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(Hansard)**

Monday 1 November 2004

Lundi 1^{er} novembre 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

Monday 1 November 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 1^{er} Novembre 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

RURAL ONTARIO

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It is my pleasure to welcome members of the Ontario Deer and Elk Farmers' Association to the Ontario Legislature today. They will be hosting a reception in the dining room later this afternoon and evening. All MPPs, their staff and media are welcome and encouraged to attend.

I would like to introduce you to Bill Top, president of the ODEFA organization, his wife, Jayne, and vice-president of ODEFA, Todd Grignon.

ODEFA is here today educating MPPs on the economic importance of their industry. On August 16 this year, Minister David Ramsay announced his intention to remove harvesting parks in Ontario, by regulation, not legislation. Although the deer and elk farmers of Ontario have, over the last 20 years, invested millions of dollars in this industry at the encouragement of previous provincial and federal governments, this government is about to destroy the industry with a swipe of the pen.

I ask Mr Ramsay and Mr Peters, as they expropriate this industry, what is their compensation package? Neither Ramsay nor Peters have replied to my invitation to visit the Universal Game Farm in Coldwater. Neither Ramsay nor Peters has responded to my request for compensation for this industry.

It is important to note that as a government, Dalton McGuinty has found millions of dollars to purchase private MRI clinics that were working perfectly well, but he can't find the money to compensate farmers whose livelihoods he has expropriated. He can't find the money to keep the Frost Centre educational facility open, a facility that educates our young people on the wilderness. Dalton McGuinty doesn't mind taking gas tax away from rural Ontario residents and funnelling it into urban centres.

Again, McGuinty and Peters have kicked rural Ontario residents, and rural Ontario will not forget their shabby treatment.

SAFE COMMUNITIES OF PICKERING AND AJAX

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): I rise today to acknowledge and commend the actions of

an organization called SCOPA, Safe Communities of Pickering and Ajax, currently chaired by Mr Jim McKinnon of Dupont Canada. SCOPA is a not-for-profit organization that offers or sponsors programs that reduce work-related injury and promote health and safety among children, youth and seniors in the community. It's a genuine partnership of more than 50 groups, including the municipalities, provincial agencies, local businesses, the board of trade, police and emergency services, and boards of education, to reference but a few.

SCOPA works with all ages to ensure a high level of safety for the Pickering-Ajax community. Programs such as the falls prevention program teach older persons how to avoid falls. Falls are the number one cause of injuries for older persons in the Pickering-Ajax area, and SCOPA hopes a program like this will reduce these devastating injuries.

SCOPA has also been a staunch advocate of safety strategies for youth, like the passport-to-safety initiative. Mr Speaker, I'm sure you're aware that young workers have the highest risk of injuries on the job. Upon the completion of the passport-to-safety program, young people are knowledgeable as to how to protect themselves from injury on the job, and employers benefit from having access to workers who are responsible and who follow the health and safety policies and practices in the workplace.

I'm proud to be the MPP of a riding that has such an organization in its midst. Because of the dedication to the community shown by SCOPA, the riding of Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge will continue to be one of the safest for all ages at home, at play and at work.

COLLEGE WEEK

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): I am proud to stand before you today to recognize College Week 2004. I am one of the more than one million graduates to have benefited from a college education. I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Honourable Bill Davis, the former Premier of the province of Ontario, the founding father of the college system in Ontario.

Ontario has 21 colleges of applied arts and technology and three institutes of technology and advanced learning. They serve 155,000 full-time students and 350,000 part-time students. This year, during College Week, the colleges are celebrating the success of their graduates.

We should be celebrating with them. Colleges employ approximately 30,000 people, and their presence is felt in 200 communities across the province. Our colleges pro-

vide high-quality, innovative courses that help to educate the highly skilled workforce that is essential to the future prosperity of this province.

Colleges offer a broad array of certificates and diploma programs in addition to applied degree programs. Ontario college graduates are health care professionals, designers, builders, technologists, journalists, CEOs and even MPPs.

We are also involved in hundreds of other kinds of careers. College graduates are on the front lines and behind the scenes, making our world work every day. We need to recognize the important work that they do in helping us to build Ontario's economy.

Today, the Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technologies is hosting a reception here at Queen's Park. I hope that many of you will take the opportunity to learn more about our colleges and the important role they play in providing real careers for real life.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I have been travelling around the province a little bit to substantiate the claim that the Minister of Education is making that he is giving away equitable allocation through a new funding model for student transportation in Ontario.

This is what I'm discovering. There are two kinds of boards: one board that's getting an increase of funding and the other type of board that's getting whacked. So we're discovering that half of the boards are getting more money and the other half of the boards are going to get less money.

What we're also discovering is that it can't be much of a discussion, the other claim that the Minister of Education is making, when those boards that are getting an increase next year are already getting an allocation and the other half of the boards that are not getting any money are planning for the decreases the following year.

We're discovering that there are two kind of boards: those who are going to lose money and are going to get whacked and the other boards that are going to get an increase. I look at the title of this paper, and it says "equitable allocation" of money. I just don't see how it can be equitable when half of the boards are getting whacked and the other half are getting more money. You understand, Speaker? I just don't see the fairness of whacking some and not whacking the others or giving more to everyone equally. I just don't see it.

1340

COLLEGE WEEK

Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I too rise in the House today to recognize Ontario College Week and to acknowledge representatives from the Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology who are with us today. Ontario's colleges have more than 100 campuses across the province,

and my riding of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh is fortunate and proud to have St Lawrence College and its president, Mr Volker Thomsen.

Colleges play a crucial role in providing the knowledge and skills that Ontario needs to be successful. To support post-secondary education, apprenticeship and training programs, our government has committed \$4.2 billion in 2004-05. This represents a \$260-million increase in operational spending, and it is a welcome departure from the years of government underfunding and neglect.

Ontario's colleges have consistently voiced concern over the accessibility to college programs, including apprenticeships. Our government has listened. We will increase accessibility, and this is how we will do it: Tuition fees have been frozen for two years, and post-secondary institutions will be compensated for costs resulting from the tuition freeze. There is new funding to create an additional 7,000 apprenticeships and a proposed tax credit to encourage businesses to hire and train more apprentices in the skilled trades. Our government has also begun a groundbreaking review of higher education in the province, and all Ontarians anxiously await the release of the Rae report this January.

Dedication and leadership are working in this province, and we acknowledge the hard work of Minister Chambers and the Premier in post-secondary education.

HEALTH CARE

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I rise today to remind the people of Ontario that today is indeed a sad one for health care in our province.

Today the promise-breaking McGuinty government begins its backdoor plan to deceitfully introduce two-tier health care to Ontario. Today the first stage of delisting—you know, providing less for more—will be implemented by this Liberal government: eye tests today, chiropractor treatments on November 30 and physiotherapy treatments on March 31, 2005.

In a survey in my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, fully 96% of respondents said McGuinty was wrong.

One resident of my riding, Joanna Szymanski, has been disabled for 19 years because of various forms of rheumatoid disease related to soft and hard tissue affecting both her joints and bones. Ms Szymanski has stated that she struggles to keep mobile. She has been able to stay out of a wheelchair only because of chiropractic and physiotherapy treatments. She cannot afford to pay for these services, but will be forced to do so if the McGuinty government goes ahead with their plan.

The feds are handing over extra health care dollars. The government is taking money out of people's pockets in the form of a new health tax—another broken promise. With this new revenue, there is no need to proceed with the delisting of services.

I urge the minister to abandon this idea now. Admit that you were wrong; otherwise, the legacy of this government will indeed be "less for more."

TRANSIT FUNDING

Mr Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I rise today to inform the House that on Friday, October 22, a major announcement was made in Thunder Bay. My colleagues and I, joined by the mayor, announced that for the first time ever, Thunder Bay was set to receive almost \$1 million in gas tax funding this year. With this new funding, Thunder Bay will be able to better plan and manage their transit needs. Public transit was neglected for years by previous governments. Previous governments sat by and watched while commute times increased for many and our environment worsened.

By making this announcement, we have delivered on our commitment to dedicate two cents per litre of the provincial gas tax to municipalities by investing over \$680 million in public transit over three years. This money will go a long way toward encouraging the citizens of Thunder Bay as well as the entire province to use public transit as an alternative to driving.

The population of Thunder Bay is approximately 112,000 people, spread out over a very large geographic area. With such a scenario, it can be quite expensive to provide transit to the people of Thunder Bay. With this money from our government, our city should find the challenge of providing transit to such a geographically large region much more manageable.

Currently, the annual ridership in Thunder Bay is almost 2.8 million. With almost \$1 million this year for transit for our city, we can increase ridership even more. The gas tax funding could be used for new buses, routes, services or new infrastructure. The mayor and council will have to make that determination.

Mayors and independent organizations have all been hailing this announcement as long overdue.

Roger Anderson of AMO says, "It's the first time in the history of the province of Ontario that there's a permanent source of revenue from gas tax, and we're very pleased to see it."

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): I'd like to say a few words on Tory math. We heard from them throughout the election that there was no deficit. The current member from Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey said so every day of the election. But his math was off—off by \$5.5 billion.

Now it appears that John Tory, the aspiring member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey, seems to be inheriting some numeracy problems of his own. You see, last week Mr Tory made a major gaffe in Ottawa by inflating hospital deficits, according to the Ottawa Citizen. This is the same party that closed the Grace and the Riverside in Ottawa, tried to close down the Montfort and downsize CHEO.

Perhaps if the aspiring member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey were spending more time here in the House with us, he would know that hospital budgets have increased by more than \$1 billion over the first year of

the McGuinty government. In the infamous Tory Magna budget, the PCs budgeted to give \$700 million less to hospitals had they stayed in power.

The Ottawa Hospital and the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario both said Tory's math was wrong. A health economist at the University of Ottawa said the numbers were "really high. I suspect they are playing with the numbers. This is an outlandishly high figure. That's virtually impossible to see. They are so far off base on that one. There is no way. It's impossible."

During their time in government, Premier Eves said people should be able to buy their way to the front of the health care line. Health Minister two-tier Tony said the same thing.

Why is Tory floating these outlandishly high deficit numbers? He publicly supports greater privatization of the health care system. Is he now hoping to scare Ontarians into supporting a two-tier alternative?

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It's a pleasure to make a statement today in the presence of the grade 10 civics class from St Ignatius of Loyola.

I want to bring to the attention of this House today an announcement made by the Premier and the Minister of Economic Development and Trade last Friday at the Ford plant in Oakville. They jointly announced a more than \$1-billion flexible, state-of-the-art, manufacturing facility for the Oakville plant. This is an investment in the future. It brings a sense of security for workers. For far too long, workers in this province have taken a back seat. Finally, they've got a Premier and a government that values industry and the skilled workforce that drives our economy.

I'd like to share with you the words of Buzz Hargrove, who was at the announcement on Friday. Let me quote: "I never was so happy in my life to see the tail end of Jim Flaherty and others who poisoned the air for this industry for far too long.... I want to compliment Dalton McGuinty.... I also want to compliment Joe Cordiano, who's been incredibly supportive every step of the way.... Joe Cordiano is one hell of a guy."

This investment was long overdue. I want to join Mr Hargrove in thanking the Premier and the minister for recognizing the auto industry, and to tell you that I share this sentiment that our Premier "recognized the auto industry was the best team for Ontario. And he stood by his word" and put a lot of money in "to invest in the future of this plant."

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I beg leave to present a report on the review of emergency management

law in Ontario from the standing committee on justice policy and move its adoption.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr Colle: In all, the committee heard in person or by teleconferencing from 92 people, 88 of them representing 53 organizations, including Ontario ministries. Written testimony was received from three individuals on behalf of 17 organization which did not appear.

I would like to thank all the members of the committee and staff, who spent the last four months over the summer deliberating over very important business in Ontario; that is, getting Ontario ready in case this province faces another unprecedented emergency. I would like to thank everybody for getting involved.

With that, I'd like to move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1350 to 1355.

The Speaker: All members in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Please be seated.

All those against, please rise and remain standing.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 54; the nays are 7.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI A TRAIT À LA GESTION DES SITUATIONS D'URGENCE

Mr Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 138, An Act to amend the Emergency Management Act and the Employment Standards Act, 2000 / *Projet de loi 138, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la gestion des situations d'urgence et la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi.*

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

Mr Colle?

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): This legislation, if passed, is designed for extraordinary circumstances and rare use when an immediate and comprehensive provincial response is required to protect the people of Ontario during a provincial emergency. There have only been two provincial emergencies declared in Ontario's history: the SARS outbreak and the electricity blackout, both in 2003. Those two provincial emer-

gencies—along with the ice storm of 1998, and the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States—have focused public attention on the adequacy of Ontario's emergency powers.

This act, if passed, will clearly define the lines of authority to be exercised to manage a provincial emergency. Its purpose is to promote the public good by protecting the health, safety and welfare of the people of Ontario in such a manner that respects the rights of Ontario citizens, while ensuring a rapid and coordinated response by our government when an extraordinary emergency occurs in Ontario.

1400

REMEMBRANCE DAY OBSERVANCE ACT, 2004 LOI DE 2004 SUR L'OBSERVATION DU JOUR DU SOUVENIR

Mr Lalonde moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 139, An Act respecting the observance of Remembrance Day / *Projet de loi 139, Loi traitant de l'observation du jour du Souvenir.*

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

Mr Lalonde.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): The bill extends the scope of the Remembrance Day Observance Act, 1997, to require schools in Ontario to commemorate Remembrance Day by playing the Last Post, followed by two minutes of silence and no school activities. Every school board shall require schools within the board's jurisdiction to observe the protocol described in section 2 at 11 am on Remembrance Day, if that day falls on a school day, or the day closest to Remembrance Day, if that day does not fall on a school day.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND PROTECTION OF PRIVACY AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ACCÈS À L'INFORMATION ET LA PROTECTION DE LA VIE PRIVÉE

Ms Martel moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 140, An Act to amend the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act with respect to community care access corporations / *Projet de loi 140, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'accès à l'information et la protection de la vie privée en ce qui a trait aux sociétés d'accès aux soins communautaires.*

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

Ms Martel.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): The bill responds to a request that was made by the Ontario Federation of Labour to Premier McGuinty in a letter dated October 6,

2004. That letter referenced a specific example where the OFL had made a request to the Kingston Frontenac Lennox and Addington CCAC for information regarding service directions and service agreements between the CCAC and the government, the provincial templates for request for proposal documents, requests for proposals issued by the CCAC and the responses, and other documents that related to the operation of the CCAC. The request for information was denied by the CCAC on the basis that the CCAC is not an institution as defined by the regulations under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, so they were not obligated to respond.

My bill would ensure that CCACs are subject to the provisions of the act so that important information regarding home care and home care delivery is made available to the public.

VISITOR

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: These proceedings today are being listened to and carefully watched by Mr Custodio Barros, who is representing the Benfica sports club from Portugal.

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

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm till 9:30 pm on Monday, November 1, 2004, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The government House leader has moved government notice of motion number 190. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There'll be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1404 to 1409.

The Speaker: Mr Duncan has moved government notice of motion number 190. All those in favour, please rise and be counted by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Hardeman, Ernie	Racco, Mario G.
Baird, John R.	Hoy, Pat	Ramal, Khalil
Bartolucci, Rick	Jackson, Cameron	Ramsay, David
Bentley, Christopher	Jeffrey, Linda	Rinaldi, Lou
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Kular, Kuldip	Ruprecht, Tony
Broten, Laurel C.	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Brownell, Jim	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Scott, Laurie
Bryant, Michael	Levac, Dave	Smith, Monique

Cansfield, Donna H.	Marsales, Judy	Smitherman, George
Caplan, David	Mauro, Bill	Sorbara, Greg
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	McNeely, Phil	Sterling, Norman W.
Colle, Mike	Meilleur, Madeleine	Takhar, Harinder S.
Cordiano, Joseph	Miller, Norm	Tascona, Joseph N.
Craitor, Kim	Milloy, John	Van Bommel, Maria
Crozier, Bruce	Mitchell, Carol	Watson, Jim
Delaney, Bob	Munro, Julia	Wilkinson, John
Di Cocco, Caroline	O'Toole, John	Wilson, Jim
Dombrowsky, Leona	Parsons, Ernie	Witmer, Elizabeth
Duguid, Brad	Patten, Richard	Wong, Tony C.
Duncan, Dwight	Peters, Steve	Yakabuski, John
Dunlop, Garfield	Peterson, Tim	Zimmer, David
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Phillips, Gerry	
Gerretsen, John	Qaadri, Shafiq	

The Speaker: All those against, please rise to be counted.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Martiniuk, Gerry
Chudleigh, Ted	Marchese, Rosario	Murdoch, Bill
Horwath, Andrea	Martel, Shelley	Prue, Michael

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 67; the nays are 9.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I'm sure members of the House will recall that on February 25, 2004, Premier McGuinty announced \$10 million for Ontario's cull animal strategy. This strategy is designed to assist our cattle industry to overcome the fallout from the BSE crisis by addressing both the short and the long term. Its immediate goal was to help producers move their surplus mature animals. Its longer-term goal is to build slaughter capacity in this province, and that's where the \$7-million mature animal fund comes in. By investing in projects that will build meat-processing capacity in the province, the Ontario government is boosting our livestock industry.

This morning I had the great pleasure of visiting one of the recipients of funding under phase one of the mature animal fund. West Grey Premium Beef is a provincially licensed abattoir in Durham, Ontario. This facility is a great example of a "gate to plate" partnership, locally owned and operated to serve the farmers and consumers of Grey and Bruce counties. It's also a great example of the willingness of the province's agricultural industry to work with government to reposition and strengthen our beef industry and help to build domestic slaughter capacity in this province.

While at West Grey Premium Meats, it was my privilege to announce that, through the second phase of the mature animal fund, another four Ontario abattoirs will receive assistance. They are Holly Park Meat Packers,

based in Bolton; Scheel Packers in Pakenham; Aman's Abattoir in Wellington; and Rideau Meats in Smiths Falls.

This initiative is working. Ontario's cattle industry is already benefiting from the funds invested in phase one. West Grey, for instance, applied the funds to buy new equipment, upgrade their facilities, and implement a hazard analysis control point plan, which will broaden their market reach.

The McGuinty government is helping West Grey increase their slaughter capacity. They are now killing an average of 215 more cows per month. Another stage one funding recipient, Gencor Foods, has also ramped up its capacity to 2,000 animals a month.

We are making good progress. When all the projects under the first two stages are fully implemented, overall slaughter capacity in Ontario will reach well over 6,000 animals a month.

The McGuinty government has also added a third stage to the mature animal fund. In addition to increasing slaughter capacity for cull animals, stage three will also benefit other segments of the ruminant livestock industry impacted by trade restrictions that have resulted from the BSE crisis. People often think it's the beef industry that's been affected. But it has been the dairy industry, the cattle industry; it's been sheep, it's been goats, it's been deer and elk. Those individuals are here today.

I am also extremely proud to be part of the McGuinty government. Despite the financial tightrope that we must walk to stay on track and reduce the provincial deficit, this government continues to deliver much-needed assistance to our farmers. Most recently, the Premier announced that up to \$30 million would be available to cattle producers to help them cover the costs of holding back livestock from the marketplace. The goal of these set-aside programs, as they are called, is to help producers realize a better price for their cattle by managing the flow of cattle to slaughter.

We know that the real solution to this crisis is to fully re-establish trade with the United States and our other partners. We will work with our partners in the federal government and the industry to help us achieve that goal. We will continue to do our part to help increase the prosperity of the people of Ontario by working with the agri-food sector to retain and grow existing businesses, attract new investment and develop new markets, both at home and around the world. All of Ontario reaps the benefits of a strong, sustainable agricultural industry.

I would like to ask members of this Legislature to join me in congratulating the four successful processors and wish them all the best in their future endeavours. To every one of you, when you go into the grocery store, make that conscious decision: Buy local, buy Ontario. That's the one way we can really help our industry.

SECURITIES INDUSTRY

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I rise today to respond to the Stand-

ing committee on finance and economic affairs and its review of the Five-Year Review Committee's report on the Ontario Securities Act. I thank the members of this committee for their unanimous support that they presented here on October 18.

This is a very solid report. It recognizes the need for investors to have confidence that their investments and interests are being well protected.

The committee made 14 specific recommendations. I have no major concerns with the direction of any of them. We will move on half of these now, or in the very near future. The others will require further input from stakeholders and the public.

The committee strongly recommends that the Ontario government continue to pursue a single securities regulator for Canada. Canada is the only developed country without some form of common regulator, and this is Ontario's number one securities reform priority. We are following this recommendation by persistently working toward this goal with stakeholders and the responsible ministers in other provinces and territories.

The committee recommends ensuring that there are strong incentives for public companies and other participants in our capital markets to do the right thing, and that when there are problems, all of our investors should have timely and affordable means to seek redress.

This brings us to a second major recommendation of the committee; that is, civil liability for secondary markets. Civil liability gives investors the right to sue companies for misleading disclosures or fraudulent actions. Similar rights already exist in the primary market. This means that investors can sue now, if, for example, there are false or misleading statements in a prospectus on an initial public offering. But currently, investors do not have the same rights, after the initial public offering, in the trading that occurs every day in our markets, and that is where the vast majority of trades occur. We will be proposing legislation very soon to strengthen investor protection by implementing civil liability for secondary markets.

The committee also recommended a change in the timing of the five-year reviews of Ontario's Securities Act—and we will propose legislation to do that this fall as well. Without a change, we would have to begin the next Securities Act review within a matter of months, before we have had a chance to fully respond to the first review.

Other recommendations we accept relate to basket rule-making, blanket rulings and orders, and the regulation of market participants.

We are acting immediately on seven of the recommendations. For the other half, we will be seeking input from investors and the financial community in the coming months.

The committee recommended the government establish a task force to review the role of self-regulatory organizations, or SROs, as they are commonly known. That would give us an opportunity to respond to those who appeared before the committee and expressed their

concerns with the current SRO system. The task force would work toward improving the current system, and in doing so would instill greater investor protection and confidence in our capital market.

1420

The committee also recommended that the adjudicative function of the Ontario Securities Commission be separated from the other functions.

The Five-Year Review Committee and the Fairness—or Osborne—Committee confirmed that there is no evidence of bias currently in the OSC proceedings. The government has confidence in the OSC, but even the best organizations must strive to improve and be better. We will address these issues in a way that does not compromise the effectiveness of our regulatory system.

The committee has also recommended more formal and regular reporting to the Legislature by the Ontario Securities Commission and by the minister responsible for the OSC. We will be looking hard at ways to develop improved OSC oversight mechanisms that are in line with this recommendation.

To sum up, there will be a staged response to the 14 recommendations put forward by the committee.

For phase one, now or in the very near future we'll move on seven of the recommendations, including the civil liability for secondary market disclosure and on changing the timing of the five-year reviews.

Phase two involves near-term actions such as proceeding with a number of consultations the committee has called for, including a task force to review the role of SROs, self-regulatory organizations.

Phase three—we'll deal with items where progress is required in the next 12 months, including the OSC accountability mechanism, restitution, and beginning to look in earnest at a separate adjudicative tribunal for the OSC.

Phase four is the ongoing work on new laws to be developed and implemented.

We will continue to improve the structure and substance of our securities regulation system, with a focus on investor protection and maintaining confidence in our capital markets.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Responses?

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I rise today to compliment the Minister of Agriculture on his announcement, and as he suggested in his announcement, I want to congratulate the applicants who were successful in getting money to help upgrade their abattoirs to increase the capacity for cull cow processing.

I can only say that I wish there were more of them, that there were more available, that we could increase their capacity even faster, because, as the minister has pointed out a number of times, it is the only solution until the border is open, it is the only solution for our cow cull program and for the farmers who are in dire straits because not only can they not sell them, they can't even

get rid of them. So they are obligated to feed them, knowing they will not get a return even on the feed they are putting into these animals. So I think it is a very important step to increase the capacity for these animals.

I think it is also very important that we look at those farmers who will not benefit from this capacity at this time but who have a lot of cows they can't get rid of that they will need to address—again, as I mentioned, the feed going into them and not getting a return on the feed. We need to look at some type of program to help those farmers.

Having said that, what I am most pleased with in the announcement is the minister's commitment to phase three of the mature cow program, which he suggests will be used for other industries and other things in our rural communities that are suffering the consequences of the BSE dilemma and will benefit from the program, such as has been mentioned in this House a number of times, the sales barns in our rural community that cannot move these animals through. They are going out of business because of the BSE program, with no assistance from the government. So I think this is very good news for those people.

Also, in my community there are many dairy farmers who have to get rid of their stock live, and for many years have been exporting it across the border and can no longer do that. None of these programs benefit them because they can't market the live animals in any way through these programs. So hopefully, the third phase will indeed help them do a little bit of that.

Lastly, I would just like to ask the minister—I noticed the statement talked about capacity in the province, and it kept talking about the total capacity. It would be helpful to the people in our communities to know whether that was increased capacity or whether it was the total capacity in the province.

Again, I want to thank the minister for the announcement. I do hope the people who are getting the money can move forward very quickly and get that capacity on stream for the farmers in my community.

SECURITIES INDUSTRY

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): May I respond to the Chair of Management Board and his comments about the OSC.

Purdy Crawford is an eminent person in the province of Ontario. He worked for five years on this review and presented it to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs. All parties represented in this House presented a unanimous report, and what they get from the government today is a mealy-mouthed lack of commitment and no courage.

The two major recommendations in the report are the national securities regulator—they didn't even sign the MOU when they had the opportunity to with four other provinces recently. Their commitment—and here's the big commitment now; after five years of work by Purdy Crawford, here's the government's commitment: They're

going to work toward the goal. That's the commitment. They should be ashamed of themselves.

Investors in Ontario expect more of a government that purports to have some familiarity with the importance of securities regulation and investment in this province. We are the only jurisdiction around that has multiple regulators, and we are only a population of 32 million or so in Canada. This is urgent. The issue of capital and raising capital on investment for small and large investors is urgent.

The other important point is about separating the adjudicative function and the regulatory function at the Ontario Securities Commission. The minister says that Osborne, in his report, confirmed that there's no evidence of bias in the OSC. He also recommended that the functions be separated. Why don't you say that to the people of Ontario and then why don't you do it? This work has gone on over five years. We may get to the point that you'll have to give it back to the minister—no, you can't do that; that's the Royal Group Technologies thing. But you've got that responsibility for the Ontario Securities Commission. You know that there are issues there about the adjudicative regulatory function. You know that it has to be dealt with urgently if you want small and larger investors to have confidence in the Ontario Securities Commission.

I say, move forward on those two vitally important points, as recommended by Mr Crawford and his committee and by the unanimous committee of this House.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): It was indeed a privilege for me and an honour to serve on the finance committee. As has already been stated, the finance committee unanimously recommended the 14 recommendations which are the subject of the minister's statement here today.

On that finance committee, from dozens of ordinary citizens—people in this province who were dissatisfied with how the Ontario Securities Commission is regulated, how it works and what has happened to them—we heard in evidence that this past year there were 262 files opened on alleged transgressions. These were not small transgressions; these were large transgressions where people were able to take advantage because of insider trading and other, I think, nefarious and uncalled-for actions in order to try and rip ordinary investors off.

The committee has made two key recommendations taken from the body of evidence before it; the first was for a single regulator. There's no question that Canada needs a single regulator. The problem is, how are we going to get there? Canada is not unique in the world, in spite of what some others have said. There is one other country that has many regulators, and that's Bosnia-Herzegovina. But I'm not sure that we want to go there as well. Canada is alone among about 100 industrialized countries that do not have a single regulator.

The second recommendation we made that needs to be acted on sooner rather than later is to separate the adjudicative function. The Fairness Committee under Coulter Osborne spoke quite eloquently in its report on why that

needed to be done. It needed to be done not only because must justice be done, but it must also be seen to be done. People have to have confidence that they are getting a fair hearing. When you have it all rolled together, where the prosecutor and adjudicator are one and the same group or one and the same people, it is impossible to say that justice is being done.

I'd just like to conclude by stating that the Ontario Securities Commission is doing, I think, somewhat of the job that they've been hired to do, but we need them to do much more. If you just look at the names this year of the people who have been fined and the amounts of money involved, you'll see that it's enormous. That would include Michael Cowpland, who has been fined \$500,000; Glen Harvey Harper, who has been prohibited from acting in the stock exchange for 15 years; Daniel Duic, who was fined \$1.9 million plus costs; Andrew Rankin, who has been found to be tipping the scales; and Jonathan Carley, who has been fined about \$90,000 for his actions. These are the kinds of things we need to stamp out, and I would tell the minister that we need to do it sooner rather than later.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): To respond to the Minister of Agriculture and Food, let me say to the minister that his announcement today will be welcome, even though in comparison to other provinces it is a little too late and much too little.

The minister will know that the federal government made their announcement of financial assistance to beef producers many months ago and other provinces, namely Quebec, Manitoba and Alberta, were very quick to take up the federal announcement and come forward with complementary strategies. As a result, Ontario farmers have been disadvantaged vis-à-vis beef producers in Quebec, Manitoba and Alberta, for example. So while today's announcement will be welcomed, it is a little late in comparison to what other provinces have been doing.

I want to offer this advice to the minister: Move the money out the door quickly. Your government has already developed a reputation for making announcements, but then the money doesn't move until six, seven or eight months later. In this case, a great deal of damage will be done in six, seven or eight months.

What I think farmers also want to hear from the minister is an announcement very soon about a long-term, low-interest loan strategy, so that beef producers in particular, but rural Ontario in general, will have some financial capital to be able to dig themselves out of the debt situation they're in now.

The minister will know—he's talked to farmers, especially beef producers—that many of them have already exhausted their own equity. They have exhausted their lines of credit. They have deficit financing with their suppliers and they need a strategy of long-term, low-interest loans to begin to recover from this. We want to see that and see it soon.

DEFERRED VOTES

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS
AMENDMENT ACT (HOURS OF WORK
AND OTHER MATTERS), 2004LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI
(HEURES DE TRAVAIL ET AUTRES
QUESTIONS)

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 63, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000, with respect to hours of work and certain other matters / Projet de loi 63, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne les heures de travail et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1432 to 1437.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthur, Wayne	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Peters, Steve
Bartolucci, Rick	Fonseca, Peter	Peterson, Tim
Bentley, Christopher	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoy, Pat	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Racco, Mario G.
Broten, Laurel C.	Kular, Kuldip	Ramal, Khalil
Brownell, Jim	Kwinter, Monte	Ramsay, David
Bryant, Michael	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Rinaldi, Lou
Cansfield, Donna H.	Leal, Jeff	Ruprecht, Tony
Caplan, David	Levac, Dave	Sandals, Liz
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Marsales, Judy	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Matthews, Deborah	Smitherman, George
Cordiano, Joseph	McGuinty, Dalton	Sorbara, Greg
Craiton, Kim	McMeekin, Ted	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Watson, Jim
Di Cocco, Caroline	Millou, John	Wilkinson, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol	Wong, Tony C.
Duguid, Brad	Parsons, Ernie	Zimmer, David
Duncan, Dwight	Patten, Richard	

The Speaker: All those against, please rise one at a time.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Klees, Frank	Prue, Michael
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Runciman, Robert W.
Dunlop, Garfield	Marchese, Rosario	Scott, Laurie
Flaherty, Jim	Martel, Shelley	Tascona, Joseph N.
Hampton, Howard	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Horwath, Andrea	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Hudak, Tim	Murdoch, Bill	
Jackson, Cameron	O'Toole, John	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 59; the nays are 25.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): I would ask that this bill be referred to the standing committee on social policy.

The Speaker: So ordered.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH CARE

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): Once again, a question for the Premier on broken promises, an issue that's going to plague him, justifiably, for the rest of his term.

Undoubtedly, Premier, the most important promises you made—and people believed you—dealt with health care. You promised a universal, publicly funded health care system that gives us all the care we need, when we need it. You never said, "I'll raise your taxes and cut your services," but that's what you've done. We're now paying more for less. Today marks the privatization of optometry services, with chiropractic care and physiotherapy soon to follow.

You feebly attempted to excuse your broken promises by saying you were overly ambitious. What's your excuse for taking away important health care services that so many Ontarians depend on?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I'm proud of the investments we're making in health care. In fact, we're investing some \$700 million more than the Tories had committed to in their last budget by way of hospitals. We are now working actively with our hospitals to ensure that we can continue to improve quality of care while bringing about more efficiencies.

I can tell you that we're also very proud that we've committed ourselves to—and we're well underway—ensuring that we have 2,300 more hip and knee replacements every year, as well as 9,000 more cataract procedures every single year.

We are determined to ensure that Ontarians are getting not only more value but more quality from their health care system.

Mr Runciman: Not very many Ontarians agree with that premise, and certainly there's no proof to support it to date.

In the months ahead, three health care services that many Ontarians depend on for quality of life will be delisted, privatized, by the Liberal government. Your government's decision to not only break your tax increase promise through your \$2-billion health tax but at the same time take away much-needed and beneficial services not only speaks to your integrity but also to your competence.

Premier, before taking the decision to delist or privatize optometry, chiropractic and physiotherapy services, did you conduct cost-benefit analyses, or was this just another knee-jerk, ill-thought-out initiative that your government seems to specialize in?

Hon Mr McGuinty: What the Leader of the Opposition is saying is that he is a staunch defender of the status quo. We do not support the status quo, and we are doing the difficult work that is involved in improving the quality of our health care system.

The member opposite may not want to hear this, but the fact is that when I got here 14 years ago, about one third of the budget went into health care. Today, close to one half of our program spending goes into health care. The members opposite may feel that 55% of the budget should go into health care. They may say that 60% of the budget should go into health care. Maybe they'd argue that 70% or 80% of the money should go into health care. We don't believe that would be appropriate, fitting and just when it comes to all the needs we have to meet on behalf of the people of Ontario. So we are making some difficult decisions. We're making them to ensure that we have a system of health care that delivers greater quality and is affordable over the long term.

My friends opposite are defenders of the status quo. They do not believe in doing the tough work today in order to ensure that we have a good health care system tomorrow. We will not shrink from that responsibility.

Mr Runciman: We wonder if removing services is good for health care. The Premier earlier referenced wait times, and this is another one of his health care promises. You have also used wait time reductions as a justification for your broken promise: your record tax grab.

Now we hear from none other than your own wait time expert, Dr Alan Hudson, that wait time data will take two years to compile. I quote Dr Hudson: "I can't promise we'll get the wait times down by then."

Premier, this looks like another Liberal shell game. Your own expert is raising doubts about the veracity of yet another of your promises. You've led people down the garden path once too often. You've increased taxes and removed key services, and now your own expert has put one of the primary justifications for your health tax in question. Premier, why should the good people of Ontario believe anything you have to say?

Hon Mr McGuinty: One of the realities of our tenure as a government is that for the previous eight years that government did nothing. They did nothing when it came to ensuring we had some real transparency and real accountability when it came to our health care system. So now we have to do the painstaking work to develop the infrastructure that actually measures our wait times.

In so many cases we don't have accurate, reliable, baseline data because they were afraid to make that information public. We're doing the difficult work to collect that information and make it public, and then we'll be in a position to demonstrate real and meaningful progress when it comes to reducing wait times for the people of Ontario. We're determined to get this job done, and I can assure you we will get it done.

HEALTH PREMIUMS

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): Back to the Premier: The people of Ontario are justifiably angry and feel a

deep sense of betrayal at your carelessness with the truth. You said you weren't going to raise taxes on working families; you raised their taxes. Then you said it wasn't a tax, it was a premium. But last week you said it was a premium and not a tax. I half expected you to come back here and call it a "premi-ax" in some vain attempt to slip one by the voters once again.

Whatever you call it, you're taking up to a thousand dollars out of the pockets of working families in the province of Ontario, and now we hear you're not going to be reducing waiting lists, as you promised, for joint replacements or for cardiac services. Premier, how can you justify this punishing health tax when you're punishing working families in Ontario with even longer waiting lists?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Minister of Health.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): On the contrary, this past Friday in the city of Toronto, 200 people came together, the leadership of Ontario hospitals working with the leadership of the Ontario government to build and develop an infrastructure for wait time management that under their watch, while provinces all across the country did it, they failed to, they refused to.

What have we done already? We've invested in more volumes: more volumes this year for cancer radiation, more volumes this year for hip and knee surgery, more volumes this year for cataracts; a recent announcement that will, in the course of one year, add 10% capacity to MRIs in Ontario. Already, one year in office, our government is demonstrating meaningful results, building the infrastructure they didn't build while previous Ministers of Health in that government ran for the leadership of their party instead.

Mr Hudak: Well, Premier, a whole lot of talk from you and your health minister, but we're not seeing any action on behalf of working families in Ontario.

Let me give you some of the evidence. Last Friday was the deadline for hospitals to submit their balanced budget plans. Due to your underfunding, Four Counties hospital in Newbury, between Chatham and London, may have to close all 20 beds. The hospital is also warning they'll be closing long-term-care beds in Strathroy. The Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance is closing 47 hospital beds. The Seaforth Community Hospital is looking at closing 19 of its 34 beds.

Premier, you said you were going to invest in long-term care before you made your reductions to the hospital sector. But that promise, of course, is not holding true, because you're cutting long-term-care beds and cutting hospital beds. Will you apologize to the folks at Seaforth and Strathroy and across Ontario for these cuts to the hospital system?

1450

Hon Mr Smitherman: The member wishes that we'd apologize. When we arrived in office, Newbury hospital was feeling like they had been left behind, forgotten by the previous government. One of the first questions I

responded to in this Legislature was to say that we're keeping Newbury open.

The member talks about long-term care: 3,760 new funded long-term-care beds in 2004-05 and an additional \$191 million to enhance the quality of care for those that existed. We inherited a crisis in long-term care, manufactured on your watch. We've made tremendous gains—a \$103-million investment in home care to provide an extraordinary raise: 95,000 additional clients served by home care over the next number of years.

This is the evidence of a government that has moved to address the chronic, urgent priorities of the people of Ontario: a \$2.161-billion new investment, reflective of enhanced care across a broad range of services, many of them, like mental health, ignored by that party while in office.

Mr Hudak: Mr Premier and Mr Minister, it's been a year. We've heard all kinds of bluster. We want to actually see some action and you following through on your promises. Lord knows the people of Newbury, if they said they had been ignored, didn't expect the focus of the bully health minister or the flip-flopping Premier to result in the closure of all of the beds in their hospital.

Minister, I want to talk to you about your proposed regional health authorities. Your recent bulletin talks about 14 more across the province. For folks in Fort Erie, Beamsville or Dunnville, that would mean their health care decisions being made in Hamilton instead of in Niagara. You're about to create a new, extensive Ministry of Health bureaucracy while you're making cuts to the hospital and the long-term-care sector. Can you stand in your place and say today that not one penny—not one penny—of Dalton McGuinty's health care tax will go into new bureaucracy before health care services?

Hon Mr Smitherman: Not only can I and will I confirm for the member that local health integration networks will be about a smaller bureaucracy for health in the province of Ontario, but I can tell the honourable member that he operates in his question with a brutal misunderstanding of the realities of health care delivery today. The very services that he likes to pretend in his question are decisions being made in Niagara—the reality is that those decisions are currently being made across the street in the Hepburn Block. Our initiative is to press those resources, press the decision-making and press the planning down to a community level, to create a geographic boundary as an organizing principle so that for once in the province of Ontario, all health care providers will be operating with the same set of unique patients within the same boundaries and they will be integrating their service delivery.

This is not about a bigger bureaucracy, Mr Speaker. This is, once and for all, getting on with the work that, while they were in office, they failed to do.

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Premier, six months ago in your budget, you cut the eye exams provided by

optometrists from OHIP. Optometrists, physicians and specialists all said to you that this is wrong, completely wrong-headed, and bad for people's health. You've been forced by that criticism to restore some of those eye exams, but you still don't have it right.

New Democrats believe that eye exams are crucial health services that are good for people's health and are good for the health care system. We believe everyone with an OHIP card deserves access to optometry services, not just people with credit cards. Premier, will you stop your privatization of optometry services and reverse the cuts you are continuing to try to force?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): We will not embrace the status quo, as my colleague opposite is so determined to do. I'm pleased that we've been able to make some changes that are in fact going to improve the quality of and access to care.

Here are a couple of comments received, one from Gary O'Connor, area executive director for greater Toronto-central south, Canadian Diabetes Association, who said, "I am pleased that the Ontario government is enhancing eye care for people with diabetes." Beyond that, Andrew Budning, who is chair of the section of ophthalmology at the Ontario Medical Association, said, "A top priority in eye care must always be anticipating and preventing future problems. By increasing access and providing the best quality eye care by the most qualified professionals to people with sight-threatening medical conditions, the government is doing just that."

Mr Hampton: This is the oldest shell game. The McGuinty government cuts optometry services in the spring, and after facing a barrage of criticism they restore some of the services, and then you say, "Hurray; we've improved service." What a shell game. The reality is that millions of adults in Ontario will now end up paying for optometry exams through a credit card and not through OHIP. Premier, cutting health services is never going to improve Ontario's health system.

Here's the reality: Since you've become Premier, you've cut optometry, you've cut chiropractic, you've cut physiotherapy, you're now trying to cut from the Ontario drug benefit plan, and you've added a new health tax.

Premier, will you do the right thing? You've recognized, through the criticism, that you're wrong. Will you restore optometry services to the people of Ontario?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Just so the record is stated on this, it was the NDP that cut the Ontario drug benefit plan, not this government. It was the NDP, just so we're clear on that. I know the member opposite may have forgotten that conveniently, but it's true.

We are pleased that we can now ensure that those with eye diseases like glaucoma have expanded access. I want to repeat for members opposite so they understand: We are expanding access for those with eye diseases like glaucoma. Eye exams will now be covered annually instead of once every two years. By the way, this puts us in line with all the other provinces in terms of what they are doing.

Any dollars saved in connection with this will be invested into more cataracts, more hips and knees, more cancer care, more cardiac care. Those are the kinds of tough decisions that we have made and that we will continue to make as we govern.

Mr Hampton: Once again the Premier repeats the shell game. He sets out in his budget in the spring to cut optometry services. He faces a barrage of criticism telling him that it is wrong-headed and bad for health care. Now he restores some of the service and he wants to pretend that he's the great defender of OHIP. The reality is, you are cutting health care services. Many people will not be able to afford to pay for optometry eye exams. That will hurt their health; it will hurt health care outcomes.

Are you prepared to admit that you're wrong? Are you prepared to admit that once again you're breaking a promise you made before the election? Will you do the right thing: restore optometry services so that adults across Ontario will have access to this important health care service?

Hon Mr McGuinty: The leader of the NDP doesn't want to recognize that we have gone to great lengths to ensure that we are protecting the poor, we are protecting the elderly, we are protecting the young, and we are improving the quality of care for the sick. We're proud of that change.

Just to remind the NDP of their legacy when it comes to health care cuts: They cut hospitals by \$277 million from 1993 to 1995. They cut funding for OHIP in 1995 by \$218 million. They cut funding for the Ontario drug benefit plan by \$29.3 million in 1994. They cut funding for mental health in 1994 by \$42.4 million. They cut funding for community and public health by \$163.7 million in their last budget in 1995. That is the legacy of the so-called staunch defenders of health care in Ontario.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I would just say to the Premier, you might want to see how much of that cut was forced on to provinces by someone named Paul Martin, the Liberal finance minister.

Premier, last week we learned that you're pocketing federal money that should be used to purchase new MRIs and CT scans—something you weren't supposed to do; something you said before the election that you wouldn't do.

Here's what we know: You've received \$380 million from the federal government in a designated fund to purchase MRIs and CT scans. Nine out of 10 radiologists say that you've made little or no progress in reducing wait times for these diagnostic procedures. In Ottawa, your hometown, there's a 35-week wait for MRIs, and 11,000 people can't even get on the waiting list.

Premier, will you spend the federal money that was designated for the purchase of MRIs and CT scans for the purchase of MRIs and CT scans?

1500

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Minister of Health.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I see that the honourable member hasn't taken any opportunity to talk to his research people over the course of the lengthy time between Thursday and now, so I'll have to do the work for him.

I said categorically in this House on Thursday that there was no fact to the basis of the allegation that the honourable member is making. The fact of the matter is that Anne McLellan, the then federal Health Minister, participated with me in the first phase of announcements for the 2003-04 diagnostic medical equipment fund. Where did we do that? We did that at Princess Margaret Hospital, where we were making a \$29.5-million investment to replace and upgrade radiation therapy equipment that will improve—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Smitherman: You should be sorry. Do you know why? Because the fact of the matter is that this is improved access to treatment for cancer patients.

Here's what Anne McLellan said on that day: "We are pleased that the Ontario government is moving so quickly"—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you. Maybe you could do that in the supplementary. Supplementary?

Mr Hampton: Once again, we see that the Premier doesn't want to answer the question and the minister thinks that lecturing Ontario's citizens is an answer.

Let me provide some more factual information. The reality is that wait times for MRIs and CT scans in this province, not just in Ottawa but elsewhere in this province, are growing. The McGuinty government's pattern of cutting health care services and then adding on a new health care tax isn't doing anything to address it.

This is what Dr Alan Hudson had to say on the weekend: "I can't promise we'll get the waiting times down." But here we have designated federal money. Front-line radiologists have given your government a plan. They say that you can cut waiting times by using the federal money that you get to buy 35 new CT scans and 65 new MRIs. That will help you get the wait times down. When are you going to start using the designated federal money for MRIs and CT scans to, in fact, buy those MRIs and CT scans?

Hon Mr Smitherman: Quoting specifically from the guidelines provided by the federal government to the provinces, the scope of diagnostic and medical equipment includes "diagnostic imaging equipment ... other diagnostic and therapeutic equipment ... medical/surgical equipment" and "patient comfort/safety equipment."

A further quote from the federal Minister of Health at the time that we were allocating resources, which included \$33.5 million in capital funding for diagnostic, therapeutic and surgical equipment in hospitals, which improves patient care and working conditions for Ontario health care workers: Anne McLellan said, "We are pleased that the Ontario government is moving so quickly to allocate this funding. This is the first instalment of a three-year federal commitment to modernize and replace

... equipment, improve patient access, safety, comfort and convenience and improve working conditions for health care workers”—which is why we also invested \$14 million in bed lifts to save the ailing backs of Ontario nurses.

Mr Hampton: The minister's answer just confirms the point: MRI waiting lists in the province are growing; CT scan waiting lists in the province are growing. And what does the minister say? He says that the designated federal money has been spent on something else.

Minister, all of the volume and all of the lecturing isn't going to cover up the unfortunate reality for Ontario patients. In Ottawa, they're waiting 35 weeks, and 11,000 patients can't even get on the waiting list because they've closed it. It means that family, friends, neighbours are all worried about what's going to happen to these patients. These patients are worried most of all.

I'm simply saying to you, instead of continuing to spend this designated federal money elsewhere, will you do the right thing? Will you do what you promised to do before the election: spend this designated federal money on the MRIs, on the CT scans, where it's supposed to go, so we can begin to deal with the waiting lists?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The first point I'll make is that we made an investment in MRIs and CT scan access, which is increasing by 10% access for Ontarians to MRIs. The honourable member says, "Do the right thing." Are we to understand, then, from the leader of the third party that investing \$14 million in patient safety lifts to assist the backs of nurses in this province is not the right thing to do?

I quote: "'This investment in nurses' health and safety is outstanding news,' said Mary Ferguson-Paré, chief nursing officer of the Toronto General Hospital. 'Nursing is physically demanding and many nurses suffer disability due to lifting patients. This investment will lower the risk of on-the-job injury and raise the level of safety in our hospitals.'"

This is an example of the way that we're appropriately spending money to save the backs of nurses and to improve the quality of patient care in our province.

STEVEN TRUSCOTT

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Attorney General. Minister, the Steven Truscott case has now been referred to the Ontario Court of Appeal by federal Justice Minister Irwin Cotler. Last Thursday, Minister Cotler said that, from his perspective, there appeared to have been, and I'm quoting him, "a miscarriage of justice" in relation to the original conviction of Mr Truscott. Mr Cotler also said that he believed it was appropriate that the Ontario Court of Appeal look into the case.

Instead of exercising his option to order a new trial, the minister has now, effectively, sentenced Mr Truscott to wait what some experts are estimating will be several years before the Court of Appeal may hear the case. As we know, Mr Truscott has already been waiting some-

thing like 45 years. Minister, without prejudging the outcome of the case, will you do what you can to expedite the court of appeal process so that Mr Truscott can finally have his day in court?

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): To answer the question directly, yes, though it is in the hands of the court, and I don't want to say anything that would in any way prejudice the court's deliberations. Will we assist the court and try and deal with this in a fashion that sees justice done, and done as quickly as possible? Yes, we will. We will work with the court in doing that.

It is now in the hands of the Chief Justice, who will make a determination as to panel. There will be, no doubt, a meeting between counsel, then decisions will be made as the applicants provide their evidence and submissions, and we will consider them in due course. So we want to ensure that there is due process, but, to answer your question, of course we will try and ensure that this is dealt with, as we always do, as expeditiously as possible, keeping in mind that the speed of this is going to be determined by the Chief Justice himself.

Mr Runciman: No one was suggesting that we pre-judge the outcome. What we're suggesting is to be fair to Mr Truscott, given the ordeal that he and his family and friends have been through for so many years, that he take whatever action is possible in his office. This is not a partisan issue, and we're certainly not trying to make it a partisan issue. We'll take the minister at his word that he will do whatever he can in his capacity as the Attorney General for the province of Ontario to ensure that this is dealt with in as timely a way as possible.

Hon Mr Bryant: This is now before the courts. It is not before this Legislature. It is not going to be determined by the court of public opinion but, rather, by a court of law.

One thing Minister Cotler said was that for anybody who wishes to find exoneration, it is found by the court. In this case, a conviction has been entered. Minister Cotler did not order a new trial, which means there are no outstanding charges to be laid or not. There's no prosecution to be pursued or not. There is a conviction that has been entered. He could have chosen a new trial; he didn't. He could have chosen to dismiss the application; he didn't. Instead, what he did was send this matter to the Court of Appeal.

This latest chapter in the Truscott matter will finally be written by the Court of Appeal, and we will finally get a determination from that court as to that conviction. I share the view and the hope that it's going to be dealt with by the court in a timely fashion, and I have no doubt that it will be.

1510

HOME CARE

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Minister, Bill Moline lives in St Catharines and, for over a decade, he's

had the Victorian Order of Nurses attending at his home because he has wounds on both his feet that require inspection, dressing and rebandaging. Since you shut the door on the Victorian Order of Nurses in Niagara, the new operators, CarePartners, have missed four of six visits to Mr Moline. His doctor tells him that his feet are not being properly dressed and bandaged. Mr Moline, you see, is blind—he can't see his feet—and he has neuropathy, so he can't feel them to know when there's an infection.

Where previously the Victorian Order of Nurses were delivering materials that he needed for his treatment, he's now been told that, if he's going to get these materials, he can either pay the delivery fee of \$10 to \$15 or pick them up himself, on his own. That's absurd; he's blind. When Mr Moline has to undergo amputations because of these infections, do you want to be advised?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Obviously, I'm not in a position to comment on a specific case, but the case the member brings to the attention of the House is one that I take seriously. I'm going to make sure there's an appropriate investigation by the ministry. More to the point, the community care access centre in Niagara certainly has the powers to deal in a contractual way with the service provider.

The situation that the member raises is one that is obviously of concern to all of us, and I'll endeavour to work with the honourable member to seek a resolution that's satisfactory for the patient at hand.

Mr Kormos: Minister, you don't seem to take these concerns seriously enough to protect the role of hard-working, professional, non-profit Victorian Order of Nurses personnel, like the people sitting up here in this gallery, who are providing competent home care service.

Let me tell you about 17-year-old Santino Campisano. He had minor surgery on his foot and relied upon attendants to come to his home to dress the wound. The nurses under your new competitive bidding system are routinely late and, in fact, one recent visit resulted in him being attended by an attendant who didn't glove herself before dressing his wound. He's now suffered a reinfection and has to go back to the hospital for more surgery because of that infection.

Minister, are you going to take this seriously enough to very specifically address those contracts that flowed from your support of the policy of competitive bidding, that ousted the Victorian Order of Nurses from their long-time historical role in communities like Niagara and across this province in providing competent home care service? Or are you going to tell Mr Campisano that he's on his own?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The evidence would be very clear to that gentleman that he's not on his own. We take any matter that the member brings forward concerning a quality-of-patient-care issue very seriously. We have invested \$103 million this year in community care access centres. I think this stands as evidence of our commitment to home care.

But we've gone further. I've been concerned, as well, with some of the patterns of settlement and the implication that has had on the relationship between caregivers and patients. That's why we're in the midst of a review that we're working to complete on an expedited basis.

I do take the matter that the member raises very seriously. We'll look at those individual circumstances and, more to the point, we're taking a review right at the moment to see what we can do to enhance the quality of connection that occurs in a very special way between caregivers and patients in the province of Ontario.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Food. I was recently reading the most recent commentary put out by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. Geri Kamenz writes about the BSE crisis that cattle farmers are facing and claims there is currently money approved and waiting for delivery.

He also states, "We're at a point where we need to ask that the minister to direct his staff to develop and deliver the federal/provincial funding immediately." Mr Kamenz and the OFA are implying that the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food is stalling the funds. Minister, is this true, and can you explain what is happening with the BSE funding to farmers in my riding and across Ontario?

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Perhaps there are individuals out there who need to pick up the phone and get the information directly from the cattlemen's mouths.

This government is very committed to supporting the agriculture industry, and in particular, matching the dollars that the federal government has put on the table. With the support of the Premier and other colleagues within the caucus, we've been able to come forward with an additional \$30 million in assistance, to bring support in excess of \$125 million.

I think it's important that this program was developed in conjunction with the cattlemen's association. I quote a letter from their president, Ron Wooddisse: "I wanted to take the time to write to you personally to express my gratitude for the support which you and your government have shown to the beef producers of this province ... you and your staff have been working tirelessly to develop an appropriate Ontario response."

Mr Crozier: Thanks for that explanation. I am pleased to see that our government is working co-operatively with the cattlemen's association.

Minister, on Monday in this Legislature, the member for Oxford made a number of accusations about our government's BSE assistance. The member for Oxford went on about Alberta having their program up and running and how our application process has yet to be put in place.

The member for Oxford implied that cattle farmers in this province are not important to our government. Can you explain to this House and to the member for Oxford how our government has worked with the cattle sector to come up with long-term solutions for the future?

Hon Mr Peters: Perhaps the member from Oxford should pick up the phone and get it straight from the cattlemen's mouths as well.

I want to continue with the letter from Mr Wooddisse: "Some people were obviously unhappy with the speed of the Ontario response. However, they should be aware that the attitude displayed by your staff was one of wanting to make sure that you delivered the support and programs which OCA wanted for its producers. The program details were reviewed extensively to ensure that they would meet the requirements of Ontario producers. Even the final timing for participation was discussed, and we decided collectively that given the fact that it is a two-year program, we could let Alberta participate in the first few auctions and see how they went, in case we wanted to make changes to better fit the Ontario producer. In fact, from watching the results of the first auction, we were able to request changes to the program to allow greater participation in Ontario."

Consultation is what it's about, consultation is what we did and we will be there to support our farmers.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): My question is for the Minister of Health. Your party was elected on a promise to reduce waiting times for medical procedures. I fail to see how waiting times of a year to 18 months for neurological testing is keeping that promise.

Kristin Huestice-Wong suffers from a type of epilepsy. The probable cause is a slow-growing tumour in the right frontal lobe of her brain. Her seizures can strike without warning. She has been waiting for months for the procedure to confirm the diagnosis. There are only two beds allocated for this procedure in the city of Toronto.

Will you commit today to the people of Ontario to devote some of that federal funding to much-needed neurological testing in the province of Ontario?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The member raises an issue that obviously is highly specialized, as evidenced by the fact that it's being provided in what I assume is one of our tertiary-care hospitals in the city of Toronto.

I have to take the situation under advisement and will endeavour to get back to the honourable member to determine the situation related to the very important procedure he raises.

Mr Yakabuski: I thank the minister for his commitment to look into it. And we will be expecting an answer, because in this House we're not used to getting answers.

Minister, we cannot accept that wait times of a year to 18 months for this kind of testing are acceptable. These seizures can strike at any time: waiting for a bus, waiting for a subway. This is a serious problem. We cannot wait for dithering, for politicizing, for skating; the time for action is now. Put your shoulder to the harness, Minister. Start to lead. We need an answer on neurological testing. We would like to have a commitment today for the people of Ontario.

1520

Hon Mr Smitherman: I can assure the honourable member that our shoulder is to the harness, that we're working very, very aggressively on a strategy to transform the health care system in the province of Ontario.

I remind the honourable member that in this year's budget we have \$700 million more in our hospital line than what your party, while in government, proposed for this fiscal year. I think that does stand out as a very keen example of the extent to which we're committed to funding Ontario's hospitals properly for the purposes of services such as the one the honourable member raises. But I have undertaken to get back to the honourable member, and I will.

GREENBELT

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Last week you announced your greenbelt legislation, and, as usual with your government, it was loaded with promises and the devil was in the detail. One of the details that is missing is the implementation of the agricultural component. Farmers want to know what compensation they will receive for loss of farm equity.

In fact, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture says, "Farmers have already lost equity through the zoning freeze. The loss of equity takes away the incentive to further invest in the farm operation. The government must examine mechanisms for compensation for the loss of farmer viability and equity."

Premier, this is a very important detail. What will your government do to compensate farmers for the loss of farm viability and farm equity?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Let me say, first of all, how proud we are of our new Golden Horseshoe greenbelt and the fact that we are looking far beyond the next election into the next generation, and generations beyond that, to ensure that they will be able to enjoy green space in perpetuity. We think it's an absolutely important thing to do to enhance the quality of life.

One of the things I hear from farmers, one of those things they have deplored, is the continuing loss of arable farmland in the province of Ontario. What we're doing by means of this greenbelt, in part, is saying no to that loss, to that gobbling up by means of sprawl, of our farmland. We are standing up for farming. We are standing up for farmland. We're standing up for the people of Ontario and ensuring that we can grow our own food in our own province, not too far from our cities. That's what we're saying, and we're proud to do that.

Mr Hampton: The question was a very specific question about detail. One of the realities of your government, Premier, is that you made all kinds of promises before the election and then you default on the promises after the election.

I have to admit that this one may take people 10 years to see whether or not you implement it. But this is a

specific question. For a lot of farmers their farm equity is important because they need to take that equity to the bank. They use it for the purposes of purchasing equipment, purchasing seed or purchasing other aspects they need for their farm operation. If suddenly their farm equity drops considerably, they're out of business. So this is a very important detail if the greenbelt legislation is going to work.

What plans does your government have to compensate those farmers for an incredible loss of equity on their farmland and their farm capital?

Hon Mr McGuinty: We do not plan to compensate farmers. Our plan is to ensure that farming remains a viable undertaking in the province of Ontario by preserving farmland.

The leader of the NDP has apparently now changed his stripes. He would prefer that we pave over farmland in Ontario. We say no to that. We say yes to preserving farmland in perpetuity for today's farmers and farmers yet to come.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): My question is for the minister responsible for seniors. With the aging population in this province and across the country, I know that we will all face some challenges in meeting the needs of the population's changing demographic. I know that all three levels of government will be working hard to make the necessary changes, but I am concerned that with all these changes there will be some confusion in terms of service delivery and responsibilities. Can you reassure me that our seniors will have access to both the services and the information they need?

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): I'd like to thank the member for his very insightful question. As he well knows, seniors are the largest and fastest-growing group of individuals in this province right now. As a matter of fact, the senior population will double over the next 10 years.

Ontario is showing leadership in creating opportunities to integrate the services that are delivered at the federal level, in collaboration with local municipalities, seniors' organizations and service providers. The collaborative seniors' portal provides seniors, their families and service providers with easy access to information and services from all three levels of government. As a matter of fact, it was a year ago yesterday that the seniors' portal was launched in Brockville, which soon will be expanded to three other communities in Ontario.

Our federal and municipal partners are ready, willing and able to work together to serve seniors better. We are working to meet the challenges and opportunities that Ontario's increasing senior population needs.

Mr Ramal: It's good to know that our government is proactively planning for these changes. I am confident we will be well-prepared for when the baby boom generation fully hits retirement age. In the meantime, though,

the seniors of today also need our protection. In the past, I have heard and read about horrendous cases of elder abuse, and I feel that we as a government have the responsibility to protect this vulnerable segment of our population. Can you tell me how our government is acting to make these cases of abuse a thing of the past?

Hon Mr Gerretsen: The member from London-Fanshawe is quite right: Ontario seniors deserve to live in safety and with dignity as independently as possible and with the supports they need. We are committed to building safer communities, and that certainly includes seniors. As a matter of fact, together with the Ministry of the Attorney General and the Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, we are implementing the Ontario strategy to combat elder abuse.

Our strategy, at a cost of \$4.3 million, is the first of its kind in Canada and is addressing three priority areas: coordination of local community services, training for front-line staff serving seniors and public education to raise awareness of this growing problem. As part of the strategy, elder abuse consultants are working with these networks across the province to support their efforts in the justice, health and social service sectors to better respond to the needs of abused seniors.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, and I hope he answers today. I note that our caucus and our leader, John Tory, support your government's decision to provide sustainable funding for public transit through the gas tax. However, you are responsible for defending northern interests at the cabinet table. Most northern communities do not have public transit. Can you tell us why you have allowed the majority of communities in the north to be denied a portion of the gas tax or a similar funding program?

Hon Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I'm pleased to answer the question. Clearly, northern municipalities that receive their fair share of the gas tax are extremely excited about the potential they have with the use of that money. Those municipalities that don't have public transit certainly have access to COMRIF. They too are extremely excited, because finally we have a government in place that recognizes the potential of both large urban and small rural municipalities.

Mr Miller: I'm asking you why, as the minister responsible for the north, you have not ensured a similar funding package for the majority of communities in the north. What about New Liskeard, Kirkland Lake, Marathon, Wawa, Red Lake, Pickle Lake, Iroquois Falls, Port Severn, Rainy River, Geraldton and Nipigon? In my riding, one of the 26 municipalities will benefit from a share of the gas tax. Residents of these communities rely on the roads and bridges to get to and from work. Maintaining these bridges and roads is a major burden on municipal budgets and public transit is not currently a possibility.

Minister, northern communities also need your support. Will you ask your colleagues to provide a parallel program that will ensure sustainable funding for northern municipalities where public transit is not feasible?

1530

Hon Mr Bartolucci: I am proud to stand and say, finally, all the municipalities in northern Ontario have a government that cares about them and is giving them the tools necessary to achieve the wealth and potential that they never ever had with the previous government.

Listen, the previous eight years of government by the members opposite caused unbelievable unemployment in northern Ontario. We are providing opportunities through our northern prosperity plan—by the way, the plan that the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka said wasn't working. Yet so far, we have 1,000 direct jobs because of the northern Ontario heritage fund. We are putting grow bonds in place to ensure that small- and medium-sized businesses grow. We're ensuring, though our GO North program, that new anchor businesses come to northern Ontario. We believe in—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): My question is to the Premier, but first I'd like to know what part of northern Ontario the Minister of Northern Development and Mines has been visiting, because I'll tell you, it's not the communities we come from.

My question, Premier, is simply this: You would know that the Kirkland Lake hospital is facing a budget shortfall of \$1.4 million this year. Kirkland Lake hospital board chairman Eugene Ivanov says they're in a critical situation. In fact, he says they will have to make dramatic program service cuts that will not be in the public interest.

Let me remind you of your election promise number 126 on health care. You promised to deliver stability to our hospitals by providing adequate multi-year funding. My question to you is, can you please tell the people of Kirkland Lake and Kirkland Lake hospital board chair Eugene Ivanov how it's in the public interest for you to break your promise and underfund their hospital?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I know the member understands that what he's portraying there is a little less than accurate. What we're doing with the hospital in Kirkland Lake, and hospitals throughout the province of Ontario, is working with them to ensure that we can deliver still better quality care in a way that is more efficient. He also knows that the hospitals have two years within which to balance their budgets. He also knows—at least he should know—that over 50 hospitals already have presented plans where they balance their budgets in a way that does not compromise the quality of services they deliver to their communities.

We've got a seven-step plan. We're prepared to work with the hospital in Kirkland Lake, as we are with

hospitals around the province, to ensure that we get this right and, in particular, to ensure that we do find more efficiencies so we can devote more of our precious health care dollars to improving the quality of services for Ontarians.

Mr Bisson: The Premier should know that 80% of northern hospitals are facing deficits. Let me be clear: Hospital deficits are not a result of hospitals just saying, "Let the budget rip." Rather, they're a direct result of cost increases that are associated with such things as higher drug costs, an increased number of patients accessing hospital services, an aging population, and the list goes on.

Your decision not to fund year-end deficits is forcing hospitals across the north to cut essential services. In the case of Kirkland Lake, it's such a desperate situation that they're withdrawing their support for physician recruitment as of April 1, 2005. Imagine how that'll negatively affect the Kirkland Lake area when it comes to health care.

Minister, I ask you again, why are you breaking your promise to northern Ontario by not providing adequate funding to hospital services in northern Ontario?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I know the minister has more details on this.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Firstly, I would acknowledge that we recognize there's a particular challenge with small and rural hospitals and we're working very hard with membership of the Ontario Hospital Association on that right now. I know that the situation in Kirkland Lake is a particularly challenging one, not just around the circumstances at the hospital but around issues of physician recruitment.

I had an opportunity a few months ago to meet with the mayor. This past Friday, my colleague the Minister of Natural Resources, I believe with the participation of the Minister of Northern Development, announced two new nurse practitioners who are going into the Kirkland Lake community. We have more work to do there, for sure.

What I would say to the honourable member is that the Premier, in his answer, I think did provide the outline for the way this process is designed to work. The predictions of those things that might occur are not, I think, in many cases, likely to be the end situation, but the situation that the member seems to campaign in favour of, allowing hospitals to run up a deficit and have that funding at the end of the year, is not one that is sustainable for our health care system. That's why we're working with Ontario hospitals over a period of 18 months to get all of them in balance. That's the challenge we're working through on a case-by-case basis.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): My question is to the Minister of Labour. The issue of asbestos in construction—and I can say so as an engineer—has been a long-standing issue and of concern to the people of Ontario. It was banned quite some years ago

and is no longer permitted in new construction, but for older buildings that are being renovated or modified or torn down, it is a very real concern to the workers. Can you tell me what our government is doing to protect the workers on these sites?

Hon Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): I'd like to thank the member from Prince Edward-Hastings for the question and for the very serious issue that he's raised.

Asbestos, as he rightly points out, is not used in new construction now but it is of course present in older buildings, which may be torn down or renovated. So it presents a problem, a very serious medical hazard to the workers, to the supervisors and to third-party occupants who may be in the same building or nearby.

For that reason, the ministry has involved themselves in an extensive look at the existing regulations to determine how they can be improved. We've come up with a proposal, but to make sure it's going to actually put forward the additional protection necessary, it's being circulated now for consultation among the stakeholders—the labour groups, those working in this area, the business groups—to make sure that it's actually going to achieve the type of protection necessary.

One last thing: We're also involving, with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, additional training requirements to make sure people know how to keep themselves protected from this very hazardous substance.

Mr Parsons: Thank you, Minister. The other concern I have is the entire matter of hazardous materials present in workplaces. We read some very unfortunate things in the media of young people who have been injured on jobs in the year past, or even experienced workers or firefighters entering a building where hazardous materials are present. Could you tell me what our government is doing to protect everyone in Ontario from hazardous materials within a workplace?

Hon Mr Bentley: This is the broader issue. There are hundreds of potentially hazardous substances, and they all have varying, different degrees of risk. For years, there has been something known as occupational exposure limits, which is the amount of substance a worker, or anyone, can be exposed to for a certain period of time without endangering their health. The problem we had historically is that there hasn't been a regular means of updating these exposure limits.

So several months ago, at the IAPA conference, I announced a new process, a process whereby these occupational exposure limits would be updated every year, not every five or 10 years, so that the workers, business owners, everybody would be protected by the most current medical and scientific evidence. That will ensure that the people of this province have the best protection possible and available that science will allow.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Energy. You would know that your govern-

ment has long talked—and there's been little action—about the use of smart meter technology to reform the whole electricity consumption issue. You've talked about it, and we're all waiting for the shoe to drop here.

I was reading an article this morning that said smart meters don't cut usage. This is written by an industry spokesperson, Paul Kahnert: "Smart meters do not get people to use less power." In fact, they made a very important observation here, Minister, that you might be aware of, and I'm suspicious here because of what the issue is: "Smart meters will be a great way for the government to scapegoat the public."

Minister, your response to this is going to be, "We give you the smart meter; you're supposed to conserve electricity," and if they don't, you're going to blame the consumers. Will you promise the House today that you're not going to force consumers to pay for the smart meters in their home, when they've been forced on them by you?

1540

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): We are helping consumers by giving them the tools they need to manage their consumption. By helping them to manage their consumption, they can help to manage their bills.

The Ontario Energy Board is currently consulting with LDCs and stakeholders with respect to how to roll out smart meters in the most cost-effective way. The \$600 meters that the Toronto Star article refers to would only be used with large commercial customers. We want to look at all options that are available for us to use smart meters and time-of-use rates. We've asked the OEB to report back with recommendations in February. The OEB report will contain advice on rollout strategies for smart meters.

We do believe in conservation. We believe that conservation—smart meters coupled with time-of-use rates—will assist consumers in managing their electricity costs and will help them, in the long term, to save money on their hydro bills. It's the policy of this government to help consumers manage their electricity costs.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you for that answer. The only thing is that your own people in the Ministry of Energy have clearly admitted that the cost of these new smart meters, so called, is over \$2 billion. Now, the word out on the street, my constituents included, is that you're going to force this tax—that's what it is. You're going to force them to buy these smart meters. That's another \$600 to \$800 whack on each household in this province.

Minister, let's keep this simple. Whether or not the smart meters work really isn't the question. It's who's going to pay. One way or another, this is another Liberal solution by raising their tax. The cost of electricity is going to be forced on each household, whether the experts I've just cited here today say they don't work. Minister, tell the House today that you're not going to charge every electricity user more for the price of electricity.

Hon Mr Duncan: I disagree wholeheartedly with those who say they don't work. Let's look at the facts: In

Italy, China, Australia, California, they work. The member talks about the cost, but the member conveniently forgets that in jurisdictions where they've been implemented, they've paid for themselves with the savings associated. The member opposite forgets that the pay-back period to consumers is under two years in some jurisdictions. We reject what you stand for in electricity. The member also forgets the \$1.8 billion that his government foisted on the people of Ontario by their artificial price caps. The member forgets the contracts for Mike Harris, Paul Rhodes, Deb Hutton and many others through Hydro One. We won't let you forget, and we are going to do smart meters. We're going to help consumers manage their bills and undo the mess you left for this province.

VISITOR

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I want to take this opportunity to welcome Margaret Klanjscek, mother of Ashley Casey, who is the page from Hamilton East. Thank you for coming in to see your daughter. She's been doing a wonderful job in the Legislature as a page.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon Dwight Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I wish to correct the record of something I said in the House last week in response to a question from the member for Oak Ridges, Mr Klees, regarding the Hydro One transmission reinforcement project in York region. I responded as part of my answer and indicated that Hydro One's environmental studies report on this proposal was posted on October 21 for a 30-day public review period. In fact, it is a 60-day public review period. Hydro One asked for and has received an extension on that. I wish to correct the record, and I'd like to thank the member, Mr Klees, for bringing that to my attention.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I presume that brings us to the end of question period.

PETITIONS

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Petitions.

A former Speaker used to say that when the Speaker is standing, everyone else should be sitting.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from the Georgian Chiropractic Centre.

"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."

I've also signed this.

HOME CARE

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

"Whereas continuous, quality home care services are vital to Ontario citizens; and

"Whereas there are no province-wide accountability standards for home care; and

"Whereas competitive bidding and managed competition for home care support services have resulted in more for-profit agencies providing taxpayer-funded health services; and

"Whereas the managed competition model is flawed and has resulted in enormous home care provider turnovers and has left home care clients with as little as 10 minutes of care per visit; and

"Whereas the community care access centres are the real employers of home care workers and not the contracted service provider agency;

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

"We call on the government of Ontario to keep home care services under public control and administration and create a permanent, professional workforce, employed directly by community care access centres."

There are about 1,500 signatures. I've affixed my signature to this as well.

PIT BULLS

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition in regard to the banning of pit bulls. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas pit bulls are dangerous dogs, responsible for vicious attacks on humans out of all proportion to their numbers; and jurisdictions where bans on pit bulls have been introduced have seen dramatic reductions in pit bull

attacks on humans; and community leaders and law enforcement officials all across the province have supported a ban on pit bull ownership;”—

Interjection.

Mr Ruprecht: I wish the member would pay attention to this, because he is next in line.

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning ownership of pit bulls in the province of Ontario.”

Yes, Mr Speaker, I will affix my signature to this petition.

CHILDREN’S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): To the Legislature of Ontario:

“Whereas there are approximately 23,000 children and youth in Simcoe county and York region who have special needs; and

“Whereas approximately 6,000 of these children have multiple special needs that require a range of core rehabilitation services; and

“Whereas children with multiple special needs (and their families) throughout the province access ongoing rehabilitation services that are critical for their development at children’s treatment centres in their area; and

“Whereas there is no children’s treatment centre in Simcoe county or York region. For families that can travel, the closest services are in Toronto; and

“Whereas Simcoe county and York region is the only area left in the entire province that does not have access to children’s treatment centre services in their own area; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care provided funding to the Simcoe York District Health Council for implementation planning for an integrated children’s rehabilitation services system in December 2001; and

“Whereas the implementation plan was submitted to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care in December 2002; and

“Whereas the proposal was reviewed and approved by the appropriate ministries in 2003, and in August the Ministry of Health advised the Simcoe county and York region district health council that the funding had been committed and would be available shortly;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to release the funding for the children’s treatment centre in Simcoe county and York region so that core rehabilitation services can be delivered to the children and youth in Simcoe county and York region.”

I’m pleased to sign that and give it to Geneva.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): “To the Legislative Assembly:

“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-related “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.”

I turn these petitions over to Anthony Prail, a very good page from Chatham-Kent.

1550

PUBLIC TRANSIT TAX CREDIT

Mr John O’Toole (Durham): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas public transit is an important public good for Ontario which must be promoted;

“Whereas increased ridership of the public transit system will result in benefits such as the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and the ease of traffic congestion and gridlock;

“Whereas it is important to provide incentives to commuters to choose public transit as an alternative,

“Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: that eligible residents for the taxation year living within the province of Ontario be able to claim on their income tax an expense credit of 50% for all public transit expenses incurred throughout the taxation year,” and that we support MPP John O’Toole and his recent legislation, Bill 137.

I’m pleased to sign this in support.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I present this petition on behalf of 820 constituents in Kingston and the Islands.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas,

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

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

“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.”

CARDIAC CARE

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of residents of the Lincoln area in Niagara, entitled “Niagara's Heart Condition Petition,” which I will summarize in the interests of time.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Niagara region has a population of over 430,000 people and has the highest 30-day death rate in Ontario for heart failure [and] the second-highest one-year death rate in Ontario for heart failure...,” among other concerns; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care funds cardiac rehabilitation in 24 communities but does not fund cardiac rehabilitation services anywhere in Niagara. Heart Niagara, a registered non-profit corporation, provides services in one of the largest cardiac rehab programs in Ontario at no charge to the patient but relies on funding through donations and special events;

“Therefore we, the undersigned concerned citizens of Niagara, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario ...

“That cardiac rehabilitation services in Niagara be funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, as they are in 24 other communities, and made comprehensive and accessible.”

I sign my signature in support.

HOME CARE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have more petitions regarding home care. This reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas continuous quality home care services are vital to Ontario citizens; and

“Whereas there are no province-wide accountability standards for home care; and

“Whereas competitive bidding and managed competition for home care support services have resulted in more for-profit agencies providing taxpayer-funded health services; and

“Whereas the managed competition model is flawed and has resulted in enormous home care provider turnovers and has left home care clients with as little as 10 minutes of care per visit; and

“Whereas the community care access centres are the real employers of home care workers and not the contracted service provider agency,

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

“We call on the government of Ontario to keep home care services under public control and administration, and create a permanent professional workforce employed directly by the community care access centres.”

This is signed by hundreds of people from Welland and the Niagara area, and I've affixed my signature to it.

ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are no established province-wide standards to deal with anaphylactic shock in Ontario schools; and

“Whereas there is no specific comment regarding anaphylactic shock in the Education Act; and

“Whereas anaphylactic shock is a serious concern that can result in life-or-death situations; and

“Whereas all students in Ontario have the right to be safe and feel safe in their school communities; and

“Whereas all parents of anaphylactic students need to know that safety standards exist in all schools in Ontario;

“Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the McGuinty government support the passing of Bill 3, An Act to protect anaphylactic students, which requires that every school principal in Ontario establish a school anaphylactic plan.”

I sign my name to this petition, as it is my bill.

LANDFILL

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I've now got 1,400 signatures from people wanting to stop Toronto garbage from being shipped to Haldimand county. It's titled, “Halt Edwards Landfill Excavation.”

“Whereas the new Adams Mine Lake Act, as of June 17, 2004, amends the Environmental Protection Act to prohibit waste in a lake; and

“Whereas in the act, ‘lake’ results from human activities, and directly influences or is directly influenced by groundwater; and

“Whereas Edwards landfill is to be 15 acres excavated 29 feet in a wetland/slough forest;

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

“Halt the Edwards landfill site excavation.”

I support these 1,400 people and sign my name.

TUITION

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition today to increase public funding for post-secondary education, reduce tuition fees and reinstate an upfront system of

grants for Ontario's students. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

"Therefore we, the undersigned, supporting the Canadian Federation of Students' call to increase funding for colleges and universities and reduce tuition fees for all Ontario students, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to (1) reduce tuition fees for all students in Ontario, (2) increase public funding for post-secondary education to at least the national average, and (3) implement an upfront, needs-based grant system for Ontario full-time and part-time students."

I'll affix my signature to this petition.

FREDERICK BANTING HOMESTEAD

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Sir Frederick Banting was the man who discovered insulin and was Canada's first Nobel Prize recipient; and

"Whereas this great Canadian's original homestead located in the town of New Tecumseth is deteriorating and in danger of destruction because of the inaction of the Ontario Historical Society; and

"Whereas the town of New Tecumseth, under the leadership of Mayor Mike MacEachern and former Mayor Larry Keogh, has been unsuccessful in reaching an agreement with the Ontario Historical Society to use part of the land to educate the public about the historical significance of the work of Sir Frederick Banting;

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

"That the Minister of Culture and the Liberal government step in to ensure that the Banting homestead is kept in good repair and preserved for generations to come."

We had a press conference on the homestead at 4 o'clock last Friday. We just had a phone call from the federal member's office threatening us with trespassing to the Ontario Historical Society for having that press conference.

Interjection: Shame.

Mr Wilson: Shame on them. I think it's a breach of parliamentary privilege, but I'll bring that up tomorrow.

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

DIABETES TREATMENT

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): I have a petition concerning diabetes.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

"We are suggesting that all diabetic supplies, as prescribed by an endocrinologist or medical doctor, be covered under the Ontario health insurance plan.

"Diabetes costs Canadian taxpayers \$13 billion a year and increasing! It is the leading cause of death and hospitalization in Canada. Many people with diabetes cannot afford the ongoing expense of managing the disease. They cut corners to save money. They rip test strips in half, cut down on the number of times they test their blood, and even reuse lancets and needles. These cost-saving measures often have tumultuous and disastrous health consequences.

"Persons with diabetes need and deserve financial assistance to cope with the escalating cost of managing diabetes. We think it is in all Ontario's and the government's best interest to support diabetics with the supplies that each individual needs to obtain optimum glucose control. Good blood glucose control reduces or eliminates kidney failure by 50%, blindness by 76%, nerve damage by 60%, cardiac disease by 35% and even amputations. Just think of how many dollars can be saved by the Ministry of Health if diabetics had a chance to gain optimum glucose control."

1600

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT (CHILD AND YOUTH SAFETY), 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (SÉCURITÉ DES ENFANTS ET DES JEUNES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 21, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 73, An Act to enhance the safety of children and youth on Ontario's roads / Projet de loi 73, Loi visant à accroître la sécurité des enfants et des jeunes sur les routes de l'Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for Hamilton East has the floor.

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): As everyone knows, Bill 73 is An Act to enhance the safety of children and youth on Ontario's roads. What it does, in effect, is provide for a number of different requirements both in the personal automobile and on public transportation, particularly around school buses. It will make new pieces of safety paraphernalia required on both school buses and in personal automobiles.

For example, in a personal automobile, one of the new parts that this legislation brings forward is something called a booster seat. This piece looks to try to fill the gap between what's currently required for children to use as safety seats, particularly very, very young children, and the children who are a little bit too big for safety seats but who still have significant injuries in automobile accidents. So what this means is that preschool to primary-grade children weighing between 18 kilograms and 36 kilograms, or between 40 and 80 pounds, with a standing height of less than four feet 10 inches, or 145 centimetres, to a maximum age of eight years, will be required to be in forward-facing booster seats. This means it'll be a new requirement, so a new industry of child seats will be produced, and people will be required to retrofit their cars or provide these seats in their cars for children. If that's not done, if people are transporting children who meet those new standards in terms of weight and height in cars without these seats, they will be subject to fines, demerit points and other kinds of sanctions.

I think everybody would agree that children are the most important group of people to be protected in automobiles because, quite frankly, their size alone means that in severe accidents they are often victims of very serious injuries. Simply by virtue of their size and weight, they are flung around automobiles in accident scenarios. So I think the idea that we would find extra ways or be more diligent in finding ways to protect children in automobile accidents is a very positive thing.

Like a lot of legislation, the issue becomes the way that these kinds of new regulations are enforced. I've been listening very intently to some of the debate that has gone on in the previous speeches about this bill. Particularly, there's some concern about flexibility when, for example, there's a family emergency and perhaps a child has to be transported by a grandparent or something of that nature, when there's really no opportunity for a car seat or booster seat to be jockeyed between one car and another.

Overall, I think this particular piece about the booster seats is a welcome addition. I get a little bit concerned about whether or not this is going to stymie the responsibility for child care sharing or for reliance on, for example, grandparents or other extended family members only in the case of extreme emergency. I think everyone would agree that, in general terms and in an overall view of this kind of scenario, we would want to see kids put into booster seats if it's going to mean their safety is enhanced in the case of an automobile accident taking place.

The other piece of this legislation deals with school buses in particular. The bill requires that all new school buses will have to include safety crossing arms to prevent children from walking into a bus driver's blind spot at the front of the bus.

In the community that I come from, the area of Hamilton East—in fact, right near the school where my page hails from, St. Patrick's school over on East Avenue—was where my son was picked up for the

longest time to attend his French immersion school, some way away at the other end of the city. One of the things that bus was equipped with was this very arm that's described in the bill.

My son had occasion several times to have to cross the street when the bus had stopped and was letting off children. That arm actually did provide quite a significant buffer, because if kids are too close to the front of the bus, the driver can't see them, because the bus sits up high and children are small. What the arm does is force the children to walk a significant distance out in front of the bus so that when they cross, they're visible to the driver.

It's a frightening thing—when I've taken my son or I've gone to pick him up after the bus has dropped him off, there have been occasions I've witnessed myself where drivers have not stopped at the flashing lights of the bus. So there are two things that I think are important here. One is that the arm itself is in fact an excellent safety enhancer, but also, this legislation I believe speaks to the issue of increased fines if drivers are not heeding the stopped school bus with overhead flashing lights.

It's a darned scary thing as a parent to be waiting for your child to cross the street and watch in horror as a car decides not to wait, decides they're in too much of a hurry and they're just going to go around a bus that's got its lights flashing. I'm pretty sure that in a driver's test in Ontario you have to be quite clear about what those flashing lights mean. I'm pretty sure that you can't get your driver's licence if you're failing that part of the test.

It's really frightening to see that people in communities are in such a hurry to get wherever they're wanting to get that they are prepared to put the lives and the safety of our children at risk. If increased fines actually mean that the deterrent factor is increased for people, then that's a positive thing.

However, I have to say that it's extremely important that the message get out to Ontario drivers that these kinds of initiatives are being undertaken. Really, it goes for naught if nobody's aware that this legislation is changing, that the deterrent factors are being increased, and therefore the deterrent doesn't take place. If people don't know about it, the deterrent is not going to have any effect. Although the deterrent is welcome, it will be extremely important to let motorists in Ontario recognize how important it is to everybody in this province to make sure that children are safe when they're exiting or departing from their school bus drop-off point.

I have to say, again, in listening to some of the debate that's come up on this particular point, that there have been some concerns that the issue of the fine is going to be subject to the vehicle that is found to be moving around the bus. The issue then becomes one of whether or not it's appropriate to fine the vehicle when the driver might not be the owner of the vehicle. So there are some issues around how we make sure that not only the owner of the vehicle but the actual driver who perhaps is the one who's breaking the law, the one who's causing the offence to occur, is the one who's being sanctioned in this particular legislation.

We have to make sure that it's actually the driver who is fined, because that driver can then go on and drive other people's cars and never have learned their lesson, per se, never have been actually deterred from this kind of behaviour. If they're driving someone else's vehicle and the vehicle is the one that is the object of the fine rather than the driver, then you can see that that driver will learn very little from that experience if they're not the ones who are receiving demerit points and who are receiving the fines. Quite frankly, that's a bit of a concern, and it is something that we really need to address, in my opinion.

1610

The other piece of this legislation, Bill 73, is the issue of graduated licenses. Specifically, it speaks to the number of passengers that are permitted by a G2 driver. Basically what this bill, or this intended legislation, will do is to restrict the number of passengers a G2 driver age 19 and under can carry. For the first six months, these drivers can carry one passenger under the age of 19 and then, for the balance of their time in G2 or until that driver turns 20, they could carry up to three passengers age 19 and under. Of course, these particular new requirements will not be in force if the G2 driver is accompanied by a fully licensed driver with at least four years of driving experience or, in fact, if family members are the passengers, regardless of their age.

Again, you can see that what this legislation purports to do, what this bill purports to do, is basically tighten up the restrictions around the new drivers because, of course, statistically it's very clear that accidents tend to be in larger numbers with younger drivers. I believe the point of this piece on graduated licences is basically to make sure that young drivers who are learning the ropes of the roads are not unduly putting other passengers at risk, so they're reducing the number of young people who can have passengers in their car while they're going through the process of learning.

It's something that I think is very laudable, but the only thing I would be a little bit concerned about is whether or not there are some extenuating circumstances that may come up that may require, in an emergency, the drivers to carry passengers who are outside this particular bill. What you do, obviously, is you try to put restrictions on that make it safe for the majority. Hopefully, if the minority or the odd person needs or finds themselves in an emergency situation where they are required to carry passengers who don't quite fit the letter of this particular law, then it would be the responsibility, obviously, of any officer who would attend such a scenario to be able to determine whether in fact there's a bona fide reason for that to be happening. If it's a responsible situation with a responsible young person, I'm sure these kinds of things can be dealt with at any time.

One of the things, though, that I think is most important about Bill 73 is the fact that when you look at the school bus issue, when you look at the new requirements that school boards are going to need to be putting in place for their school buses, it's out of step with the government's commitment in funding school transportation.

I think the actual pieces of the change are important and they're appropriate. The arm is absolutely necessary and I think all new buses should definitely have it. But what needs to go in tandem with that is the commitment by the government to make sure the school boards have the tools, have the resources, to be able to finance those changes.

Some would say most school boards contract those services to bus companies, and of course that's true. If the bus companies, however, are going to be required to change their fleets or to put new features on new buses coming into their fleets, then those costs are simply going to be transferred over to the transportation budgets of the school boards.

You heard even as recently as today the fact that school boards in Ontario are not going to be treated fairly under the new transportation funding formula. We know that at least half of the boards, come next year, are going to see significant—in some cases minor, 4%, 5%, 6%, and in other cases extremely significant, 30% or 40%—decreases in the amount of funding they're going to receive for transportation.

So on the one hand the message is, "Let's work together. Let's increase the safety of students who are riding in our buses in the school system." On the other hand the message is, "But you're really on your own. You have to come up with solutions on your own. In fact, we're going to be withdrawing the very resources you need as a school board to make sure those children get the kind of safe transportation they need," not to mention the fact that the school funding formula for transportation, I would suggest, puts many students in a situation where they're no longer eligible for school bus funding.

Interestingly enough, I heard from some parents from the Durham District School Board a couple weeks ago claim that between 600 and 1,000 families have at least one child being cut out of bus service altogether as a result of cuts that already exist in their transportation budgets. When boards cut those transportation budgets, these kids are being forced to walk longer distances, oftentimes on unsafe roads and on roads without sidewalks.

Even in the city of Hamilton, one of the controversial issues the boards deal with is, as they reduce the amount of transportation that's available in an inner-city school, for example—maybe it's only five, six or seven blocks that a child has to walk; however, what's not taken into consideration is the kind of environment those children are walking in. I speak specifically to extremely fast-moving, one-way streets that are huge pedestrian barriers for the most capable people in terms of an urban environment, never mind young children who are trying to get to school, oftentimes distracted by their friends and different things like that. So when you look at the safety of children, it's much greater than arms on a school bus; it's a matter of making real commitments to school boards and to children around how they get to school and how they get home from school in the most safe fashion.

Quite frankly, transportation funding overall is not much different from what happened with the previous

government. Promises were made around transportation funds and there was supposed to be a new program to fund transportation and school boards, but in fact what the Liberals are calling an equalization program actually means that some boards are going to do fairly well while a good half of the boards across Ontario are going to be in serious trouble when it comes to transportation costs. It's quite an untenable situation when the government is bringing these kinds of mixed messages. On one hand, Bill 73 talks about the safety of children and youth on Ontario roads, and on the other, there's a lack of commitment around putting the tools in place to make that happen.

What we see is more than 30 boards of education losing funds for buses, beginning in the 2005-06 year. I know that some of the government members here will say, "We've got a 2% increase across the board this year. Everybody's doing great. All the boards are getting funded very well this year." The issue is not this year; the issue is the discussion paper that was released and the proposal for what they are calling Equitable Allocation Through a New Funding Model for Student Transportation in Ontario. Again, that looks forward to the 2005-06 year, theoretically right around the time this bill actually might make it through the whole legislative process and come into force. We would have a situation where the very time these new requirements are being implemented is the exact same time when all these 31 boards are being reduced in terms of their school bus transportation allocation. What that does is it really hurts families, children and parents, as opposed to helping them when it comes to safe access to schools and a safe return from school.

The list is available for everyone to see. It's provided in the consultation document, so anybody who might be watching who's concerned about or interested in what their particular school board has in store for it for the 2005-06 school year, it's available. I'm sure the ministry office can actually provide you with that information if the board doesn't have it on hand.

Just in wrapping up the points on Bill 73, it is a bill that purports to deal with child and youth safety. It has a lot of good pieces to it, specifically around the bus arm and particularly around the new requirements for booster seats. I think where there are some challenges is around the way that fines are implemented, the way that vehicles are fined or sanctioned, as opposed to the drivers, and how we get that deterrent effect, if it's not the driver, himself or herself, who has caused the infraction that's actually getting the sanction.

1620

The last, and probably the most important, piece is that at the same time the government is wanting to make some changes with school buses, they're putting these new tools in place on the one hand for children's safety and transportation in the school bus system, while on the other hand, they're taking away the ability of the boards to pay for those changes. They're taking away the ability for 31 of our school boards across the province to be able

to implement the retrofitting or the increased safety features of any new school buses that are coming on line for the fleets in the next couple of years.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I'm pleased to rise and make a few comments about Bill 73. I spoke to this bill during the second reading debate, but I did want to make a few comments after the member from Hamilton West gave her presentation.

This bill is about safety for children and the very young. We know that almost 1,000 children and young people are killed or seriously injured on our highways each and every year. We also have heard that 33% of school bus drivers experience illegal passing each and every day. We also know that an unrestrained child, in a 50-kilometre crash, has comparable injuries to a child dropped from a third-storey window. So we know very well what can happen to persons without the protection that we must indeed now put in place for our youth and small children. Bill 73 addresses those needs.

I want to thank the minister for incorporating the idea of school bus safety. I introduced a bill in 1996, and introduced it subsequently six other times, to help bus drivers and others identify those who are passing school buses illegally. The member from Hamilton West is concerned about the fact that perhaps we may not be identifying the actual driver in this case. Under the current law, the bus driver must identify the driver of an offending vehicle. It is almost impossible to do so. Daylight hours, the speed of the vehicle, the fact that the vehicle may be passing the bus from the back to the front and all manner of circumstances make that very difficult. As well, the bus driver is watching that our most precious cargo, our children, either get on the bus or get off the bus. Some 50,000 names have come to me in petition form. Police, school boards, bus owner-operators, drivers and a host of individuals and groups across Ontario support this new initiative.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to rise this afternoon and make a few comments on the member from Hamilton East's lead-off speech. I know that the bill does some important things in improvements to the safety of our children, and who's going to argue about anything that would protect our children and our community?

But I do want to put on the record, and it's important to note for the citizens, that although this bill is bringing forward additional safety features, there have been numerous studies done on the safety of our school transportation system as it is today. I have to say that I understand that the people who transport our school-children each and every day—I believe something like 800,000 young people a day are transported on our school buses—do a fantastic job. I've worked with the School Bus Operators' Association of Ontario a lot over the last three or four years, and I want to pay my respect to that organization, because I think it's important to note that there are very few accidents on school buses today. That's not to say that any other additional piece of legis-

lation would not make additional improvements, because one accident or one problem is one too many when it comes to our schoolchildren.

It's important to note that probably the safest place schoolchildren can be when they're on the roads and the highways of our province is in a school bus. I think that's been proven over and over again, and I want to put that on the record today, because I do think that school bus operators are not getting enough respect in this manner, and enough credit for the great job they do.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I was so pleased that Ms Horwath, our member from Hamilton East, spoke to this bill on behalf of the New Democratic Party. Ms Horwath has demonstrated herself, in such short order, to be one of the most effective members of this assembly, to be a credit to the community she represents and, I tell you, she's made a huge difference to New Democrats, not the least of which is with respect to party status here. Ms Horwath has shown herself eager and capable in debate.

I'll be speaking to this bill in due course, but I find it incredible that this bill was introduced on May 4 and yet is only now being called by this government for second reading.

There are some aspects of this bill, quite frankly, that cry out for speedy passage. If the member for Chatham-Kent Essex—I'm well aware of his history around school bus legislation; he just spoke to it briefly in his two minutes—could get his whip or his government House leader to sever the provisions that create vicarious liability, I say we could have that passed this afternoon.

There are other provisions in the bill, though, that necessarily have to go to committee. That's just the nature of the beast. Now, I didn't decide back in May not to call this bill on behalf of the government. I didn't make that decision. The government decided to let it moulder and acquire dust on a shelf. New Democrats are debating it now, and I say to this government, let's keep this bill on the front burner until the debate has ended so we can send it off to committee, let it get the prompt consideration it needs in committee and then it will come back as soon as the government wants it to come back for third reading.

Ms Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): I'm pleased to comment on this, as well.

When this bill first came forward, I was talking to a number of mothers and grandmothers, and they were talking about what it was like when they grew up, when they would get into the car with their parents or grandparents. There were no booster seats and no seat belts. You might have 10 kids clambering around in the back of the station wagon, standing up and roaming around. There was no consideration of this sort of thing at all.

We discussed how it might be a bit onerous if you have to have a booster seat in grandma's car and a booster seat when carpooling; it might be a problem logistically or financially onerous. But these changes have come. There's been an evolution in the way we approach child safety in our cars. So from the time when

the kids were just scrambling around all over the place in the back of the station wagon, to today, when we have very well constructed booster seats and car safety seats for our kids, you wouldn't even think about getting in the car and letting your kid roam around or drive anywhere without your child strapped in properly to either a booster seat or, at the very least, a safety belt.

This is just part of the evolution in safety, and I'm very pleased to see that our minister has moved very quickly, that it is one of his major first initiatives to get this front and centre, and that the children of this province will be that much safer. Again, maybe it will be a bit of an inconvenience, maybe it will be a little expensive here and there, but nobody will argue that any safety measure we take is priceless. This is one of those priceless pieces of legislation that we're putting forward, and I'm very proud that our government is doing that.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Hamilton East has up to two minutes to reply.

Ms Horwath: I appreciate the comments of all the members who have spoken to my debate on this bill. Just from the comments people have made, it seems to me that everybody in this place and time would agree that the kinds of initiatives this bill brings forward are important to children and families. I think that where we might have some fine tuning, that can be appropriately done in committee, as my colleague Peter Kormos has indicated in his remarks. But overall I think that work needs to be gotten at, because Bill 73 is something that, once it gets to those fine tuning opportunities and once it's brought back for third reading and is passed, we'll see some real, positive initiatives. If those can be accompanied by some financial supports from the government, particularly to school boards in regard to school bus retrofitting and/or the changes in specs for new school bus fleets in the province for the various school boards, I think that would be appropriate.

Hopefully, it's simply a matter of some concentration and focus around moving this legislation forward, getting it to the next steps, getting it through committee and having it come back in a form that I think everybody will agree can cause some really major improvements in the safety of children, from the perspective of public transportation in school buses and also in the private automobile around booster seats, as well as with G2 drivers.

1630

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): I'm honoured and privileged to stand today to speak in support of Bill 73, which I haven't spoken about before. I think it's a great bill. It has to go forward and pass. If this bill passes, it will make safety more available to all generations.

I was listening carefully to the member from Hamilton East when she was speaking about the bill in detail. I was impressed by her eloquence and support of the bill. It comforts me a lot when you see members opposite speak in support of this bill, because it creates safety for all of us: seniors, children, all kinds of people.

I was listening to her concern in terms of some issues, especially about drivers. If someone was driving a different car and violated the rules and regulations, it shouldn't be the owner of the car who is fined but the driver. Hopefully when the bill goes to committee, we'll notice that issue, because I believe it is a very important element of the bill.

Also, I was listening to other members, especially the member from Simcoe North. He explained that the bill is an attack on bus fleets and the people who are driving buses across the province. I don't think so. I agree with him that bus drivers across the province do an excellent job. They do a wonderful job. They are very careful, and they are great people who deliver our children to school.

What is very important, as the member from Stoney Creek mentioned, is that with the advance of our society and the advance of life, a part of our evolution—I remember that when I was a little boy, I used to be driven to school by bus or by station wagon. Booster seats weren't an issue back then. Traffic wasn't an issue back then, because the number of cars was very small. But we're talking about a high-tech society, a fast society. We're talking about a massive number of cars passing back and forth. I think that as part of this evolution, we should implement that safety element in our driving act in this province.

I agree with the member from Niagara Centre when he agreed and supported the bill. Hopefully, all our colleagues in the opposition will agree to it and pass it. Let's do it quickly and fast, because I believe it is overdue, especially when I heard my colleague the member from Chatham-Kent Essex. He introduced that bill six times in the past and it didn't go. I was surprised.

If all the members believed in safety, especially the opposition when they were the government, why didn't they pass it for the children, for our young generation?

This is a very important bill. We should all support it. I believe now this bill is going to see the light with the minister and with our government, because we believe in safety and protecting our children for the future.

I also want to go back to the member from Hamilton East when she was talking about how the boards are going to absorb the cost. I don't believe so, because most of the boards across the province contract transportation to different companies. I think those companies, whatever companies, not because they are not doing an excellent job but because they have to live with this new era, should live up to the safety expectations for our kids. They should update their fleet. We're not forcing every bus to fit the whole conditions, such as having an exit on both sides, but any bus being built after January 2005 should meet these requirements and these conditions.

I think, yes, create new standards. The member from Perth-Middlesex agrees with me. He's a great member. He also believes in the need for safety in the bus industry and not to undermine their ability to do the job. I want to take the opportunity right now from this House to extend my great and sincere thanks to them for doing an excellent job, eliminating trouble and driving carefully.

But our duty as a government is to put in the mechanism to protect our kids in the future, to create the safety, the important thing about this bill. Hopefully, in the end all of us are going to vote in support and pass it.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Bill 73 is a very important bill for our youth so that they are safe on our school buses. There's nothing more important for our future, of course, than the safety of our children. All too often, we hear about accidents involving school buses. It always brings a lump to your throat until you hear that all the children are safe or their injuries are minor. Of course, when you're putting seat belts on school buses, it's important that the cost and funding of these seat belts is properly done. School bus companies have contracts with school boards, and the contracts didn't include the outfitting of school buses with seat belts, so obviously that is a concern. It's being funded by rural communities. Of course, these rural communities won't be receiving, or very few of them will be receiving, any of the fuel tax revenues that—

Interjection.

Mr Chudleigh: Some 350 communities are not receiving any of the fuel tax for the improvement of roads, to make sure the roads are safe for school buses to travel on, to make sure the communities that these school buses travel through are properly signed, that the roads are properly maintained and that the snow is properly removed from them. But no, there are 350 communities in Ontario that won't be receiving a nickel of that gas tax. The gas tax will only go to large cities. Mainly it will go to the city of Toronto, of course. That's where this government seems to have its focus, on the city of Toronto. If Toronto wants to wag the tail of the province, I suppose that's what this government sees as appropriate funding for what is, of course, a very controversial issue when you get out into the farm communities in rural Ontario where none—none—of the gas tax will be ending up.

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I'm delighted to respond to the remarks of my colleague from London-Fanshawe and to speak in favour of Bill 73.

First of all, I just want to correct a few misimpressions that have perhaps been left.

This bill does not put seat belts on school buses. We need to be clear about that.

There have been some concerns raised about whether or not school boards will be able to manage the cost of putting the arm on the front of the school buses. In fact, what is already happening in the vast majority of cases is that as school boards are replacing their stock or the bus operators are replacing the stock, the majority of operators in the province are already putting the arms on the buses. This just formalizes the standard.

1640

The really important part of this legislation is the ability to simply fine a driver based on identifying the car. As a trustee, I know that for years school bus operators, school bus drivers and parents came to me and

said, "People are illegally passing school buses and there is nothing I can do about it, because the existing legislation requires me to get a positive identification of the driver."

Well, how can you possibly do that as a school bus driver when you've got a bus full of little kiddies and somebody ignores the flashing lights and goes driving past your bus? What you're trying to do is manage the problem. You're not going to be able to get a positive ID of the driver.

With this legislation, all you have to do is get the plate number and the driver, or at least the owner of the car, will be fined for breaking the law. This is a great improvement in student safety, and I support it.

Mr Dunlop: I'm pleased again to rise and make comments on the member from London-Fanshawe's speech. I think he brought in some points, of course.

I would like to pick up a little on what my colleague from Halton was saying, and that's how rural Ontario—most of the school buses that operate in our province operate in rural Ontario. He has a very legitimate point, and that's this whole idea of the gas tax. I hope that maybe my colleague from Erie-Lincoln will bring this up in his 20-minute speech a few minutes from now.

It's amazing that we're expecting municipalities in rural Ontario to build good roads—we want good roads and good bridges—yet all the gas tax money is going to the urban centres, and I can't understand why. That seems to be a very unfair way of allocating the money everyone pays. Don't the people in the township of Severn or the township of Ramara deserve to have some of that gas tax put back into their areas? Why should their money go into the city of Orillia or the city of Toronto? They're all paying gas tax.

They need that money to make these roads good and safe and smooth—the same with the bridges—and they can be used, of course, to further transportation. If the roads and bridges are rough, it's harder on the buses, it costs more to operate the buses and the buses become unsafe. I think we should do a lot more debate on that.

The other thing I'm amazed at is why the Liberals are not debating this. You had a 20-minute chance to speak and you only spoke for like four minutes. I think we have to get around to debating this bill. The minister wants this passed and wants it well debated, so let's debate it.

Ms Horwath: It's my pleasure to make remarks on the speech of the member from London-Fanshawe in regard to Bill 73. I think what he had to say in his brief remarks, quite clearly, is something most of the people in the Legislature would agree with; that is, the importance of ensuring the safety of children, in particular when it comes to their participation on our roadways, whether it's in school buses or as passengers in their parents' cars or as passengers in the cars of older brothers and sisters. It is clearly an important discussion and debate for us to be having.

I think his remarks are what I would call motherhood remarks. As a mother, I would vouch for that quite clearly. And as the mother of a son who has been

transported and is currently being transported in a school bus—in fact, just a couple of weeks ago he became a school bus patroller in his school bus. Yes, my son Julian Leonetti is a school bus patroller and quite proudly so. In partnership with the automobile association in Hamilton, he got some training around how to help maintain order in a school bus.

Again, the issues around how school boards cover off the costs of making sure those buses are adequately retrofitted or adequately upgraded is still an issue. And again, the issues around who is being charged and fined when there are infractions of the various recommendations in this bill—I think it's still really important, and I look forward to this bill being moved along in the process.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for London-Fanshawe has two minutes to reply.

Mr Ramal: I'm honoured again to stand and comment on what my colleagues said about this bill. I can sense from the feeling around this House that all parties can support it, except for a few minor issues. I know that the member from Simcoe North is trying to move the debate in different directions. I want to assure the member that other issues will be fully debated in the House, but now we're talking about the safety of buses and how we can ensure that our kids are safe and comfortable when they go to school. That's what we're talking about today. I think Bill 73 speaks to this issue in detail.

I also listened to my colleague for Hamilton East. She had concerns about the costs incurred in implementing the bill. But already, the majority of the bus operators across the province have agreed to equip their buses with all the equipment needed to ensure the safety of our kids.

I want to bring up a very important issue: I think insurance will go down, the more safety features you add to make the bus safer. It is a part of our safety in general, and I believe this bill details the entire concern, not just from the government's side but from the whole population.

I listened a lot of the people in my riding of London-Fanshawe, and they were happy and thrilled about the implementing of this bill and about pushing this bill to be passed. If this bill passes, I think it will create a lot better environment around the schools. That's why I support it. I'm also here to listen to more people talk about it. I'm convinced that the majority of my colleagues in this House will support it, and I believe we are going in the right direction.

Mr Kormos: On a point of order, Speaker: I just learned from Tory insider Debbie Hutton that Tim Hudak, the member for Erie-Lincoln, is turning all of 37 today. It's just amazing how we watched that young Hudak boy grow up in front of our very eyes. I found it interesting—and the Legislature would want to know—that Ms Hutton is taking the matter in hand herself.

The Deputy Speaker: That certainly is not a point of order, although I started to hear somebody sing something. From what I heard, we don't want that.

Further debate? The member for Erie-Lincoln has the floor.

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): Thank you very much, Speaker, and thanks to my colleague from Niagara Centre—

Interjections.

Mr Hudak: —and to my colleagues from across the way—Simcoe North, the Minister of Transportation and others; Brantford, very kind too, and by the looks of him, I would think him my junior by one or two years.

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: One year junior. Happy birthday to the member from Brantford.

I'm pleased to rise in the Legislature to speak to Bill 73 on this November 1, which is my 37th birthday. And what better place to be for my birthday than in the assembly, Speaker, with the likes of yourself and my good friend for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, among others.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): You're sick.

Mr Hudak: The member says I need some help. That could be the case, but maybe my wife will rescue me later this evening with something different than speeches.

The Deputy Speaker: We'll want to know what that is, since you brought it up.

Mr Hudak: I'll report back accordingly.

Bill 73 according to my notes, deals with child booster seats, school bus safety and changes to the graduated licensing system in Ontario. I'm pleased to see that the Minister of Transportation is here in the assembly this evening to listen to our debate on this legislation. I thank the member for London-Fanshawe for his comments as well. I do think it's always important to point out the dead minutes that have occurred in debate—the number of minutes available to government members that were not taken up once more—which I think is an unfortunate trend that we in the opposition are seeing as we debate these so-called important bills.

I would—

Ms Mossop: We're more succinct.

1650

Mr Hudak: The member says they're more succinct, and maybe every member of the assembly opposite will speak to Bill 73. It remains to be seen but, certainly, I look forward to taking advantage of the entire 20 minutes available to me as a member to address the issues with respect to Bill 73, to try to point out some of the concerns that I, myself, may have with provisions in particular sections of the bill. As well, I think it's important to bring forward those that have been expressed by my constituents on Bill 73.

My colleague a bit earlier had talked about—and the Minister of Transportation is here, which is a good thing to see—the importance to the minister, as well as debate for Bill 73, of the Minister of Transportation and his capacity to make decisions with respect to the distribution of the gas tax in the province. There's certainly a feeling from our caucus that, while the funding for transit will be welcome and will finally be flowing for municipalities with transit systems—they will make the proper investments and improve the transit and be, no doubt,

thankful for that—there are, at the same time, 340 municipalities across Ontario that will be receiving no gas tax funding whatsoever despite the fact, by way of example, that the folks in Beamsville, at the Pioneer gas station on Ontario and Green Lane, fully pay the same amount of taxes as others across the province but will not receive a dollar back in investments through the gas tax.

Mr Chudleigh: How can they do that?

Mr Hudak: The colleague from Halton asks, how can they do that? I think it's important for us in the assembly to recognize two classes of municipalities: the transit haves and the transit have-nots. The difference is that those with transit systems receive the gas tax funding and those without transit systems, despite the fact that they pay gas taxes, do not receive any needed funding for road or bridge repair. Certainly, a good number of those roads, which municipal councillors would argue are in need of maintenance, and a number of those bridges that were constructed 30 or 40 years ago or longer will be in need of substantial investment.

So the government continues down that path. We would argue on this side of the House that it's incumbent upon them to create a similarly generous program to help out those municipalities that aren't receiving the gas tax, that don't have transit, so they can address the roads and bridges issues. So we'd like to see a substantially similar program, and I know the Minister of Transportation is taking that into consideration in his deliberations with his cabinet colleagues.

As a general comment on Bill 73, I think it's important to take into context a general and, I would argue, disturbing trend by the Dalton McGuinty government that the government is the solution to every ache and pain or problem across the province. Sure, it's important for the Legislature to act at certain times—that's the best course of action—but I do wonder if appropriate thought has been given to a number of these measures, if this is a key area for the Legislature to act in and, if it is, is in the best interests of the province to legislate or regulate in a particular area. Are there ample resources being made available to partners—police forces, for example—to help to enforce these laws and make them enforceable?

I do worry about Bill 73 and some of the provisions in Bill 73, particularly sections 1, 2, 3 and 5, about their enforceability, unless there are also resources being allocated to school boards, to police officers and potentially to municipalities to ensure their enforcement. Let me give you some examples, because certainly a definition of a Conservative would include that you legislate or regulate only when necessary. If there are other avenues available to solve or address a particular problem, including common sense, you should look at that first and foremost. Legislation should be one of the last tools and only used if necessary, right? The way to the province of law, all those resources brought to bear, should be prioritized as the most important issues of the day.

I think that the Dalton McGuinty government, I say to my friend from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot, has gone a bit bananas for bans. You have. You've

banned a lot of things, or you're in the process of banning a lot of things. This legislation is part of that mentality with respect to enforcing particular activities. Let me give you some examples.

Well, there was a famously infamous week a couple of weeks ago when the Minister of Health came out, emerged from a cabinet meeting, beat his chest and said, "We're going to ban sushi in the province of Ontario."

Mr Levac: You never get sushi.

Mr Hudak: I like sushi. I wonder what the minister has against sushi. I wonder about that new sushi restaurant on Thompson and Garrison in Fort Erie, in my riding, the town where I was born and raised, if there is something wrong. I think the sushi they serve is terrific and they seem to be doing all right, but I'd bet you they would wonder why the Minister of Health suddenly emerged from cabinet and said, "You know what? We're going to ban sushi in the province of Ontario."

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): He probably doesn't like sushi.

Mr Hudak: If that's the decision, if he doesn't like sushi personally, I don't think he should ban it for everybody else. Secondly—

Mr Yakabuski: If next year he doesn't like pizza, do you think he'll ban pizza?

Mr Hudak: I certainly hope he doesn't ban pizza. That would be worse than banning sushi.

The question too for my colleagues opposite: Is that the best use of health care workers' resources? Is that the best thing for public health inspectors, to be going into the kitchens across Ontario and banning sushi?

Interjection: Some will make you sick.

Mr Hudak: I know some of you believe that, but this is my reasoning.

Secondly, his colleague, quick on the heels of the health minister's announcement, threw down the gauntlet and said he was going after the Three Musketeers. He was going to hunt down every last gummi bear that stalked the hallways of our province's schools, saying that he was going to ban every one of these particular foods in all of the schools in the province.

Obviously, good eating habits are important, no doubt about it, but look at the irony: The week before, he watered down provincial tests considerably, part of that announcement lowering standards. So I wonder, if you talked to Ontario parents, Ontario taxpayers, whether they would think the priority should be raising standards in the classroom or banning gummi bears from vending machines. I'd bet that 99.9% of the time they would say, "Raise the standards." Unfortunately now, in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, a student could fail one of either reading or writing in the literacy test—the reading or writing components—they could actually fail one of those and still reach the literacy standards. I think that's regrettable. I think part of literacy is being able to both read and write. Particularly if these students that you purport to care about want to get into the workforce, I think it is vital that they pass the reading and writing components—whether it is French or English, I say to the

minister of francophone affairs—as long as they pass those standards. I think it's regrettable that the minister is part of a government that is watering down those standards and then saying they're targeting gummi bears instead.

The third strike in the week of the ban bonanza, the bonanza of bans that very same week, is pit bulls. Suddenly, the most important law-and-order issue in all of Ontario was to ban pit bulls. Certainly attacks by vicious dogs is something that comes up from time to time. My suggestion would be to raise the negligence penalties against owners of all vicious dogs instead of concentrating on a particular breed. That having been said, I find it curious with the minister's bill that he has put all of the time of his Attorney General's staff, lawyers, and then police officers and municipal enforcement officers, into banning certain breeds of dogs.

The Deputy Speaker: To the member for Erie-Lincoln, speaking of "from time to time," from time to time I would like to hear some comments on Bill 73.

Mr Hudak: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Yakabuski: It is his birthday. You could give a little bit of latitude.

Interjection: Happy birthday, Minister—or former minister.

Mr Hudak: Former minister; the formerly honourable, now no longer honourable, member.

The point I'm trying to make is that the government has a proclivity, they've got a habit, of trying to dictate behaviour for taxpayers across Ontario from Queen's Park, a habit of trying to micromanage. If you do that from time to time when you think it's a priority, fine. Bill 73 does that in a number of ways: the changes to G2 licensing, for example. Certainly, section 3 with respect to child booster seats is consistent with this behaviour of dictating from above what mom and dad or grandma are going to be doing, including bringing snack food into the schools, including what kind of pets they may—

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: Well, no. But you're telling mom and pop, mom and dad, one or both of the parents or the grandparents, what kind of dogs they can have. You're also telling them what kind of snacks are going to be available in schools, and you're certainly telling them that they can't bring sushi home.

1700

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: Well, you've got this tendency, and that's certainly part of Bill 73, by dictating particular types—by regulation, mind you. The actual booster seat changes are not in legislation, I want to say to those watching at home or those in the gallery; they'll be done by regulation. The Minister of Transportation will think up to what age children will have to have booster seats, present it to cabinet and then it would become sort of the stated law in the province without any kind of debate in the Legislature.

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: I think I've always had a bit of a libertarian streak in me, maybe not 100% of the time, but I

think it's an important value to bring to the debate and I'm trying to do that.

Let's say, for example, the Minister of Transportation says that all children up to a certain number of kilograms, or even eight- or nine-year-olds, have booster seats everywhere they go—and I think we need to realize this could impose a financial liability on a lot of working families in the province.

Now, if this was the only thing that you did in this realm, the only increased cost to the taxpayer, the burden would not be as great, but working families in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario are now facing the following: If both are working, they're facing a punishing new health care tax that could take up to \$1,000 from the pockets of working families in the province. I would argue that already taxes are far too high. For a working family, a middle-class family could be paying up to a \$1,000 each in additional health care tax annually, and, as we argued in question period, many will see a reduction in health care services in return for their higher tax.

Hydro rates, I ask my colleague from Durham, have gone up some 20%?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): This is the plan.

Mr Hudak: The plan is to increase them some 20%, and maybe even higher. So not only are taxpayers paying a significantly higher Dalton McGuinty health care premium or tax or premi-ax or whatever it is, they'll be paying higher hydro bills on top of that. In fact, I believe that there were about 50 new tax or fee increases—

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: Well, hopefully we'll have a chance to get to that, but there were 50 tax or fee increases as part of Dalton McGuinty's first budget, and that's just to start, I fear. This is including increases in drivers' licensing fees, for example, and increased tax on alcohol and tobacco. I know that there is work to ban some of those substances anyway in certain places. I think you have to realize that with the higher tax, the higher hydro, the higher licensing fees, the affordability of child booster seats adds into that, taking more of the resources out of the pockets of working families. They like to jump to a simple conclusion that somehow this means that members of the opposition are against child safety. No, quite the opposite; we support child safety. At the same time, you have to realize—

Mr Yakabuski: We're just not sure about that Big Brother world you guys are talking about.

Mr Hudak: The Big Brother world, the nanny state, that you seem to be creating on the opposite side where, increasingly, you are dictating the behaviour of parents across the province of Ontario in a realm of circumstances. You're also taking away their financial ability to make decisions and investments for their own family—saving for their son's future, helping their daughter go off to university—by taking more money out of their pockets.

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): Soon they won't have them.

Mr Hudak: I think that there is a dangerous trend that I'm seeing as part of Bill 73 which is making these things

unaffordable. Grandparents too; I mean, here are individuals that are on fixed incomes, and—you're too young to be a grandfather, I would say to my colleague from Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): He's got six.

Mr Hudak: He's a grandfather of six. Well, congratulations, but imagine if you were taking all six in the van to an event, maybe to a Christmas celebration or such. If this bill passes, you'll have to purchase six booster seats, potentially, for those individuals. If you get a high-quality booster seat, for example, that could be 600 bucks.

Mr O'Toole: Now he has to buy an SUV.

Mr Hudak: It could be about \$600. It depends on your financial background. I certainly don't know that about my colleagues, but I do know that a lot of working people in the Niagara region or Dunnville would find an additional \$600 quite a burden in taxes or increased fees being mandated. On top of that, there's higher hydro and higher taxes, among the other things that I have listed so far. This would be in every circumstance. Even if it was the occasional trip the kids were going on, you would dictate that that car would have to have—that van, in this example—would have to have six booster seats.

I remember with great fondness my time as a coach, coaching soccer, kids about nine to 12 years old, different age categories—I enjoyed it, I miss it. Certainly, volunteer coaches—I wasn't coaching a big all-star team; I was coaching a house-league team—from time to time will need to transport the players from game to game, from place to place. If Bill 73 passes, that coach would be required to purchase booster seats for all the children who fit into that category.

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): Did you take them to Buffalo for a game?

Mr Hudak: No, I never took them across the border for a game. We just simply played in the Niagara region.

That having been said, I think there would be a lot of coaches who would find that to be a significant financial hardship and then who may not volunteer to coach or who won't transport the kids. So I think you have to realize that there are some probably unintended consequences of this particular bill.

I do ask my colleagues—you'll be debating this in caucus, and maybe we'll debate it in the House. The Minister of Transportation should take into consideration, at the very least, if the government is going to move ahead with Bill 73—will you bring in some sort of financial support system for families who find this to be a fiscal burden, PST relief, by way of example, or something to help relieve the mounting pressure that working families are feeling because of the increased taxes, the increased hydro and the increased dictates that the Dalton McGuinty government has brought forward?

Quickly, on section 5, when we were in government under Mike Harris, one reason we rejected photo radar was because it penalized the vehicle and not the driver. In fact, my suggested solution is to put more police officers on the highways and streets. I strongly encourage the government to actually move forward with fully funding

the additional 1,000 police officers across the province of Ontario—certainly one of your keynote platform commitments during the election, but we have yet to see a single one of these officers. As our very able critic the member from Simcoe North has said, you're not fully funding these police officers, although from your campaign commitment it certainly sounded like it would be 100% provincial dollars.

Mr Yakabuski: Do you mean they may have broken a promise or two?

Mr Hudak: I hate to say it, but it appears that you might be hitting the 40-broken-promises barrier by downloading the cost of police officers on to municipalities, when my recollection of the campaign commitment was that you were going to fund 1,000 new police officers.

I'd much rather that you hire more police officers to catch speeders, dangerous drivers and those who go past a school bus without stopping, rather than giving a bus driver more enforcement provisions or a version of photo radar on buses that would catch the bus as opposed to the exact individual who is driving that bus.

So I do have some significant concerns about Bill 73, particularly about the costs of the bill to working families, the enforceability of the act and the photo radar approach to school bus safety—sadly, all part of a government's approach that seems to think dictates from Queen's Park are better than solutions found locally or within families.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?

Ms Horwath: It's my pleasure to make comments on the debate brought forward by Mr Hudak, the member for Erie-Lincoln. Actually, I think he brought some quite interesting points to the discussion today, particularly starting off with the issue around the lack of debate coming from the government side on this particular bill but also going on to talk about things like the need for more funding for municipalities for things like road and bridge repairs. Although I think public transit is a good use of the gas tax dollars, coming from a municipality that has lots of significant rural areas, I certainly understand how difficult it is for those municipalities to maintain those pieces of infrastructure when they're not getting the support they need from other levels of government.

He also spoke a little bit about—what did he call it?—the ban bonanza, the bonanza ban?

Mr Hudak: The ban bonanza.

Ms Horwath: He raised some concerns around whether or not there are really the appropriate resources being put in place to make sure that some of these initiatives are able to be enforced and that they're not just empty kinds of gestures; that in fact municipalities, police departments and school boards are given the supports they need to enforce new legislation of this stature when it gets to that point.

He also spoke, of course, about other bans, like banning sushi and banning junk food in schools and those kinds of things, in relation to how this bill is also a ban on various activities.

1710

One of things he raised, though, that I thought was important was the issue of volunteers, particularly in the field of sports, and how the graduated licence restrictions might affect the ability of volunteer coaches to transport kids. I thought that was a very interesting point and a good one. Finally, he spoke about the financial burden that some of these initiatives might have on municipalities. I think they were all interesting parts of the debate.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): I was listening to the member from Erie-Lincoln, and I can tell you that I wish he would have gone directly to Bill 73, because half of the time he spent on other things—that we are to blame at the present time, but they should be to blame, because they left us with a \$5.5-billion deficit.

Also, the hydro rate—they got a cap at 4.3, which has created a deficit at Hydro of \$380 million. They said that we implemented the health tax, but in the past they promised that hospitals would get additional equipment to relieve waiting times. They made promises, promises, promises. They never responded to the needs of hospitals. They left us with that deficit.

Let me tell you, on the booster side: I used to travel with a hockey team and had the whole team in my car. I do realize now the danger this was causing, and that I would have been responsible if an accident had occurred. We just have to remember what happened to that poor lady in Quebec. She had a private daycare and travelled with eight kids in the car. Seven of them were killed. They didn't have booster seats. They didn't have car seats. I will definitely go ahead and buy a child's car seat to travel around with my grandson Joshua.

In 2002, 149 children and young people were killed on the roads. We want to prevent this. We want safety for all of our children. If this past government does not support this bill, it's because they just don't care about our kids.

Mr O'Toole: I couldn't resist responding to the member from Erie-Lincoln, because he did cover a lot of things that concern my constituents in the riding of Durham. I don't think he was wrong in pointing out some of the vacant promises by the Liberal government.

I do want to respond to Bill 73, specifically on one section. I am a grandparent. My daughter Rebecca has two of our grandchildren. Lhose is her name. They are coming from Australia this Christmas. In fact, they'll be here in about three weeks. They have two children under the age of two. Of course, as a grandparent, I want to do the right thing.

We're just in the process of determining the right vintage of safety seats for children while transporting them in vehicles, because we'll be supplying the vehicle for them here. We're not only going to have to rent a vehicle for them, but now, under mandatory law, we're going to have to make sure that we have the appropriate seat belts. They'll have to be installed. When I return the rental car, they'll have to be de-installed.

These are expenses that someone like myself, of course, would be more than wanting to be proactive in

providing. But he points out the burden on people who live in Ontario. This bonanza of bans is cause for concern. I've been going to encourage my daughter Rebecca and her husband, David, to return to Ontario when he's finished his military service there. But now, the way Ontario is going, there won't be any opportunities for them. I'm quite concerned.

Out of respect for the member from Chatham-Kent Essex, I want to recognize that your government is finally giving you the just reward for the hard work you've done on school bus safety. In that respect, I think that's the only good thing in the bill, and I'll probably be supporting it for that very reason. You should get the credit. I'm surprised that you aren't a minister, but I hope that Minister Takhar recognizes the work you have contributed to making Ontario's school bus industry safer.

Mr Kormos: I was pleased to hear the comments made by the member for Erie-Lincoln and so pleased that he found the time to make them here. I'm going to speak to this bill, in a few minutes' time, for a modest 20 minutes.

I want people to know this bill was introduced on May 4—that many months ago—and only now is being called for second reading. I find it incredible that the government members now say, “Oh, this bill”—and there is important stuff in this bill; make no mistake about it. Had the school bus issue stood alone, I'm confident there would have been offers to accelerate passage of the bill, because I know we all supported the member for Chatham-Kent Essex when he did private members' bills of the same nature.

The booster seat: People are marketing this, selling this, as a public safety issue, and nobody can quarrel with that. I'm going to be speaking about how effective that particular legislation is going to be in terms of enforceability. We simply don't have—look, this government promised 1,000 new cops, and they end up being 50-cent cops on a good day—

Mr Dunlop: Thirty-cent cops.

Mr Kormos:—hold on, Garfield—50 cents on a good day, and as low as 30-cent cops. So when this government promises 1,000 cops, it wants to reap the goodwill from that kind of public relations exercise. What we're going to find out is that—especially some of those remote and northern and rural parts of Ontario that are already grossly underpoliced are going to find themselves forced to live with the sad status quo rather than the cops that those towns and cities deserve on their streets to help to make their streets safer places to be, and enforce this and other kinds of legislation.

I'll be speaking to this bill in around two minutes' time. I'm looking forward to it, Speaker, and looking forward to the exchanges you and I will have during the course of my contribution to the debate.

The Deputy Speaker: The member from Erie-Lincoln has up to two minutes to reply.

Mr Hudak: I thank my colleagues for their comments.

A couple of things, in particular: I appreciate support for my concern that I have heard increasingly from

taxpayers in the province about the Dalton McGuinty government's bad habit of trying to ban, ban, ban. It is a ban bonanza, or a “ban-anza,” happening in the province. Once in a while there may be a reason to act, but they are consistently trying to regulate, from Queen's Park, the behaviour of working families in the province of Ontario.

The member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell says that everything I spoke about was somehow my fault from the previous government. But I fail to see how the ban on sushi, the ban on gummi bears and the ban on pit bulls are in any way related to the treasury. Unless the gummi bears, led by their team captain the sugar bear, raided the treasury somehow, I fail to see how your argument makes any sense whatsoever or that this tendency to make these kinds of bans has anything to do with the treasury in Ontario. And quite frankly, this notion that the Liberal party has a monopoly on caring about children in the province of Ontario is highly regrettable, and I hope that he will repeal that assertion the next time he has a chance to speak.

Lastly, I want to say too that I would encourage our colleagues here, if they have a chance to slip away from debate, to go down and see the elk and deer farmers. They're having a reception in the dining room; I understand it's a great time. Hopefully you'll have a chance to do that.

As I conclude my remarks, I thank members for their kind words, and now I'll slip away for a nice dinner with my wife as I celebrate my birthday.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for Niagara Centre.

Mr Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. I've got but 20 minutes.

As a matter of fact, the member for Erie-Lincoln and I were down on Saturday evening at White Meadows Farm on Effingham Road, where the Niagara South Federation of Agriculture had their annual general meeting and dinner. I was pleased to be with those folks again, a hard-working group of the farming folk from down in the Niagara region, many of them in the farming business for generations and struggling hard, and now, especially down where we're from in Niagara, they're going to be hard-hit, whacked, by the greenbelt legislation.

1720

There isn't even a farmer in town who's going to tell you that they don't support the principle of preserving green areas and controlling—heck, farmers are as familiar as anybody with the need to resist and control high-density municipal urban growth. That's what encroaches on farmland that surrounds municipalities, and that's where you get these incredible conflicts in terms of land usage. You know that. That farmer who has been farming that land, perhaps a fruit farmer like we have down in Niagara, who uses the noisemakers to scare away the birds so they can protect their fruit from the birds—well, before you know it, the people living in that little subdivision around the corner start calling up city hall and complaining about noise and start calling the Ministry of the Environment. When you've got a farmer

putting some fertilizer down on his field—and we're all familiar with fertilizer here—again, we've got the urban neighbours phoning up the Ministry of the Environment and anybody else, saying, "Oh, but it smells." Those are the sorts of conflicts between urban and rural dwellers that farmers are more familiar with than anybody could possibly be. So they well know the need to maintain and preserve agricultural land.

Farmers down where I come from are incredibly committed stewards of some of the province's—no, some of the country's—finest and rarest agricultural land. So, by God, they expect to be treated fairly and they don't expect to have to carry the financial burden all by themselves. They've paid enough of a price throughout the years simply by virtue of being farmers. They don't expect to have to carry the financial burden all by themselves of maintaining some of this greenbelt. In the case of Niagara, a whole lot of it is agricultural and, in the case of Niagara, a whole lot of it is land that is going to be captured by the definitions in the legislation that has no business being in the legislation. I'll be speaking to that come the time to speak to the legislation.

I, for the life of me, don't know when the government intends to call it. I really don't understand. I try. I do my best to try to figure out, to try to understand the rhyme and reason, the methodology, of this government in terms of how it calls legislation. Here we've got a bill that has got to go to committee. The school bus provision has already been dealt with by committee, as I recall, and I'm not concerned about that becoming the subject matter of committee debate, vicarious liability amongst other things, but the booster seat and the provisions for graduated—can I say that? Of course I can say it, but is it relevant?—booster seats, booster seats designed for the size of the child who's going to be sitting in them because there are serious concerns about the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of seat belts in cars for a person of smaller stature, like a kid.

Having said that, I question—and I would be pleased to hear from people who have expertise in this area—whether or not it's more incumbent on, for instance, the federal government to create standards for motor vehicle manufacturers to make their motor vehicles more adaptable and safer for passengers of varying sizes. Surely if the safety consideration is built into the vehicle, it begins to address some of the serious and obvious problems about booster seats, about, let's say, the person who just, on occasion, has to drive a nephew, a niece, a grandchild to or from an event, the situation wherein you have a child in between booster seat sizes.

Once again, the enforceability: We need cops out there on the streets of our communities enforcing all these laws that we generate here at Queen's Park. Just today, the government came in with their much-touted—at least self-touted by the government members themselves—amendments around emergency management. Far be it from me to rain on anybody's parade. And Mr Colle and Ms Broten, the two members are out there jostling each other out of the view of the camera during the interviews out there in the scrums.

Mr Colle: They're standing shoulder to shoulder.

Mr Kormos: Oh, there's Mr Colle. I saw it. One would bodycheck the other and then the other would dive back into the scrum circle.

Mr Colle: They were hip to hip.

Mr Kormos: Oh yes, there was no competition whatsoever between the two of them in terms of getting access to that scrum. You see it from time to time here, but talk about the dance. It was a dance. It was the dance of MPPs who were out there on the stroll—

Mr Colle: On the troll, did you say?

Mr Kormos: —on the stroll, trolling—who knew that they could give a far better interview than their colleague who's currently being interviewed by the press. It's a fascinating dance and game, and I witnessed it.

But again, here we have—

Mr Colle: You've never done it.

Mr Kormos: Oh gosh, the stroll, where's that?

Here we have legislation, self-touted, yet at the end of the day the real, fundamental issue around public safety, community safety, is restoring the public sector, rebuilding the public sector. It's getting cops out there—and not 50-cent or 40-cent or 30-cent cops, but 100% cops, 100-cents-on-the-dollar cops—in communities, generating net increases in policing. It's getting firefighters out there. It's establishing minimum staffing standards for fire-fighting services to abide by and, more importantly, giving their communities the financial resources to acquire and to maintain that adequate staffing.

Then, of course, we've got paramedics. Paramedics in this province continue to be abused and exploited and, quite frankly, so taken for granted when it comes to granting them the resources, like down in Niagara, for instance—everything from radio systems to adequate pay—so they can remain competitive in all sectors of the paramedic world, with competitive employers who are creating huge turnovers in the area of dispatch, amongst other things, a critical element of the paramedic role.

I mentioned White Meadows Farms down on Effingham Road in North Pelham. White Meadows is a second-generation farm. I talked to the dad. He had come here, I think he said, around 1937 as a young teenager with his parents. They came from out west, from Manitoba. They were part of that exodus from Canada's west, from Canada's wheat fields, forced by the Depression into industrial Ontario, looking for work, simply unable to make it on their own. They eventually purchased this farm property, which is run as a dairy farm and some fruit farming but, over the course of the years, has tapped a huge forest of maple sugar trees. One of the rites of passage for schoolkids in Niagara region is to visit that sugar bush every year come maple syrup time and witness maple syrup making in real life, real terms, real time.

White Meadows is just an incredible place during maple sugar time for folks to visit, and an incredible place in between time. They have a great restaurant there specializing obviously in some very native Ontario products, the sort of stuff the farmers grow and work so

hard growing, making sure that it's produced for the benefit of all of us.

I put to Mr Hoy, the member from Chatham-Kent Essex, that I had wished, and continue to wish, that he could prevail upon his House leader to sever the portions of this bill that deal with school buses. I expect that, were we able to sever them—because I don't see any need to put that principle, that piece of legislation, once again to committee. I believe we could proceed with that without committee work. The rest of the bill, rightly, has got to go to committee. There are people out there who are going to have things to say, people from any number of sectors. How long the committee should be depends upon the level of interest out there across the province that people have, that members of this provincial community have, in addressing the bill.

I appreciate that our colleague from Hamilton East, Ms Horwath, took the lead on this. Normally, Gilles Bisson would be taking the lead on this bill, it being a transportation bill. But Ms Horwath, being the type of working person she is, said, "No, don't worry. I'll do the lead on this bill like I've done the lead on so many others for so many other critics." In the course of doing that, Gilles Bisson lost his lead, but I'm sure he'll be speaking to the bill in due course.

But Ms Horwath, you will recall, in the course of her comments to this bill, had occasion to talk about, yes, our kids, kids in our community and school buses, and the fact that 30—no, it's 31, isn't it, Ms Horwath? Thirty-one school boards across this province are having their pockets picked by this government in terms of funding for busing of kids in those jurisdictions. Hamilton is one of them, huh? The District School Board of Niagara is another one.

1730

Gosh, Ms Horwath, you're one New Democrat in a pond of Liberals there in Hamilton, just as I am but one New Democrat—

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: A pond of Liberals—

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Well, what did you think I said, Mr McMeekin? Spit it out.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I thought you said, "Fond of Liberals."

Mr Kormos: Mr McMeekin did spit it out. Folks can't see, but it's not attractive. I'll not invite him to do that again.

So here you are, Ms Horwath, one New Democrat, a very good one, in a pond of Liberals, and there I am down in Niagara—gosh, yes, Hudak is a Tory, and then we've got two Liberals with the government. But Hamilton gets whacked, and so does Niagara—it gets hammered—in terms of funding for busing of kids. Don't just nod your head as if this is some sort of mundane, no-problem sort of thing; understand what happens when you reduce these budgets for school busing. Either a board has, as some are inclined to say, to borrow from Peter to Paul, or rob Peter to pay Paul, or the board has to put more kids in fewer buses on longer bus roads.

We've had occasion down in Niagara to observe kids, especially kindergarten kids who are in school a half-day, who literally spend more time being bused to and from their school than they are in the classroom. That's remarkable. That surely isn't healthy. It surely isn't good education. In the broadest meaning of the term, I'm not sure that it's safe either.

We understand the need for vicarious liability around this issue. The problem is that school bus operators, who are inevitably the people reporting the offence, are unable to identify the driver. That means we've got this vicarious liability. But the problem is that a school bus operator, at the same time while he or she is making sure that kids get off the bus, keeping their eyes peeled for vehicles approaching and coming up from behind, is hard-pressed to also even record the licence plate number. I can't help but indicate that if and when there are problems in any given community around drivers, vehicles not properly accepting the restrictions of the Highway Traffic Act and stopping as they're supposed to—approaching from either direction a school bus that's stopped with its red lights flashing—I'm telling you that the best deterrent, the most effective deterrent, is having cops who are able to literally sit there and look out for so-called hot spots, areas where this type of behaviour has been reported, so that they can not just catch the vehicle and fine the owner but so they can apprehend the driver.

I've got no qualms with the principle that Mr Zimmer—he's a lawyer; he knows about these things—would call "vicarious liability." But I've got to tell you that vicarious liability can be as significant a cop-out in this type of circumstance as can red-light photos, because the problem is that you punish the vehicle owner. The fact is that red light photos, just like vicarious liability, can't detect the drunk driver, the suspended driver, the uninsured driver, the underage driver or the unlicensed driver. It seems to me that if we're really serious about highway safety, we've got to approach driving habits vis-à-vis the actual people engaging in those bad habits, the drivers themselves.

That then takes me, of course, to this government's failure to keep its promise to reduce auto insurance rates by first 10% and then another 10%; this government's dismal, pathetic, miserable failure to keep its promise to in any way control auto insurance premiums for drivers across Ontario. This government promised first 10% and then another 10% reduction in rates that had already skyrocketed. I tell you, I am searching for the one driver in this province who actually enjoyed a reduction in premiums. Mr Yakabuski didn't get a reduction in premiums, that I understand. But I tell you that I am searching, because what rots people's socks, what drives them crazy, is when they're good drivers, make no claims, get no tickets and their premiums still go up and their car is one year older.

People understand why you've got to go after the bad driver. People understand why bad drivers should pay more. But the corollary of that is that good drivers should

pay less. We should be rewarding good drivers, just like they do in British Columbia.

Did you know that, Speaker? In British Columbia, good drivers are rewarded for being good drivers, because they pay less and bad drivers pay more. It's called a bonus-malus system. Mr Martiniuk will explain what bonus malus means, because he understands Latin. Bonus malus: Good drivers pay less; bad drivers pay more. A good driver in British Columbia, that public, non-profit automobile insurance system that has over the course of decades now contained premiums, may stabilize them, and when there are premium increases, the premium increases are much more modest and, quite frankly, also deliver a far superior product. Do you understand what I'm saying?

In British Columbia, there are full tort rights. An innocent accident victim has the right to compensation for all of his or her injuries, including economic loss, along with a no-fault benefits package for the single vehicle accident, the insured who is at fault who doesn't have somebody else to look to for compensation. So you've got a far better benefits package, a far lower rate and a far fairer system, where the discrimination isn't based on age or gender but on whether or not you've demonstrated yourself to be a responsible driver. So there you go.

So I say to this government, it wouldn't be inconsistent with Liberal philosophy to support public auto insurance. Liberals in Alberta endorse it and advocate it and are campaigning on it. Liberals in eastern Canada think auto insurance, run and owned by the people of their province—publicly owned and non-profit—is a pretty fine idea.

The people of Ontario know that public auto insurance, driver-owned auto insurance, the sort of auto insurance that Mel Swart had advocated for so many years across this province—and continues to believe in, I tell you; old Mel Swart hasn't lost any of his passion or commitment to public auto insurance—the sort of auto insurance that the people of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia, notwithstanding any number of changes in the political regimes that have held power in those provinces; the sort of public, non-profit auto insurance that those jurisdictions, those three provinces, have maintained through incredibly hostile governments, incredibly pro-privatization governments—you know, the Vander Zalm Socreds.

So it seems to me that if this government were serious about making life a little better for Ontarians, it would end its dastardly and evil relationship with the private, for-profit auto insurance industry. It would send those clowns packing, send them marching, and send the private, for-profit auto insurance companies that have been highway robbers for decades in this province, ripping off drivers and innocent accident victims; tell them, if they're so insistent that they're not making any money, that maybe it's time for them to get out of the business, because the people of Ontario could do a better job, just like the people of Manitoba and Saskatchewan

and British Columbia have, to make owning a car and driving a car affordable, and to guarantee real fairness, not just for drivers but for innocent accident victims.

Think about it. With some eight million vehicles insured in this province, you would have the largest risk pool in the world. Insurance, although the actuaries can make it look complex, is really quite simple. It's about sharing risk. The larger the risk pool, the less expensive it is. That's not difficult to understand. Like the guy says on the Cooking Channel, it ain't rocket science.

We'd have the largest risk pool in the world, the largest single database. There'd be no more insurance fraud. There'd be no uninsured vehicles. Why, the savings, the return on ensuring that those uninsured vehicles are now paying their annual insurance premiums, the first year alone would pay for the capital costs of building a public auto insurance system in this province.

We would be the envy of the balance of North America. We'd have delegations visiting Ontario. We'd solve our tourism problem because we'd have politicians from all over the western world coming to Canada, and specifically Ontario, to see how it's done.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): It amuses me. I have to respond, but I didn't hear very much that was directed toward this legislation. The insurance program of our McGuinty government has been working. It's been doing a good job. I would like to get back, though, more to the issue at hand.

I wonder why this legislation has taken so long to be brought in. I know the member from Erie-Lincoln said today that we're too involved in decisions for Ontario.

1740

But I go back to the 1970s, when a nephew of mine was killed coming out of a school bus in front of his mother. I think it was about a year after that that the legislation came in—partly for that death; partly for other deaths—where we did have to stop for the buses, but I think that was the time that that came in.

I wonder now—we've got all of this good legislation, which I commend the Minister of Transportation for bringing in and is obviously going to save lives and is going to provide that additional safety. When you're looking at a car that costs \$15,000 to \$35,000, depending on how you're hauling these children around, and you wonder what the incremental costs are, you've got air bags, you've got the safety seats—so it's extremely important that this legislation comes forward and it's extremely important that we get these measures in place quickly.

I just wonder how many lives we would have saved since the mid-1970s when that first legislation for the school buses came in, but it's always difficult to bring in new legislation. People figure that their lives are going to be changed, but why are they going to be changed? They're going to be changed to protect young lives. It will cost a few dollars, but this is good legislation, and I'm really pleased that we're proceeding quickly with it.

Mr Yakabuski: Always a pleasure to respond to the member from Niagara Centre.

I did want to mention again that my good colleague from Erie-Lincoln is celebrating his birthday today, and I wanted to personally get it on the record that I'm wishing him a very, very happy birthday—number 37 for Mr Hudak.

One thing about this legislation—and I didn't catch a whole lot of the member for Niagara Centre's issues with the bill; I must have missed some of that—but I did want to talk about the fact that one thing we can absolutely be certain of, certainly from my point of view, is that there is no greater priority in this province or any other jurisdiction, in my home or any other home, than our children. So I want to get that on the record straight away: If any party, particularly the government side here, wants to question the motives of opposition members with regard to this piece of legislation, please do not impugn our motives when it comes to our concern for the safety of our children in this province.

One thing I did want to mention while my short time is running out here is we've got the Ontario Deer and Elk Farmers' Association in the dining room tonight. I just had the opportunity to drop down there. I would suggest that you go down there and enjoy some of the fine foods that they're serving, because this is another business in the province of Ontario that the government wants to shut down by way of regulation. I have some very significant concerns about what they are doing with regard to the deer and elk farmers here in the province of Ontario, but we'll be speaking to that at another time.

Ms Horwath: It's my great pleasure to comment on the remarks of my colleague Mr Kormos from Niagara Centre, particularly the way that he began his speech in indicating how important it is to make sure that the different parties that are responsible for pieces of this legislation coming into force have the tools to be able to do that.

I think he referred to the greenbelt legislation as an example of groups that will be overburdened in regard to government legislation and not be compensated for it—particularly in his area, the fear that farmers have in regard to the value of their agricultural land and how that value is going to be affected by the greenbelt legislation, and recognizing how important the farmers believe the greenbelt legislation is and also recognizing that they are the ones who are going to be burdened, to a great extent, with the insurance of that legislation coming into force.

He spoke about a number of different things specific to the bill, particularly concerns around how the graduated licences and how the booster seats were going to be brought forward, and how perhaps the federal government might be able to be involved in regulating the manufacturing of the vehicles to make sure that these things are undertaken by manufacturers. Also, particularly, I think he spoke about the enforceability of the legislation, and used that point to indicate how important it's going to be to have the government provide resources to—I think he mentioned police forces in particular, but certainly police forces. He spoke about the need to rebuild the public sector resources that are necessary to enforce safety in our communities.

Finally, I believe that he spent some time talking about some of the broken promises this government had around auto insurance and how that is affected by this legislation.

Mr Colle: This bill is focused on child safety, and it's baffling to me why the opposition has been delaying and deferring this since last May. This is a no-brainer. My colleague here from Chatham-Kent has been fighting for safety around school buses; this bill incorporates some of that safety. People all over Ontario, petitions, people saying that it's about time to stop people who are passing school buses that are stopped in front of schools: This bill is going to help address that issue. I don't know how the opposition keeps arguing against that.

The second thing is booster seats. It's proven that booster seats do save lives for children who are not quite safe in a full-blown seat belt. It's empirically proven.

These are two straight-ahead pieces of legislation in one. They're going to protect children in a very real way, a pragmatic way, and all we hear is all these stories about everything else, dealing with an issue that was brought by the people of Ontario to this Legislature. I think that it was brought more than three years ago, four years ago, by the member from Chatham-Kent. This is how long it has taken to basically say no to people who speed by stopped school buses and endanger the lives of children coming off school buses. We still hear all kinds of reasons why this bill should not be debated, why they ring the bells—on and on it goes. The people are saying that it's about time that we moved ahead.

This is a very good, positive piece of legislation the people of Ontario have asked for. Let's get on and do what they have asked for: protect their children.

The Deputy Speaker: The member from Niagara Centre has up to two minutes to reply.

Mr Kormos: The last commentator makes a point. The minister called this bill back on May 4 of this year for first reading. The House voted on it then, so that means it proceeds on to second reading. For this government to wait this long to call this bill for second reading is—give your head a shake. It is remarkable that this government is so disinterested in its own legislation that it allows its own legislation to linger and gather dust on back shelves.

Look, some of you folks have been here long enough: How does a government pass bills? By calling them and calling them day after day until they're debated, and then, once they're debated, you vote on them. Again, it ain't rocket science. It's not complex stuff. It's pretty simple, pretty basic. You tell the House leaders from the other caucuses, "This is the bill that we're calling today, and quite frankly, if we don't finish today, we'll call it again tomorrow. And if we don't finish it tomorrow, we'll call it again the day after that." At some point, the debate's going to be over. The debate's going to be over because there are no more people interested in participating in the debate, or because, in the case of some caucuses, every person who's entitled to debate has debated and they can't call more people to debate it anyway.

I find it passing strange. Here we have a majority government, a big majority—not a little majority; a big majority—and once again, the observation that I happened to make last Thursday: They couldn't organize a drunk-up at a brewery, because, notwithstanding that huge majority, they can't get bills through the House, and then whine and complain and say, "Oh, the opposition are debating it." My goodness. My goodness. You want to pass legislation? Call the bills. Let's get them debated.

1750

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr McNeely: It would seem that the person who was just speaking seems to have forgotten that the last time this was called, the debate was adjourned by his party.

Bill 73 will save lives and protect the young passengers of our province. I commend the minister for bringing this legislation in. We've discussed it before. It makes booster seats mandatory for preschool children and primary-school-aged children. It will stiffen penalties for drivers who misuse or fail to use proper seats. It will improve safety on and around school buses with new safety crossing arms, emergency exits and stiffer penalties for drivers or owners who pass buses when kids are getting on and off.

Having three sons, one issue that comes home to me is how Bill 73 will protect the young drivers of our province. My riding, like most ridings in this province, has a lot of young drivers with their own cars. My own sons drove our family cars around Cumberland and Orléans when they were teenagers. On the streets of Fallingbrook, the part of Ottawa-Orléans where I live, you see teenagers zipping around in their cars every day. It's a typical sight in Fallingbrook, something most people wouldn't even think twice about. But some of the numbers are enough to make you worry. Sixteen-year-olds to 19-year-olds make up a little over 5% of Ontario's population, but they accounted for 11% of all traffic fatalities in our province in 2002. Road accidents are the leading cause of death and injury to Ontario's youth.

Driving can be dangerous, no matter how old you are, especially when you consider all the distractions that are out there, when you take into account all the conditions that affect how alert you are on the road: ringing cellphones, loud music, passengers who can take away from the level of concentration we give to our driving.

For young drivers today, those distractions seem ever present, but while these kids are still getting used to being behind the wheel, those distractions can be fatal. Look at the stats. Anyone who has ever been in a car with a group of teenagers knows what kind of distraction they can be. But did you know that drivers aged 19 and under are three times more likely to be involved in a fatal accident or collision if they are carrying passengers aged 19 and under in the car—three times more likely? This is reflected in insurance costs.

Another US study shows that the likelihood of a collision increases significantly once there is more than one passenger in the car. We've had a few accidents in

my riding with kids involved. Under current legislation, the number of passengers that a young driver with a G2 permit can have in his or her car is limited to the number of working seat belts in the car. In your average sedan, that works out to four. In a minivan, you've got six passengers. A teenaged driver with four to six teenaged passengers: That's a lot of risk when you look at the stats.

What Bill 73 proposes to do is reduce that risk, reduce those distractions by restricting the number of young passengers that young drivers can carry in their vehicles. Fewer passengers mean fewer distractions and more attention paid to what's going on in front of them on the road. For the first six months, driving independently under the G2 licence, young drivers could take one passenger aged 19 and under. Then, until they get their full G licence or until they turn 20 years old, they could carry up to three passengers.

Bill 73 is not unique in its aims. Across Canada and the US, 31 jurisdictions already have some form of teenaged passenger restriction in effect. The statistics are there. These are good, sensible restrictions that will help to ensure that kids get off to the best possible start behind the wheel, that they will develop good driving habits for the future. These restrictions will promote driving conditions where young people are focused on road safety instead of chatting with their back-seat passengers.

This legislation is backed by police officers, the ones who are on the front lines dealing with auto collisions on a daily basis. A staff sergeant from York region says, "Any steps taken to make youth safer behind the wheel are great." I agree. With this legislation, this government is proving that we're committed to a safer Ontario: safer passengers, safer drivers and safer for all our young people.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent to move a motion respecting House proceedings for this afternoon and evening and to have the Speaker put the question on the motion without debate or amendment.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: As usual, the official opposition is more than happy to help out the government House leader and do whatever we can do.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. The government House—point of order?

Mr Kormos: Mr Speaker, the eagerness of the official opposition to roll over for the Liberals is noted.

The Deputy Speaker: The government House leader has asked for unanimous consent. Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Duncan: I move that, notwithstanding any standing order of the House, the House continue to meet beyond 6 pm today for the purpose of considering the following orders: G18, G60, G70 and G96; and that upon completion of those orders, the Speaker shall adjourn the House without motion until 1:30 pm tomorrow; and that this afternoon's debate on second reading of Bill 73 be

considered one full sessional day for the purposes of standing order 46.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

AUDIT STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LA VÉRIFICATION DES COMPTES
PUBLICS

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 25, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 18, An Act respecting the Provincial Auditor / Projet de loi 18, Loi concernant le vérificateur provincial.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr Sorbara has moved second reading of Bill 18, An Act respecting the Provincial Auditor.

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

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Interjections.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move that the bill be sent to the legislative assembly committee.

The Deputy Speaker: So ordered.

ONTARIO HERITAGE
AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 28, 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 Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

There being none, Madame Meilleur has moved second reading of Bill 60, An Act to amend the Ontario Heritage Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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.

Pursuant to standing order 28(h), there is a request that the vote on the motion by Madame Meilleur for second reading of Bill 60, An Act to amend the Ontario Heritage Act, be deferred until Tuesday, November 2, 2004. This is signed by the chief government whip.

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

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 25, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 70, An Act to amend various Acts administered by or affecting the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services / Projet de loi 70, Loi modifiant diverses lois appliquées par ou touchant le ministère des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): The official opposition wants to thank the government House leader for giving in to the Tory party's desire to ban negative-option billing and thanks the government House leader. There is nothing wrong with admitting that you were wrong and backing down.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments? Further debate?

There being none, Mr Watson has moved second reading of Bill 70, An Act to amend various Acts administered by or affecting the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services.

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

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

I have received, pursuant to standing order 28(h), a request that the vote on the motion by Mr Watson for second reading of Bill 70 be deferred until Tuesday, November 2. It's signed by the chief government whip.

LIQUOR LICENCE
AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES PERMIS D'ALCOOL

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 26, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 96, An Act to amend the Liquor Licence Act / Projet de loi 96, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les permis d'alcool.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I look forward to this bill going to committee. I want to just put on the record that I've had a number of calls on this which are interesting to debate when it gets to committee. I am certainly looking forward to my opportunity to speak on this bill at third reading.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments? Further debate?

Hearing none, Mr Watson has moved second reading of Bill 96, An Act to amend the Liquor Licence Act.

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

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: I didn't hear a no. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, 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.

I have received, pursuant to standing order 28(h), a request that the vote on the motion by Mr Watson for second reading of Bill 96 be deferred until Tuesday, November 2. It's signed by the chief government whip.

There being no further business, and pursuant to the motion, this House is adjourned until 1:30 of the clock, Tuesday.

The House adjourned at 1803.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon James K. Bartleman
Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Alvin Curling
Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers
Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Waterloo-Wellington	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Parliamentary assistant to the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / adjoint parlementaire au président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Baird, John R. (PC)	Nepean-Carleton	Opposition house leader / chef parlementaire de l'opposition
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Deputy Opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Bartolucci, Hon / L'hon Rick (L)	Sudbury	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Bentley, Hon / L'hon Christopher (L)	London West / London-Ouest	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Chief New Democratic Party whip / whip en chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Boutrogianni, Hon / L'hon Marie (L)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse, ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Bradley, Hon / L'hon James J. (L)	St Catharines	Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs
Broten, Laurel C.(L)	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Parliamentary assistant to the Premier / adjointe parlementaire au premier ministre
Brown, Michael A. (L)	Algoma-Manitoulin	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Richesses naturelles
Brownell, Jim (L)	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Bryant, Hon / L'hon Michael (L)	St Paul's	Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique
Cansfield, Donna H. (L)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy / adjointe parlementaire au ministre de l'Énergie
Caplan, Hon / L'hon David (L)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy House Leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint
Chambers, Hon / L'hon Mary Anne V. (L)	Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	Deputy Opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Toronto-Danforth	Deputy New Democratic Party House leader / leader parlementaire adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Colle, Mike (L)	Eglinton-Lawrence	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Finances
Cordiano, Hon / L'hon Joseph (L)	York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Craiton, Kim (L)	Niagara Falls	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Crozier, Bruce (L)	Essex	Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Curling, Hon / L'hon Alvin (L)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Speaker / Président
Delaney, Bob (L)	Mississauga West / Mississauga-Ouest	
Dhillon, Vic (L)	Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	
Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Sarnia-Lambton	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Children and Youth Services / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Dombrowsky, Hon / L'hon Leona (L)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Duguid, Brad (L)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Urban) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement (Secteur urbain)
Duncan, Hon / L'hon Dwight (L)	Windsor-St Clair	Minister of Energy, Chair of Cabinet, Government House Leader / ministre de l'Énergie, président du Conseil des ministres, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Chief opposition whip / whip en chef de l'opposition
Eves, Ernie (PC)	Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey	
Flaherty, Jim (PC)	Whitby-Ajax	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Oakville	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Travail
Fonseca, Peter (L)	Mississauga East / Mississauga-Est	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Gerretsen, Hon / L'hon John (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Gravelle, Michael (L)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / Thunder Bay-Superior-Nord	
Hampton, Howard (ND)	Kenora-Rainy River	Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Horwath, Andrea (ND)	Hamilton East / Hamilton-Est	
Hoy, Pat (L)	Chatham-Kent Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Erie-Lincoln	
Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Burlington	
Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	
Kennedy, Hon / L'hon Gerard (L)	Parkdale-High Park	Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation
Klees, Frank (PC)	Oak Ridges	
Kormos, Peter (ND)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	New Democratic Party House leader / leader parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Kular, Kuldip (L)	Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale	Parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for democratic renewal / adjoint parlementaire au ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique
Kwinter, Hon / L'hon Monte (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Transports
Leal, Jeff (L)	Peterborough	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Levac, Dave (L)	Brant	Chief government whip / whip en chef du gouvernement
Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Trinity-Spadina	
Marsales, Judy (L)	Hamilton West / Hamilton-Ouest	
Martel, Shelley (ND)	Nickel Belt	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Deborah (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Mauro, Bill (L)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
McGuinty, Hon / L'hon Dalton (L)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
McMeekin, Ted (L)	Ancaster-Dundas- Flamborough-Aldershot	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Consumer and Business Services / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises
McNeely, Phil (L)	Ottawa-Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon / L'hon Madeleine (L)	Ottawa-Vanier	Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound-Muskoka	Deputy opposition House leader / leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition
Milloy, John (L)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
Mitchell, Carol (L)	Huron-Bruce	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture and Food / adjointe parlementaire au ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation
Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)	Stoney Creek	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Culture / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de la Culture
Munro, Julia (PC)	York North / York-Nord	
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (L)	Sault Ste Marie	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Éducation
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Parsons, Ernie (L)	Prince Edward-Hastings	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services (Disabilities) / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires (Personnes handicapées)
Patten, Richard (L)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade (innovation) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce (Innovation)
Peters, Hon / L'hon Steve (L)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation
Peterson, Tim (L)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Tourism and Recreation / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs
Phillips, Hon / L'hon Gerry (L)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (ND)	Beaches-East York / Beaches-York-Est	Deputy New Democratic Party whip / whip adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Pupatello, Hon / L'hon Sandra (L)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Racco, Mario G. (L)	Thornhill	
Ramal, Khalil (L)	London-Fanshawe	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Ramsay, Hon / L'hon David (L)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Rinaldi, Lou (L)	Northumberland	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Renouveau de l'infrastructure publique
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition
Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (L)	Guelph-Wellington	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / adjointe parlementaire au ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	
Sergio, Mario (L)	York West / York-Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for seniors / adjoint parlementaire au ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Smith, Monique M. (L)	Nipissing	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / adjointe parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Smitherman, Hon / L'hon George (L)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Sorbara, Hon / L'hon Greg (L)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Lanark-Carleton	
Takhar, Hon / L'hon Harinder S. (L)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Van Bommel, Maria (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Rural) / adjointe parlementaire au ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement (Secteur rural)
Watson, Hon / L'hon Jim (L)	Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises
Wilkinson, John (L)	Perth-Middlesex	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de l'Environnement
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	
Wong, Tony C. (L)	Markham	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Wynne, Kathleen O. (L)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education / adjointe parlementaire au ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (L)	Willowdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General / adjoint parlementaire au procureur général

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: John O'Toole
Wayne Arthurs, Caroline Di Cocco, Andrea Horwath,
Cameron Jackson, Kuldip Kular, Phil McNeely
John Milloy, John O'Toole, Jim Wilson
Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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Finances et affaires économiques**

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Jean-Marc Lalonde, Deborah Matthews, Jerry J. Ouellette,
Shafiq Qaadri, Lou Rinaldi, John Yakabuski
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

Government agencies / Organismes gouvernementaux

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Présidente: Andrea Horwath
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Michael Gravelle,
Andrea Horwath, Tim Hudak,
David Oraziotti, Ernie Parsons,
Laurie Scott, Monique M. Smith,
Joseph N. Tascona
Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Justice Policy / Justice

Chair / Président: David Oraziotti
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Bob Delaney
Michael A. Brown, Jim Brownell, Bob Delaney,
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Frank Klees, Peter Kormos,
David Oraziotti, Mario G. Racco, Elizabeth Witmer
Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Legislative Assembly / Assemblée législative

Chair / Présidente: Linda Jeffrey
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Mario G. Racco
Donna H. Cansfield, Kim Craiton, Bob Delaney,
Ernie Hardeman, Linda Jeffrey, Rosario Marchese,
Norm Miller, Mario G. Racco, Mario Sergio
Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

Public accounts / Comptes publics

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-Présidente: Julia Munro
Laurel C. Broten, Jim Flaherty, Shelley Martel,
Bill Mauro, Julia Munro, Richard Patten,
Liz Sandals, Norman W. Sterling, David Zimmer
Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Regulations and private bills /
Règlements et projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Présidente: Marilyn Churley
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Tony C. Wong
Gilles Bisson, Marilyn Churley, Jeff Leal,
Gerry Martiniuk, Bill Murdoch, Tim Peterson,
Khalil Ramal, Maria Van Bommel, Tony C. Wong
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

Social Policy / Politique sociale

Chair / Président: Jeff Leal
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Khalil Ramal
Ted Arnott, Ted Chudleigh, Kim Craiton,
Peter Fonseca, Jeff Leal, Rosario Marchese,
Ted McMeekin, Khalil Ramal, Kathleen O.Wynne
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

These lists appear in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month. A list arranged by riding appears when space permits.

Ces listes figurent dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et du premier lundi de chaque mois. Par contre, une liste des circonscriptions paraît si l'espace est disponible.

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