.

Our government's budget stands behind better health, delivering a better health care system to the people of Ontario, and we have put \$2.161 billion in my ministry alone in evidence of those very clear priorities.

1440

Mr Hampton: The minister talks about all the wonderful things the McGuinty government promised. But I talk to those frail seniors, people who are disabled, people who have to rely upon Ontario Works, and what they know is that you've told the doctors, "You pry \$200 million in drug benefits away from the poorest, the disabled and the frail elderly." People who need that eye exam are being told, "You pay for it out of your own pocket now. And if you can't afford it, that's too bad." People who need a chiropractor and who need to look after an injured back so they can go to work are being told by the McGuinty government, "You pay out of your own pocket."

Minister, tell me, how is it that you, the government that advertises itself as a health care government, go around and pick on the frail elderly, the poor, the disabled, injured workers, people who suffer from vision impairment? How is that improving health care for all of these ordinary Ontario citizens?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The honourable member likes to talk about the frail elderly—73,000 residents in our long-term-care facilities currently enjoying the benefit of a \$191-million injection of new money to hire 2,000 new staff.

The honourable member likes to talk about people on Ontario Works, who continue to be part of those hundreds of thousands of Ontarians who will soon receive access they need to the optometry services which are critical to them.

This is evidence that, within the available resources, we make our priorities and we stand by them because they're important priorities for the people of Ontario. Communities all across this province, totalling now 142, do not enjoy the benefit of enough physicians at the local level.

They stood by and waited and waited and did not reverse the terrible decision made by that party while in government. But we have stood up for those communities, and we're working hard to produce more doctors in local communities. The element of success of family practice revitalized is a tremendous commitment that we make to the people of Ontario.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask that the member for Etobicoke North apologize for saying audibly—many of us heard him during question period—referring to me and my comments, "OK, the hot flash is over." I would ask for an apology—

The Speaker: Order. I did not hear the member, but—
Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. If the member felt that he had said something unparliamentary, I would ask him to withdraw. But I did not hear him.

Mr Shafiq Qadri (Etobicoke North): Speaker, I believe you said, "I will give the member opportunity to—"

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I would ask the member from Etobicoke North to withdraw.

Mr Qaadri: I withdraw.

PIT BULLS

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): My question is for the Attorney General. Minister, today you made good on your intention to ban pit bulls in Ontario. With the recent number of serious attacks by pit bulls, your bill will be welcomed in many quarters. Banning pit bulls may be a prudent step for your government, but the lack of details of your plan has raised serious concerns.

My question is, Minister, that once your government has passed legislation banning pit bulls, who gets the responsibility to enforce this new law? Will it be a newly created provincial force with expertise in dogs, or will it be the Ministry of Natural Resources, or municipalities, or the SPCA? And the really tough one, Minister: Who's going to pay for it?

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): With respect, I'd say to the member, I would not presume as to what this Legislature will do with this bill. I will say that I have been working very closely with the city of Toronto and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, and I have spoken very directly to a number of mayors and councillors across the province to deal with this issue.

Yes, municipalities, of course, have a very, very important role to play when it comes to the regulation of dogs. At the same time, I've got the message loud and clear, that the municipalities do not want a patchwork approach to the pit bull issue. They want to have a province-wide strategy, so that's what we're doing.

We're working with the municipalities. We're working with the SPCA. That's why I sat down with the Ontario association, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. That's why we're working with the humane societies. That's why we're meeting with veterinary associations.

I guess my question to the Attorney General critic is quite simply this: I got the impression that you didn't support this bill. Do you support the bill or not, sir?

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary.

Mr Tascona: Minister, many organizations with expertise in dogs, including the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association—the OVMA—attempted to meet with you to discuss your proposed ban. Your parliamentary assistant wrote a letter to the Toronto Star denying reports that you had refused to meet with them.

Today, in the same newspaper, the OVMA president revealed a letter was sent to you, the Attorney General, on September 15. A month later, on October 15, the same day you announced your decision to ban pit bulls, the OVMA received a faxed letter from you stating that your schedule did not permit them to meet with this organization.

This is another example of your seat-of-the-pants approach to government. This is ill thought out. You didn't consult, and you don't know how it will be policed and how much it will cost. Admit it, Minister: This is a public relations show designed to give people the impression you are doing something and getting your mug on TV. What are you going to do to protect the public?

Hon Mr Bryant: You tell those victims in this gallery that this is a public relations exercise. This is real—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I presume you want to respond.

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): No, we don't. That's a bunch of crap.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Let's all just settle down now.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Could we just all settle down for a moment now. Let's proceed with question period in a very civil way.

Hon Mr Bryant: I'm actually very happy to be given the opportunity to talk about the level of consultation that we undertook. In a very, very short period of time, we were able to get all sides of the issue, very openly.

The cameras were all there, and everybody saw that I met with the National Companion Animal Coalition, a membership that includes the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies, the Canadian Veterinary Association, the Canadian Kennel Club, the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council and agricultural. I met with animal control officials, a representative of the Kitchener-Waterloo Humane Society, and the OSPCA, Cat and Jack K9 Safety, dog trainer, author and behavioural consultant, Toronto police canine unit, Kitchener-Waterloo police. I received submissions from the Ontario Veterinarian Medical Association. We considered their submissions. We spoke with them in September and October, and then there were follow-up meetings.

I'm running out of time. We did so much consulting—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): A question to the Acting Premier. Minister, your government's been asleep at the wheel when it comes to protecting consumers from auto insurance rate hikes. First, you broke your promise to cut rates by 20%, and now we find out that you're giving the green light to secret kickbacks that are driving insurance rates up even higher. Brokers who play ball with big insurance get secret bonuses, kickbacks on top of the 12.5% to 20% commission they're already charging.

Who pays? Well, it's drivers and homeowners, that's who. Last year the scam cost Canadians \$290 million, and you're turning a blind eye. Will you ban that scam and protect drivers and homeowners? Are you going to let big insurance and insurance brokers continue to rip off

drivers to the tune of millions of their hard-earned dollars?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Hon Dwight Duncan: This government is moving to strengthen regulation in the province to make insurance more affordable and available, and most importantly, to protect consumers. Thanks to our reform, auto insurance rates are coming down in Ontario for the first time in years, which will result in a more competitive market.

Rates were increasing by 43% over three years under the previous government and they did nothing. We've now cut rates by 8.75%. In addition, the insurance industry reports that the average premium is 12% cheaper than it was in November. Some people have already realized savings, and others may do so when they next renew.

We have brought stability to the system after years of skyrocketing rates. Consumers should always shop around. This government is moving to protect the interests of consumers, and we pledge to continue those efforts.

1450

Mr Kormos: That's little comfort to drivers paying premiums that are higher than they've ever been before and that have failed to be reduced by never mind 20%, by 10% or even 1% or 2%. Theresa Courneyea, head of the consumer interest alliance, says that Ontario brokers have "a financial incentive to do certain things that ... may not be in the best interests of the consumer. [They have] a conflict of interest between [their] interests and [their] clients' interests." In plain English, that means that in this kickback scam, insurance companies are giving brokers cash bonuses to rip off drivers. And you're turning a blind eye.

Stand up and tell auto insurance premium payers, tell homeowner premium payers, that you're going to protect them, that you'll ban the scam. Or are you simply going to let big insurance and their brokers continue to rip off drivers to the tune of millions of dollars of hard-earned bucks?

Hon Mr Duncan: Let me correct the record. It is completely inaccurate to suggest that we've turned a blind eye. In fact, our government has asked the regulator, the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, for a report on insurance practices here. Based on that report, if the government needs to consider further actions, we will.

That being said, this government thinks more disclosure is always a good thing. Whether it's in business or government finance, transparency is what keeps our insurance marketplace competitive. We want auto insurance to be more transparent to consumers so that they can make themselves aware about what's in their policy. Brokers should always find the best rates for their clients, and we think that companies and brokers should be providing as much disclosure as possible.

Three insurance companies, ING Canada, Sun Life and Manulife have already said they'll be reviewing their

practices with regard to contingent commissions. I have every confidence that the Financial Services Commission of Ontario will take whatever steps are necessary if any insurer doing business in this province is not abiding by the provisions of the Insurance Act.

INTERNATIONALLY TRAINED ENGINEERS

Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Internationally trained engineers represent the largest group of internationally trained professionals entering our province. Several of these individuals have also faced hurdles in gaining access to the engineering profession in their new chosen home of Ontario. We have heard that a lack of Canadian work experience is one of the greatest barriers that these individuals face. It's a never-ending cycle of no Canadian work experience, no job; no job, no Canadian work experience.

I understand that as part of an announcement you made this morning, our government is doing something to address this dilemma that internationally trained engineers face. Can you please explain how you are addressing this work experience issue for internationally trained engineers?

Hon Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I'm really pleased with the progress that we are making with regulators and, specifically, today's announcement with Professional Engineers Ontario. They will be working with us and with our college system to develop a course that internationally trained individuals will be able to take, which will qualify as an option for the 12-month Canadian work experience requirement that they currently have for permanent licences. I want to congratulate Professional Engineers Ontario for their very progressive action in this regard.

Mr McNeely: I know that internationally trained engineers lose precious time in their home country as they wait to emigrate to Canada. I've heard that before arriving in Canada, many of these individuals do not have a clear idea of how the licensing process works for the engineering profession. They also do not have a sense of how their credentials and skills will be assessed once they reach Ontario. How does your announcement today address this issue?

Hon Mrs Chambers: The internationally trained individuals who are applying to come to Ontario do not currently have enough information on what's expected of them to obtain licensure in their profession. This morning's announcement includes a \$2-million investment over two years, which will help in the development of an international portal that will provide labour market information and skills assessment. It will be interactive, providing the opportunity for coaching and mentoring. This is a portal that will be developed with the professional engineers of Ontario. It starts at the beginning of the process, so it provides individuals in their home

countries with the opportunity to understand what's expected of them and to start to work toward achieving their licences.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): My question is for the Minister of Community Safety, the minister responsible for fire services in Ontario. I have recently received a copy of a letter sent to a double-hatter firefighter, a professional firefighter in Stratford, who serves as a volunteer firefighter in the township of Perth East in the riding of Perth-Middlesex, right next door to mine. The letter, which I shared with the minister last week, as he will recall, is from the local president of his firefighters' union in Stratford. It is a threatening letter demanding that this firefighter resign as a volunteer firefighter in three to six months. It goes on to suggest that there will be consequences if he doesn't resign.

This firefighter has asked me to protect his confidentiality, so I will not mention his name. If he refuses to resign as a volunteer, the consequences he faces will no doubt involve more threats, more harassment, possibly charges and possibly expulsion from the union, which could lead to the loss of his full-time position, solely because he serves as a volunteer in his home community. This is the kind of thing that's been happening across the province for the last couple of years. Will the minister tell this House if the government condones these heavy-handed threats, yes or no?

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I thank the member for his question. This is an issue he is very passionate about, and I understand that. I also understand that when you were the government, you brought forward a bill and your own party would not support it. As a matter of fact, four members of your caucus right now voted against it. I just want you to know that I am totally committed to make sure that fire safety is something that is intact and that we provide safety for the community. I support volunteers. Notwithstanding that, there's no question this is a difficult issue. When you had the opportunity—you were on the government side—your own party did not support it.

All I'm saying is that we are working to make sure we have some co-operation between the municipalities, the professional firefighters and the volunteers to see if we can come to a solution through the collective bargaining process.

Mr Arnott: I must express utter disappointment at the minister's response. For the record, when Bill 30 was voted upon at third reading, a full two-thirds of our government caucus supported the bill on a free vote. If this continues to be the government's position, then the right to volunteer in Ontario will be rendered void and meaningless, and public safety in our smaller communities and countryside will be diminished. These skilled and trained volunteers who work to provide emergency protection to their neighbours will be removed as the

union gradually eliminates the remaining double-hatters while the government sticks its collective head in the sand.

I want to inform the House of the response of municipal councils in Ontario. Since the spring of this year, 165 municipal councils have passed resolutions in support of double-hatter firefighters and insisted the government take steps to protect them. These are from Conservative ridings, current Liberal-held ridings, NDP ridings, and include the county of Wellington, the town of Halton Hills and the second-largest city in the province, the city of Ottawa, which of course is partly represented by the MPP for Ottawa South, the Premier of Ontario.

How can the government dismiss the views of 165 municipal councils on this issue of public safety? When will the government express public support for the principle of Bill 52, the Volunteer Firefighters Employment Protection Act—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you. Minister.

1500

Hon Mr Kwinter: I find it interesting that the member talks about the support he had in his caucus. You were the government. If you had that support, why didn't they pass the bill?

The other thing is, Bill 52—and again, I commend the member for trying to get a resolution to this thing—doesn't go far enough. It doesn't solve all of the problems that are out there. I can tell you this: Right now, the fire marshal is keeping a very close watch on what is happening. We will make sure that communities are not in harm's way as a result of it, and we will do whatever we have to do to resolve it.

APOLOGY

Mr Shafiq Qadri (Etobicoke North): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: With your indulgence, I would like to stand in my place now and issue a full and unequivocal apology to the MPP for Toronto-Danforth and any others I have offended. What I said was wrong, inappropriate and beneath the dignity of this assembly.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you.

HOTEL CLOSING

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Yesterday, the Inn on the Park announced that it is closing. One hundred fifty workers, or more, will lose their jobs. All of them are low-paid. Most of them are women and most of them are immigrants. These workers need your help. Most are not eligible for employment insurance. Instead, it seems your ministry is giving them the cold shoulder.

Later this afternoon, I am going to the closing wake party for the Hospitality Workers Resource Centre. This centre is exactly the kind of lifeline that the Inn on the Park people need. It's a one-stop shopping centre where

they can get the help to rebuild their lives and the services they need. Just when workers need this help the most, you are cutting them off and shutting them down and shutting down the centre. The Minister of Tourism attended the centre's grand opening less than a year ago. Will you come with me tonight to the closing to see what you are causing?

Hon Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I'd like to thank the member from Beaches-East York for his question. It gives me the opportunity, first of all, to express my very sincere sympathies to the people who are affected by the hotel closing.

I also want to take this opportunity to ask the member not to make this a political situation. This is in fact a very serious issue.

I also want to bring to everyone's attention the fact that our government sponsored this centre that he refers to for more than the 12-month period that it was originally announced to be open for. I will look forward to a supplementary question.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary?

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Minister, these workers don't want your sympathy. I beg to differ: This is a political situation. These people are losing their jobs and you're shutting down a centre that could help them. You're letting them down.

Let me tell you about Minh Huynh. He's a waiter who has worked at the Inn on the Park since 1973. On October 31, he's out of a job and doesn't know what he's going to do. He says, "Most of us are over 50 years old. The labour market isn't going to be very good for us." The Hospitality Workers Resource Centre was set up to help Mr Huynh and workers like him to get employment, training and social services, Minister, but you are choosing to shut down the centre and shutting out the hope for those workers in need.

I'm asking you, will you reconsider your cuts and keep this absolutely vital centre open? Will you do the right thing, Minister?

Hon Mrs Chambers: The right thing is to provide permanent services for these and workers in other industries who need employment services. We deliver those types of services to these and other workers in other industries through my ministry's Job Connect program. We are actually working with that centre, as we speak, to take them through the transition into services provided by Job Connect agencies across Toronto and, in fact, across Ontario. These individuals will not be abandoned.

CATTLE FARMERS

Mr Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Food. As the Premier announced late last month, the province will provide up to \$30 million in assistance for cattle producers who continue to face border closures following the discovery of a single case of BSE in an Alberta cattle herd in May 2003. I understand that the Canada-Ontario set-aside

program is available as of today to Ontario cattle producers. Could you please give some detail as to how this program works?

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): The whole objective of the cattle set-aside program is to hold back. We have a serious oversupply of cattle in this country and in particular in this province right now. The goal of this program is to hold back a portion of those animals that would be sold and moving on and eventually going to slaughter. We've worked very closely with the Ontario Cattlemen's Association to hold back those calves born in 2004 and ensure that those animals are held back until at least January 1, 2006.

This program is part of a \$30-million initiative that we'll be cost-sharing with the federal government. I heard some reference yesterday that it's a program for which there are no application forms, but you can call in and get a PIN. You can get the process started. To date, as of the announcement yesterday, over 40 farmers have already taken advantage of this. We're going to continue to be there to support them.

Mr Rinaldi: Minister, can you tell us how the program was designed and the total number of cattle targeted?

Hon Mr Peters: As I said earlier, the program was an initiative of the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, and the Ontario Cattlemen's Association endorsed this proposal. So this is a proposal that we've worked very closely with the Ontario Cattlemen's Association to develop.

The target is to hold back 115,000 animals as a result of this program. I am confident that goal is going to be reached. As I said earlier, we already have farmers who are taking advantage of the new program. There will be detailed application forms available next week, as of November 1.

We're going to continue. The McGuinty government is committed to supporting the farmers of this province. The commitment of \$30 million is a definite, positive sign of support for farmers.

To every one of you and to those at home, again I stress, when you go to the grocery store, when you go to the restaurant, ask if it's from Ontario, ask if it's Canadian. That is one way we can help support this industry. Every one of us, in a non-partisan way, can make sure we send that message that we want to support Ontario product.

DRIVER LICENCES

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Of Dalton McGuinty's 231 campaign promises, numbers 100, 101 and 110 deal with improving government services to the taxpayer. In light of these promises by Dalton McGuinty, why are you creating a major inconvenience for students trying to get drivers' licences by no longer recognizing photo health cards of the province of Ontario as proof of personal identity?

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): This government is not creating any inconvenience for any student getting a driver's licence. Our procedures are very standard and clear and they have been in practice for a long time.

We encourage people to get drivers' licences. I haven't heard there is any problem with that, but I will be more than pleased to see if there are any issues, and we will address those.

Mr Hudak: Thank you, Minister. I am surprised to hear him describe it as not being a problem. On this side of the floor, we certainly have heard from students in our riding, from the driver's licensing centres about this major inconvenience.

I hate to correct the minister, but it has not been the policy for a long time. In fact, a memo dated February 13, 2004, from your ministry says, "Effective immediately, the Ontario health card will be removed from the ministry's list of acceptable identification documents." To make matters worse, according to the offices, they are no longer accepting the photo ID card from the Ministry of Health but they'll accept library cards, student cards or any kind of membership cards for effective ID.

This goes beyond a broken promise; this goes to the managerial competence of the McGuinty government. Please tell us that you'll immediately reverse this bizarre decision to say that you don't recognize the Ontario health card photo ID but you'll recognize library cards instead.

Hon Mr Takhar: A driver's licence is an important piece of identification and we want to make sure the people with the right credentials can get their drivers' licences. The memo was issued in February, six months back, and I haven't heard any inconvenience resulting from it. I'm saying to the member, if there's an issue, bring it to my attention and I will be more than pleased to clean it up.

1510

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Minister of Health. Minister, during the health estimates you said that in a matter of weeks you would be announcing 10 new satellite community health centres. Can you confirm today that the proposal submitted by the Centre de santé communautaire de Sudbury to establish satellite clinics in Rayside-Balfour and Valley East will finally be funded?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I am not in a position today to confirm what the member seeks. I can confirm, of course, that our budget has increased funding for community health centres, and that's for existing ones. Associated with that is going to be an expansion by 10 community health centre satellites. We are a week or two away from those announcements. I am not in a position to comment on the specific one she raises.

Ms Martel: In the fall of 1995, the former government promised \$1 million in capital funding to the centre de santé communautaire to establish satellite clinics in these two communities. Despite repeated requests and lobbying efforts, the money was never allocated. Both communities have been declared underserved for a number of years now; both communities have long waiting lists for those who need access to primary health care. Patients in both of these communities have waited, I think, long enough for satellite CHCs they were promised some nine years ago.

Minister, you said you were going to be funding 10 satellite community health centres. Will you commit today that this proposal, a proposal that's been in the works for nine long years, will be given top consideration?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The challenge we face, of course, is that 140 or so communities in Ontario are underserved from the standpoint of physicians. There are about 100 communities or so that have made application for either an expansion of their existing CHCs in the form of satellites or for new community health centres.

I cannot confirm for the honourable member that Sudbury will be on that list, but what I can tell the honourable member is that our commitment around family health teams will see the first 45 family health teams launched in fiscal year 2004-05, and that what we are seeking to do in the first class of applicants, if you will, is to reach out to those communities that have made application for community health centres, because we really want to, in a certain sense, reward the community effort that's gone into the development of those proposals. So I do think there is hopeful news out there for communities that have long been waiting for more access to primary care at the community level.

I recognize the issues she's raising with respect to those two communities in the Sudbury area, but I would just say that, regrettably in a certain sense, they are not unique in the province. There are many communities that wish to have an expansion of community health centres, and we are working very hard to drive more of these resources to the community level.

ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Ms Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): My question is for the Minister of Labour. Minister, as you well know, in my riding I have many constituents who are recent immigrants to Canada and whose first language is neither English nor French. On account of this, they face a double burden of not understanding Ontario's laws governing the workplace, nor do they understand the language. What has your ministry done to help these vulnerable workers?

Hon Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): I'd like to thank the member for London North Centre for the question and also for her efforts in trying to make government more accessible to people, particularly to those whose first language is neither English nor French.

Yesterday the Ontario government, the McGuinty government, launched a very exciting initiative. We wanted to make sure workplace laws were accessible to those whose first language is not English or French, particularly recent immigrants. So yesterday we launched an initiative that consists of the translation of basic workplace rights and responsibilities into 18 additional languages from English and French. They include Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Dari, Farsi, Greek, Gujarati, Italian, Korean, Filipino, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, Tamil, Urdu and Vietnamese, and by the end of week, Hindi is coming.

The point is that in order to protect people, they have to know what their rights are and what their responsibilities are.

Ms Matthews: Has the government taken any other measures to improve the well-being of Ontario's most vulnerable workers and make it easier for business to comply with the laws?

Hon Mr Bentley: I'd like to again thank the member for her continuing efforts on behalf of, particularly recent immigrants, but all workers.

Earlier in this legislative year, this House passed a family medical leave act, very important legislation to provide job-protected leave for workers faced with the impossible task of choosing between their jobs and being with their loved ones in that very difficult time as they are approaching death.

We also raised the minimum wage for the first time in nine years, and that will continue to increase every February 1 until it reaches \$8 an hour by the year 2007.

For the most vulnerable workers, many of whom are recent immigrants, we have a piece of legislation pending in this House that we are waiting to get passed, and that's the bill ending the 60-hour workweek. We look forward to passing that legislation to protect the workers on behalf of whom the honourable member has been working so hard in London North Centre.

PETITIONS

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): "Whereas today in the Legislature, Minister Duncan, Acting Premier, stated that the Minister of Finance, Greg Sorbara, has always referred to the Ontario health premium as a tax, even in budget lock-up;

"Whereas on May 18, 2004, during the budget lock-up, the Minister of Finance was recorded on tape as actually saying, 'We had the option of looking at personal income tax increases or going with the Ontario health premium. Our choice on the health premium was very clear. We chose it because it gives us an opportunity to identify a revenue stream separate and apart from personal income tax that will be applied, every single cent of it, to health care';

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully request that Minister Duncan correct the record."

I've signed this petition. I agree with it.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I have a petition signed by over 700 people from my riding in northwestern Ontario. It states:

"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; and

"Whereas 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; and

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

"Whereas 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."

I have affixed my signature to this petition as well.

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition to the legislative Assembly of Ontario regarding support for chiropractic services in the Ontario health insurance plan.

"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; and

"Whereas 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; and

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

"Whereas 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."

1520

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my pleasure to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of 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 tourism 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,” campgrounds, “municipal governments, businesses, the tourism sector and other stakeholders.”

I am pleased to sign and endorse this on my constituents’ behalf.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

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

“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; and

“Whereas 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; and

“Whereas 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

“Whereas 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.”

I agree with the petitioners from Wallaceburg. I’ve affixed my signature to this.

GO TRANSIT SERVICE

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from a number of residents of central Mississauga. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the city of Mississauga has, within a generation, grown from a linked collection of suburban and

farming communities into Canada’s sixth-largest city, and tens of thousands of people daily need to commute into and out of Mississauga in order to do business, educate themselves and their families and enjoy culture and recreation; and

“Whereas gridlock on all roads leading into and out of Mississauga makes peak period road commuting impractical, and commuter rail service on the Milton GO line is restricted to morning and afternoon service into and out of Toronto; and

“Whereas residents of western Mississauga need to commute to commute, driving along traffic-clogged roads to get to overflowing parking lots at the Meadowvale, Streetsville and Erindale GO train stations;

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

“That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Transportation and highways, instruct GO Transit to allocate sufficient resources from its 2004-05 capital budget to proceed immediately with the acquisition of land and construction of a new GO train station, called Lisgar, at Tenth Line and the rail tracks, to alleviate the parking congestion, and provide better access to GO train service on the Milton line for residents of western Mississauga.”

I wholeheartedly agree with this. I’m signing it, and Justin will carry it for me.

STUDENT SAFETY

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have here a petition I’d like to present to the Legislature on behalf of the member from Whitby-Ajax.

“To the Legislature of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Education has failed to ensure that students are protected from individuals whose past behaviours have directly harmed children; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Education has chosen to ignore the children’s aid society’s recommendation that certain individuals not work with children; and

“Whereas the introduction of a volunteer into the school system must not be solely at the discretion of the principal; and

“Whereas the Liberal government promised to ensure that school boards provide strong local accountability and decision-making;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to amend the Education Act to place restrictions on the eligibility of persons who act as volunteers in schools, and to include as a formal requirement that volunteers be subject to the approval of the school board and parent council.”

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a number of petitions that I’ve received from Dr Dario Laurenti, my friend in Espanola.

“To: Legislative Assembly of Ontario

“Re: support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan

“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;

“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.”

Thank you.

HIGHWAY 7

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the previous Progressive Conservative government committed \$85 million to four-lane Highway 7 between Highway 417 and Carleton Place; and

“Whereas Lanark-Carleton MPP Norm Sterling announced this project when he was transportation minister because it will save lives and greatly improve traffic flow; and

“Whereas the current environment minister failed to deal with two environmental challenges in an expeditious fashion; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has warned that this delay means the project won’t start for at least one year; and

“Whereas lives are being put unnecessarily at risk by any further delay of this project;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly ... as follows:

“...Premier Dalton McGuinty intervenes to ensure that the Ministry of Transportation is taking all actions necessary to start this Highway 7 four-laning project in the 2004 construction season.”

I agree with that, obviously.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I have more petitions sent to me by Melanie Perrier, the mother of Allyceea Ennis, who died very tragically on a school bus this past February in Thunder Bay. It’s signed by 13,000 people.

“To the Legislature Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Education requires district school boards to ensure that classes, ‘on average for each board, do not exceed ... 24.5 in elementary overall’; and

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Education states, ‘For safety and discipline purposes, a school bus is regarded as an extension of the classroom’; and

“Whereas a full-size school bus has 24 seats and can carry up to 72 children, far more than a teacher is allowed to supervise unassisted; and

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Transportation states, ‘Police can charge drivers with careless driving if they do not pay full attention to the driving task’; and

“Whereas school bus drivers, no matter how diligent, cannot adequately supervise up to 72 children and safely navigate a multi-tonne bus through busy traffic and changing road conditions; and

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Transportation regulates deployment of safety equipment unique to school buses; and

“Whereas Transport Canada recommends that, ‘depending on their physical characteristics, children up to the age of four or five be restrained on school buses using the same restraint system recommended for a passenger vehicle’; and....

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Transportation is responsible for establishing rules and regulations pertaining to driver qualifications and licensing; and

“Whereas the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators recommends that commercial vehicle drivers take a first aid course that includes respiratory emergencies, artificial respiration and accident scene management;...

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

“That the Legislature pass a law:

“(1) requiring all elementary school buses to have a trained adult supervisor on board, in addition to the driver;

“(2) requiring the proper installation and use of appropriate child safety restraint systems on school buses for all children under 50 pounds or 23 kilograms; and

“(3) requiring all school bus drivers to annually pass mandatory instruction and testing in first aid, CPR and emergency situation management, as a requirement of Ministry of Transportation licensing.”

I’m very pleased to add my name to this petition.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): To the Legislature of Ontario—and John Steadman is here to receive it from me:

“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 affix my signature to this petition.

1530

OPTOMETRISTS

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): These signatories ask the Ministry of Health to resume negotiations immediately with optometrists to continue quality eye care. I'll just quote in part from the petition:

“Whereas the lack of any fee increase for 15 years has created a crisis situation for optometrists; and

“Whereas fees for OHIP services do not provide for fair or reasonable compensation for the professional services of optometrists in that they no longer cover the costs of providing eye examinations;...

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

“That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care resume negotiations immediately with the OAO and appoint a mediator to help with the negotiation process in order to ensure that the optometrists can continue to provide quality eye care services to patients in Ontario.”

I agree with this and I sign it.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a large number of petitions in support of chiropractic services in the Ontario health insurance plan.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the 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;

“Whereas 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;

“Whereas 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

“Whereas 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.”

I affix my signature to this petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PROGRAM CANCELLATION ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 ANNULANT LE PROGRAMME DE PERFECTIONNEMENT PROFESSIONNEL

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 25, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 82, An Act to amend the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 to cancel the Professional Learning Program / Projet de loi 82, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur l'Ordre des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario en vue d'annuler le programme de perfectionnement professionnel.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): It's my understanding that Mr Bisson has completed his debate. I would now ask for questions and comments.

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): Bill 82, the Professional Learning Program Cancellation Act, has now had over seven hours and five minutes of debate. I'm prepared to vote on it, and I hope the opposition feels the same way, so let's get on with the voting.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): Well, I'm not ready to vote on it. I want to speak on this bill.

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): If I can recall the comments made by my colleague during his debate of this particular bill, Mr Bisson once again was speaking about his experience and the kinds of constituents that he represents and the areas that he represents, specifically how we will be able to meet the training needs, the upgrading needs. Where is the strategy, really, in the bill to provide for the upgrades and the training that are necessary for smaller communities, for more remote communities, for communities that are perhaps not easily accessing these kinds of upgrades?

I think he did an excellent job in not only indicating some of the shortfalls that this particular bill has, but in recognizing that there certainly has been an improvement on the way the previous government treated teachers, specifically looking at opportunities that may have been missed by the government around the pieces in the bill or opportunities that the bill could have had in providing for quite a unique strategy, or at least in addressing in some way the lack of a strategy around smaller and more remote communities where people are less able to take time out to travel to major centres, that are less able to attract, perhaps, speakers and workshops and professional activity days for teachers who might need to have some professional activities and some upgrading in those smaller and remote communities.

Really, children across the province, regardless of whether they live in a major centre or a smaller, more rural and remote area, should all be able to access excellent education and should all be able to have

teachers who are well trained, who are articulate and who are up to date in terms of current practices and current teaching standards. I think Mr Bisson did an admirable job of representing those issues in his riding.

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I share the same sentiments as my colleague the member from Scarborough Southwest. This bill has had over seven hours' debate. In our opinion, it's time that we have a vote on it.

The Speaker: Mr Bisson, you've got two minutes.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): First of all, I find it highly interesting—and I can't use the words because they'd be unparliamentary—that this government would now propose, after seven hours of debate, that we should somehow all sit down and not have anything to say about what is a fairly important matter for the people of Ontario, this from a party that, when in opposition, stood in opposition to the Tories when it came to time allocation. There are all kinds of speeches, and I'm sure I'll have an opportunity to pull them all, from the House leader to the now Premier to all of your cabinet and people who sat here before who basically were in opposition to the government when it came to time allocation and when it came to a closure motion, which I feel coming with those comments. I think that government on the other side has forgotten, quite frankly, what they used to say when they were in opposition.

Now, when it comes to what I had to say last night, the point I was making was that if we're going to talk about mandatory certification, as the Tories had tried to do and I opposed—and I support this government's move to get away from mandatory certification—we still have to deal with an issue that is very important, and that issue is, how do we deal with the many people out there who are currently employed or maybe have graduated from universities or colleges and are not employed and need to update their skills when they live in areas that are outside of the major urban centres?

For example, we know that where I come from, industry is really struggling and looking at how we're going to deal with upgrading skill sets with new technologies as we bring them into mining and forestry. Government does not have a policy to deal with that. I didn't put it, clearly, only at the feet of this government. I said this is an issue that's been out there for some time and we need to have a policy to deal with it.

How do we deal with upgrading one's skills if you have, let's say, an honours or a BA in something you happen to be employed in and you've been out of the education loop for 10 or 15 years? How do you do that if you live in Kapuskasing or White River? We need a policy to deal with those issues.

The Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): I'm honoured and privileged to stand up and talk about this very important topic. As my colleagues mentioned before, we have spoken a lot about this issue. We've been debating it in the House for several hours. Hopefully, our colleagues from both sides of the House will come to terms and vote in support of it.

I'm going to use some of my time, and hopefully we can enter the debate and see that people who didn't participate can participate and then we can move on with the issue.

I was listening carefully to my colleague from Timmins-James Bay when he was talking last night about this issue. First of all, he supports the move of the government to cancel professional testing, which I think is very important. As mentioned by the member from Nickel Belt, many professions in our society are not subject to testing in order to maintain their certificates, like lawyers, doctors and other professions except teachers. I think it's just undermining the teachers, and that atmosphere created some kind of war, instability and a lack of tranquility in our education system when the past government imposed testing on teachers. They have to go through 14 courses and they have to pay for it. It creates some kind of uncertainty and chaos in the education system, in which we are telling teachers, "You're not qualified enough unless you go and take those courses." Besides that, this testing didn't prove in any way an improvement in the education system or improve the whole atmosphere in the education system.

This initiative by the Minister of Education, I think, creates some kind of relaxing atmosphere in the education system among teachers, which allows teachers to move on and feel respected again in their profession. They're being treated as people who look after our future generations.

I had the privilege to meet with the union of teachers last week and they had been talking about this initiative. They were happy and thrilled by the government initiative where they trust them again and give them the chance to go back to work with full respect.

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As you know, I have been a teacher before. All the teachers across the province and across the globe want to go to any training courses there are to take. They want to update their knowledge and their information. They go to work not because they treat it as a job; they treat it as a duty to help others. When I was a teacher, I used to take advantage of any training courses to update my knowledge and my own information to be able to offer my students whatever knowledge was available—especially when we live in an era full of technology that moves on a daily basis.

I believe this atmosphere created by the Minister of Education will also help a lot of teachers voluntarily go and take many courses to update their skills. And in the end, I believe those who will benefit from the whole atmosphere are the students across the province. In general, the whole relaxed atmosphere across the province will create a good education, a future for all the students in this province.

All of us take the measures to create bills. We create bills and take measures in order to enhance the education system in this province, and I believe 85% of the teachers engage in some kind of professional skills voluntarily and also about 7,500 elementary teachers began this

school year with specialized training in reading and math. We believe it's estimated that about 2.1 million students will benefit from this measure.

I think this approach to open the dialogue with education professionals is a very good approach and will help us in this province to maintain our advantage in terms of technological life, also help our kids to learn more and help our teachers who give their time and effort to be relaxed, to be happy, in order to give more and have a beautiful and wonderful province.

The Speaker: Question and comments?

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): It's interesting that the speaker talks so eloquently about the bill. However, it's the future of our children in our classrooms, and there's nothing more important in the province than to make sure that those children are given the opportunity to do well and to see that they do well. To empirically see the results is very important and therefore we believe, of course, that testing has to be an intricate part of the experience that they have.

Of course, the experiences that children themselves have in classrooms are some of the finest days of their lives. When you get to be our age in this House—or at least perhaps my age—you cast your mind back to those wonderful, wonderful days you spent in jail—in school that would be. I was just checking; nobody is listening.

Interjections.

Mr Chudleigh: That was just a test. It's a wonderful time of life for children. And to ensure that they maximize their experiences over that time—even though they are having a good time, having fun and developing all the interpersonal skills they will use for the rest of their lives—it's important they also have the experience of learning as much as they can possibly learn during those early years.

Of course, the learning curve in those early years is extremely high and, in fact, unmatched again any time in their lives, although it's approached again as they get to be 14, 15, 16 years old. But it's with the young ones that their interpersonal skills are developing, and that's the kind of thing that hopefully the educational process will give to the children of Ontario for many years to come.

Ms Horwath: I want to congratulate the member for the comments he made on Bill 82, the ban on teacher testing. It's obvious there are many points of point of view when it comes to this particular bill, and certainly the issues that were raised by the member from London-Fanshawe are ones that are, I think, in the best interests of everyone.

There are some things the bill does that are going to be readdressing some of the previous concerns that teachers had. I'll be speaking about that myself a little later on when I get an opportunity to make my own comments on the bill. But suffice it to say that the member's comments, I think, outlined specifically what the teachers were concerned about, as well as how those concerns that the teachers had perhaps affected children in the classroom. Of course the main interest of everyone, regardless of your personal opinion, in terms of how we

deal with maintaining extremely positive and good skills in the classroom, is really the interests of the children. I think we all might agree, regardless of the details on how we achieve that goal, that the end goal really is excellent, quality education in our public school system across the province.

I think the previous member who spoke on this issue outlined that. I agree that those are the concerns of all of us. I would also, however, say that there are some specific comments that I look forward to making around what the potential is for further improvement in that area. I can certainly enlighten some of the members of this Legislature around some comments I've had from teachers not only in Hamilton but across Ontario, as I've met with them recently at a status of women committee meeting that they held here in Toronto.

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It's a privilege for me to comment on the comments of my good friend the member for London-Fanshawe, who certainly articulated extremely well the views of the government on Bill 82, the professional learning program for teachers. As I said before, my wife is a teacher, my sister-in-law is a teacher and my father-in-law is a retired elementary school principal in Peterborough. I remember when my wife came back to the classroom this past September. What a renaissance teachers were feeling, particularly in my riding, to come back into the classroom and know that this odious piece of legislation that was put in place by the previous government was soon to be repealed.

Unfortunately, teachers were targeted by the previous government to have this professional training program. No other professions in Ontario were subject to such draconian measures as was the teaching profession. When you see that over the last little while we've had seven and a half hours of debate on this particular bill, it's time that we get on with it and get it passed. We know the positions of the official opposition and the New Democrat Party and we know the government's position, so we'd be doing well in this place if we got this bill passed as quickly as possible and moved on to various other matters that I know members want to discuss.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Time for one last question and comment.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I'm glad to see you in the chair. You do a phenomenal job for the people of your constituency.

I want to comment on the speech given by the member for Halton.

Mr Bisson: London-Fanshawe.

Mr Baird: London-Fanshawe, I'm sorry. I apologize. I want to compliment the member from London-Fanshawe for an excellent speech on education. I was just wondering if, when he was campaigning in the last election, he knocked on doors and said, "Hi, I'm representing Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party. I want to lower standards in education." I would suspect he didn't. I think it's important that we have standards in education.

We, all of us around this table, have to be re-certified every four years. All of us in this House have to submit to re-certification every four years, and sometimes we don't like the evaluations. We don't have the ability to say, "I don't agree with that evaluation. Therefore, it's not valid." I think it's important to look at other professions. I don't know why he didn't mention this in his remarks. Real estate agents in Ontario now have to seek re-certification. They have to constantly upgrade their skills because, collectively, we have decided that it is important that these types of professionals be current in their education. I would like to have heard the member speak to that issue.

Having said that, we look forward to more debate on this important piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes questions and comments. The member for London-Fanshawe has two minutes to reply.

Mr Ramal: Thanks to all the honourable members who spoke: the members from Hamilton East, Halton, Peterborough and Nepean-Carleton.

To the member from Nepean-Carleton, I want to say that we as a government—the Minister of Education and the government of Dalton McGuinty—are not going to lower standards, as perceived by some who are trying to send a wrong message to the people. No, we want to build respect and tranquility in the education system. We want to create peace.

It's very important that we talk about peace, because in the past there was war between the teachers and the government. The government was accusing the teachers of not doing their job; therefore, the teachers were upset. And who got affected by this atmosphere? The students. All that stuff created uncertainty in the education system.

Also, we're not saying that we're going to cancel all the training sessions. We're not going to cancel all the testing just for the sake of lowering standards. No, we want to develop another mechanism, in consultation with the teachers. I believe it is very important, when we impose some kind of peace legislation, that we go to the people in the profession and ask what they think about it. Let's work together to create a good mechanism to benefit all the people of this province—the teachers, the students and the parents—and then we can have a good education system.

I want to say to the people of Ontario, through this place, that we are not going to lower the standards. We are going to create peace and tranquility in the education system. We believe that by cancelling testing we will give teachers more respect and dignity. Let them do their work and respect them and honour them for doing a wonderful job for our province. By consulting with them and respecting them, we're going to create good education, not by penalizing them or threatening them: "If you don't pass this test and that test, we're going to take your certificate away from you." That's what we are planning to do.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Sterling: I'm disappointed by the fact that the government wants to shut down debate on this very

important bill, Bill 82, and I'm very disappointed that there's only a handful of government members here. Therefore, I move to adjourn the House.

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

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1553 to 1623.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing while you're counted by the table.

Take your seats, please.

All those opposed to the motion will please stand and remain standing while you're counted by the table.

Please take your seats.

The Deputy Clerk (Ms Deborah Deller): The ayes are 12; the nays are 44.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

The member for Lanark-Carleton still has the floor.

Mr Sterling: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I'm glad there are more members of the government in here to listen to reasoned debate on this very important bill. We've only heard from government members to date that they want to close down debate on this important bill. That's what the two previous government speakers have talked about: "We've heard enough. We want to shut it down. We want to vote. We want to use our 71 members to put the 32 members to shame."

The other part of this important debate is that, really, what the government is doing here is lowering standards in our education system. I think it was 1996 when this bill was brought in as part of the set-up of the Ontario College of Teachers. I believe all parties supported the bill at that point in time. Part of that bill was to call teachers to accountability in a number of ways.

First of all, it was to set up the Ontario College of Teachers, which was given the right to discipline, to make certain the profession qualified for teaching, and put it out at arm's length. It's a very large college, a very important college. There are 190,000 teachers registered under the Ontario College of Teachers.

Right from the outset, we had a little bit of a problem with the college—not so much a problem with the college but a problem with the way the federations or the teachers' unions took a look at the college. Basically, the unions thought that they should control the college. They thought that the college was set up to advocate on behalf of the teaching profession. Of course, those of us who are familiar with the various professional colleges that we have in the province of Ontario know that colleges are not there for the profession; they are there for the people, the consumer, the student.

Over the past five to seven years we have seen the union continually want to gain control of the 31-member board of the Ontario College of Teachers. This government, prior to being government, in the election cam-

paign said to the unions, “We are going to give you control of the Ontario College of Teachers.” They haven’t done it quite yet, because there are two members who still need to be appointed to the board of this college. It continues on, though, the pressure by the union to actually control what happens to the consumer.

This morning I had a take-off from the college on the number of teachers—there are 190,000 of them, you remember—who either had had their certificate revoked or were suspended by the college. There’s probably a list of 150 so-called revocations or suspensions.

This past week, when I was in my constituency of Lanark-Carleton, I talked to a young fellow who is in grade 10 in one of the secondary schools in Kanata. I was asking that young fellow how he was getting along in school and I was talking to him about the courses he was taking. He was a really engaging young man, who had a part-time job, and I was engaged in this conversation while he was serving me in that part-time job. He mentioned to me that he was taking a particular subject at his school and that he had a terrible teacher. This was a class A student, a very important student, and he was bemoaning the fact that he and his parents and the students of that particular class couldn’t get rid of this teacher, who he and his fellow students felt was not competent to teach in that school.

I would make the argument that the problem with the college as it now stands is that it is not strong enough, that the discipline committee of the college should be controlled by non-federation members. The members of the discipline committee of the Ontario College of Teachers should have a majority of people on it who are not part of the union, because the union, at all costs, seems to want to protect a teacher, whether that teacher is competent or incompetent.

One of the greatest things that our government did—the Conservative government under Mike Harris—was to bring accountability into our education system. And even after the most recent election, I was listening to the radio as I was driving back to my constituency and I heard Dave Cooke, a former NDP Minister of Education, and Sean Conway, a former Liberal Education Minister in the 1980s, talk about the reforms that our government had brought forward. Everybody agreed that there were great reforms and that we had brought accountability into the system.

I believe that this drawback by the present Minister of Education, this drawback from the accountability of our education, particularly with regard to teachers and their keeping up their certification and the desire of the government and the public to continually make them accountable and to bring forward new ideas to their teaching careers, is really important.

As I talk, I see there are a number of conversations across. Obviously, the members of the government are not interested. Therefore, I move to adjourn the debate.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1632 to 1702.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Sterling has moved adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise and be counted by the table staff.

All those opposed will please rise and remain standing.

The Deputy Clerk: The ayes are 51; the nays are 3.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

ONTARIO HERITAGE
AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LE PATRIMOINE DE L’ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 24, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 60, An Act to amend the Ontario Heritage Act / Projet de loi 60, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le patrimoine de l’Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): I turn to the government side for a speaker. Further debate on Bill 60? I recognize the member for Lanark-Carleton.

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): Mr Speaker, we were not given notice with regard to the calling of this order and therefore we were unable to prepare ourselves, so I move adjournment of the House.

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

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1704 to 1734.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing while you’re counted by the table.

All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing while you’re counted by the table.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 14; the nays are 35.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

The member for Lanark-Carleton has the floor.

Mr Sterling: We’re talking today on Bill 60, An Act to amend the Ontario Heritage Act. I hope members will bear with me in that we were given no notice by the government House leader that this act was going to be called. It seems to be a pattern developing here at the Legislature that the government House leader wants to surprise the opposition as to what we’re going to debate next. It really is a strange strategy.

As you know, Mr Speaker, I did serve as the government House leader for three years, and during that period of time I always wanted to give as much notice as I possibly could to the opposition members so that we would have a reasoned, logical and intelligent debate about the legislation that we were going to talk about.

Now we have a government that is putting forward a number of bills, some of them not as important as others, but has gone into late-night sittings. So we're going to sit tonight from 6:45 until midnight. During that period of time, we'll go through the same procedures as we've gone through this afternoon, because this government doesn't want to seek co-operation from the opposition or anybody else in terms of what they're doing. It's a sign of early arrogance.

Let me talk a little bit about the Ontario Heritage Act. I'm really suspicious of what the government wants to do in this act. That suspicion arises from a former piece of legislation dealing with the closure and taking away of property rights in terms of the Adams mine. Whether you were for the Adams mine or against the Adams mine, this government basically said to the citizens of Ontario, "We are going to pull the rug from under your feet and we are not going to allow you access to the courts to seek proper compensation."

I guess the citizens of Ontario, and Canada, should understand that we are, I think, the only country in the western world that doesn't enshrine property rights in our Constitution. This government could not have done what they did on the Adams mine had property rights been enshrined in our Constitution. They would have had to allow that property owner the right to go to court and seek compensation for the property rights they took away from that particular owner. I guess what made it even worse was that they ignored the rule of law. The rule of law says that it doesn't matter what political stripe you are or where you are from, every one of our 12 million-plus citizens must be treated equally in the eyes—

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I respectfully request that the member for Lanark-Carleton address the topic of the bill.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would suggest that this rookie note that the man speaking, the member for Lanark-Carleton, is the dean of the Legislature, knows the rules quite well and doesn't need to be reminded by a—

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): On a point of order, Mr Speaker—

The Acting Speaker: Is this the same point of order?

Hon Mr Caplan: Yes, on the same point.

The Acting Speaker: OK. I recognize the deputy government House leader.

Hon Mr Caplan: Speaker, I refer you to page 18 of the standing orders and standing order 23(b), which says: "... a member shall be called to order by the Speaker if he or she...."

"(b) Directs his or her speech to matters other than:—

"(i) the question under discussion...."

The member clearly has not been speaking to Bill 60, the Ontario Heritage Amendment Act, and should be called to order. It is a valid point of order raised by my colleague from Mississauga West.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much for your intervention. I was listening to the member's presentation, and I heard him distinctly say that he was going to start making reference to the bill, and I heard him doing so. I recognize the member for Lanark-Carleton.

Mr Sterling: I am absolutely amazed by the members opposite, particularly the minister of infrastructure, who doesn't understand that the Ontario Heritage Act is about property rights. I'm talking about the record of this government with regard to property rights, which is abysmal. They've made me so angry I'm going to adjourn the debate; I move so.

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

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be another 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1741 to 1811.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing while you're counted.

Members may take their seats.

All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing while you're counted.

You may take your seats.

The Clerk of the Assembly: The ayes are 4; the nays are 31.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

This House stands adjourned until 6:45 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1812.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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