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Thursday 28 April 2005

Jeudi 28 avril 2005

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 28 April 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 28 avril 2005

The House met at 1000.

Prayers.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS**

EASTERN ONTARIO ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT FUND ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LE FONDS DE
DÉVELOPPEMENT ÉCONOMIQUE DE
L'EST DE L'ONTARIO

Mr. Sterling moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 187, An Act to establish the Eastern Ontario Economic Development Fund Corporation / Projet de loi 187, Loi créant la Société de gestion du Fonds de développement économique de l'Est de l'Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr. Sterling, you have up to 10 minutes.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): This bill tries to establish an economic development fund for eastern Ontario, eastern Ontario being defined as all of that area east of the region of Durham, roughly speaking, all the way to the Quebec border, save and except for the city of Ottawa; it cuts out the city of Ottawa. I will explain to members and to the public why that is necessary to do. The fact of the matter is that the city of Ottawa, which contains half of my riding, has done quite well over the last two decades, since I started representing that area, while the rest of eastern Ontario has not benefited from the growth our economy has seen and has some unique characteristics that are very similar to northern Ontario.

This fund would be created like the northern Ontario heritage fund, which we established by legislation in this Legislature some time ago. The northern Ontario heritage fund has about \$60 million per year to spend in northern Ontario to help municipalities' economic development through direct grants to new businesses that might go into northern Ontario. It helps business associations establish economic opportunity in their area. The ambit of the northern Ontario heritage fund and that of the eastern Ontario economic development fund would be similar in that it would have quite a wide scope in terms of what it could do for this very unique part of Ontario.

This part of Ontario, which I have driven through, back and forth, along Highway 7 from Ottawa to Toronto

on many, many occasions, comprises what I would describe as probably some of the most scenic, most beautiful country in Ontario, but it's also very, very harsh. It's the Precambrian Shield, which sort of wraps from the south of Ottawa all the way around, through Peterborough and of course up north.

It's very difficult in these areas to provide some of the infrastructure we need for our population. The areas cover a population of approximately 900,000 people, very similar to population numbers to the north, which has about 850,000 people.

Two organizations have risen out of the eastern Ontario community, and both organizations have expressed support for this bill even though they did not know about it until two weeks ago. I refer to the Municipalities United for a New Deal, which includes the cities of Peterborough, Prince Edward, Belleville, Quinte West, Kingston, Brockville, Pembroke and Cornwall. I have received an endorsement of this legislation from the mayors of the two largest municipalities, Kingston and Peterborough. There is another organization called the Eastern Ontario Wardens Caucus, which I would characterize as representing the smaller towns and rural areas of eastern Ontario encompassed by the scope and breadth of this bill.

We all know, and I want to try to illustrate, the problems this kind of fund may address. Last Thursday night I was in the town of Lanark, which is about 20 kilometres from the town of Perth. This is a small town of about 450 homes. They don't have sewer and water in that area. I believe there is a significant health risk to the residents there. They should have had sewer and water 20 or 30 years ago, but for some reason, as we went down the path, it never happened. It never happened primarily because there was never enough wealth in the community to make it happen, and they face the same problem today as they did then. A new system would cost about \$18 million to put in, and even if they were lucky enough to get, under the new federal-provincial program—I believe it's COMRIF. That program provides one third federal funding, one third provincial funding, and it is expected that one third would be raised locally.

In my example, it would mean that each household would be required to come up with about \$15,000; that would be the capital cost of putting this system forward. It would probably end up even higher than that when you look at the difficult topography of that town. The Clyde River runs through it, so there are significant problems in crossing that river and dealing with people and homes on both sides. But the town can't go forward in terms of

economic development until this problem is solved. It can't attract a new restaurant, it can't attract new industry, because who is going to come to a town where there is not safe drinking water and sewage disposal services? If it costs \$15,000 per home—and you're talking about family incomes that are about 40% less than the average in Ontario—how are these people going to pay for this very large ticket? They are surviving hand to mouth in terms of what they are trying to do on a daily basis. To go in with a program like COMRIF and say to the town of Lanark, "Come up with a third"—it's an impossible task. We need some kind of mechanism in government to help small towns like Lanark be able to go forward and get the necessary services their residents need to have safe drinking water and adequate sewage capacity.

1010

I note, in some of the examples on the Web site with regard to the northern heritage fund, that grants have been given, for instance, to North Bay, \$2 million for a waterfront development project, and to West Nipissing, \$186,000 for water treatment plants. There are many, many other examples of where there was an extra top-up given to these particular municipalities to try to meet some of the regulations and standards that we require of these people.

As well, eastern Ontario has received about 40% of former provincial highways in the readjustment of that particular responsibility, and that has fallen, to a great degree, on rural municipalities. We can argue here about whether that should or should not have been done, but that's the way it is at the present time, so these particular areas are wrestling with it.

These communities are characterized by low commercial and industrial tax bases. They are characterized by average incomes, both household and individual, of 15% to 20% below the Ontario average. They are characterized by a much larger aging population than the Ontario average of 12%. In some of these communities, 20% or 25% of the community are old-age pensioners and that kind of thing, and are living on small fixed incomes.

As well, the infrastructure in these areas has been aging and much of it needs repair. This area is characterized as well by a lot of crown land where there is no tax assessment or any kind of income coming back. Hydro corridors don't receive the same kind of treatment as they do near urban areas. The tax revenue that local municipalities get from these particular areas is much smaller than it is near urban areas because of its characterization as an easement rather than ownership. We go on with a whole number of other new challenges they have with regard to regulations under the environment: septage, waste, and it goes on.

These communities really need some extra help, and this gives the government a great opportunity to provide that help. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I'll be supporting my colleague from Lanark-Carleton's bill, Bill 187, the

establishment of the Eastern Ontario Economic Development Fund Corp.

I want to acknowledge this morning Helen Chong, who did a lot of background research for me to prepare to make a few remarks on the issue. Some history is interesting.

The Eastern Ontario Development Corp. was established in 1973 by the government of Ontario to provide financial and advisory services to business to stimulate growth, economic development and employment opportunities in eastern Ontario. The original mandate for the EODC was to serve the counties of Victoria, Haliburton, Peterborough, Hastings, Prince Edward, Renfrew, Lennox and Addington, Frontenac, Lanark, Leeds, Russell, Stormont, Prescott, Glengarry and the regional municipality of Ottawa-Carleton.

I went back to review a document produced by the Honourable Claude Bennett, a former colleague of the member from Lanark-Carleton back in 1975. In his document, Mr. Bennett clearly identified what the EODC was to do. Its first mandate was to provide incentive loans and term loans to prospective businesses in eastern Ontario. Its second mandate was to provide loans specifically to small business, to start their activity in eastern Ontario. The third was to provide venture capital for new ideas, for those business people who wanted to establish in eastern Ontario, to give them a leg up. Another one that was identified, and certainly what the member from Lanark-Carleton identified, was that they also provided loans for pollution control equipment—for those municipalities that had low assessment bases, an opportunity to upgrade their facilities. EODC would provide to its municipal partners loans for pollution control equipment. Also, something that's so important to eastern Ontario, they provided tourism industry loans for new resort facilities, cottage development and others in the heart of eastern Ontario. It also provided mortgages and lease-backs to new manufacturers that were being established in eastern Ontario. Mr. Bennett, the minister of the day, provided what I thought was a very comprehensive mandate to support those businesses in east-central Ontario.

I was concerned that in 1996, the minister of the day, the Honourable William Saunderson, wound down the activities of the Eastern Ontario Development Corp. at a time when the free trade agreement was coming into its era of great expansion, when the Governor of New York state, George Pataki, was bringing in a very aggressive bonusing system in New York state to allow industries in that particular state to defer property taxation for many years in order to attract business. When you look at the activities of the EODC, to have it wound down in 1996 I think was a strategic mistake. I'm pleased that we're here today to have the opportunity to discuss it.

When you look over the briefing material that was provided, I say to my good friend from Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, I notice that Sir Sam's Inn, back in the early 1990s, was a recipient of EODC money to expand development. To my good friend from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, in 1991 there was an EODC loan to

a company in Pembroke that manufactured cooling suits for American Armed Forces personnel serving in the Persian Gulf at that time. The EODC has a long history of providing innovative support to manufacturers in eastern Ontario, and I'm very pleased, as the member from Peterborough, to support Bill 187.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I'm pleased to rise in support of the bill brought forward by my colleague the member from Lanark–Carleton. The bill would provide a means for the government to address the economic disparity that exists between eastern Ontario and much of the remainder of the province. Northern Ontario has benefited from this type of economic support for years.

The bill would establish the Eastern Ontario Economic Development Fund Corp., and that fund would be able to maintain the eastern Ontario economic development monies. The money in the fund would promote economic development growth in rural areas and in smaller urban municipalities in eastern Ontario. My riding of Haliburton–Victoria–Brock is predominantly rural, and we have many small municipalities that could benefit from the provided support of the eastern Ontario economic development fund. Eastern Ontario lags behind the rest of Ontario in population growth and in income, and that was well articulated by the member introducing the bill today. Northern Ontario lags behind the rest of Ontario, and they have had the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Act fund set up there.

One of the areas in my riding most in need is Haliburton county. I've mentioned many times in the Legislature that it has the second-lowest average income in the province and has the lowest average household income in the eastern Ontario region. The closure of the Frost Centre by the present Liberal government made a precarious situation for local residents still struggling economically, and we're hopeful that we'll have a good outcome on that later in the year. In Haliburton county, the average household income is \$35,268 and in the city of Kawartha Lakes it is \$46,156, while the provincial average is \$53,626 for household income. So the disparities are remarkable.

I have met with many local businesses in the area about setting up a fund like this. They could see benefits in businesses developing and employing local people, helping the area economically, good jobs that could keep our young people in our communities. In the city of Kawartha Lakes, I can think of three villages—Omemee, Norland and Kinmount—that would benefit from updated water systems that would help entice more businesses to their area.

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The Eastern Ontario Wardens Caucus has told the government that property taxes are going to jump, thanks to the government's new funding program. In their press release of April 25, they said, "The new formula side-steps eastern Ontario's crucial need for help with its share of downloaded provincial roads and bridges." They also noted that, "The formula caps funding for social

housing at 2002 levels." It doesn't address big increases in operating costs due to rising energy rates and it doesn't increase the capital improvements, some of which I just mentioned.

We have a large proportion of seniors in my riding—Haliburton county has the highest percentage of seniors in the province, for example—so right now, we don't have the labour force participation. Haliburton county has a labour force participation rate of only 50%; the city of Kawartha Lakes only 60.3%. That's much lower than the province-wide rate of 67.3%. This fund would help municipalities develop economic support, increase their tax base and revenues.

Sylvia Sutherland, the mayor of Peterborough and chair of Municipalities United for a New Deal, is fully supportive of this economic development fund and has said, "It is long overdue." Harvey Rosen, mayor of the city of Kingston, says, "I have no doubt that the council of the corporation of Kingston would support this bill with a large majority if not unanimity." Margaret Walsh, reeve of the township of Tyendinaga, says, "Thank you for giving me an opportunity to express my support for Bill 187."

There are a lot of positive effects that could happen in our communities. In Peterborough county, there are two topics—I know the member from Peterborough just spoke. The skating oval project and the DNA cluster are just two examples of larger projects that are on the books. Either one of these projects, if they could get some economic development money, would provide significant benefits in terms of jobs, the spinoff of housing and the purchase of goods and services that would be required to support them in the future. This is in Peterborough county.

The agricultural crisis has taken quite a toll in eastern Ontario and presented more challenges for our local small businesses. Haliburton county passed a motion last night that the proposed private member's bill that would create an Eastern Ontario Economic Development Fund Corp.—would have the potential to provide much-needed additional government investment.

I can see that there is a clear need across my riding and that this would help them out. I urge all members opposite to support this bill.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I'm speaking not only in my own right but on this occasion on behalf of the NDP caucus when I express my support for this particular bill by Mr. Sterling, which correctly identifies an incredible hurdle and burden that a whole lot of smaller-town and small-town Ontario is carrying, along with, from time to time, larger-municipality Ontario as well.

It's interesting, when you read today's Toronto Star, to learn that Ontario's economic growth again lagged behind the national average in 2004, and the trend is expected to continue this year. These are tough times for Ontario, and even tougher times for communities like some of the communities in eastern Ontario that Mr. Sterling is addressing, as well as some of the com-

munities down where I come from, in Niagara, that have lost significant high-wage industries: communities that, as a result of losing significant heavy industries, have lost the tax assessment associated with them; communities that are struggling with the downloading that persists. It's the very illustration that Mr. Sterling gave of a community where the per-household cost would be extraordinary to participate even in a program where there's shared funding with senior levels of government: extraordinary to the point of being incapable of being done. Of course, then you create a downward spiral. You've got the dog chasing its tail, where you never get out of the dilemma.

So I say that this bill is a very legitimate effort to create a vehicle for economic development in eastern Ontario, and I look forward to every member of this Legislature supporting it. More important is that the bill then has to move on to committee. I'm confident that the author of the bill, Mr. Sterling, will be identifying at the appropriate time, after a successful second reading vote, the committee to which he wants it to go, and not only that the bill go on to committee but that it be addressed in committee. The communities that Mr. Sterling is speaking to deserve an opportunity to make their case directly to elected representatives at Queen's Park during that committee process.

It's important. I don't know if the author of the bill had in mind the legislation in Bill 136, so-called places to grow. The fact is—look, think about it—if you want to talk about smart growth, you want to address the incredible impact of constant larger and larger concentrations of population in the greater Toronto area and the incredible cost that's inherent in that. People talk about efficiencies with that type of density, but I tell you, at the same time, there are incredible costs associated with that kind of density, including environmental costs.

I say we'd be making a lot more headway in terms of addressing environmental concerns, good planning concerns, if we gave small- and smaller-town Ontario—that's been whacked hard—some of the financial resources that they need to make themselves more attractive to Ontarians, to newcomers to Ontario, to newcomers to Canada, not only as places to live in but, if you're going to live there you've got to work there, so as places where there are jobs to do that work in.

As part and parcel of that, I want to make this observation. With all due respect, the Minister of Economic Development has a whole lot of explaining to do, not only in response to the article in this morning's Toronto Star about Ontario lagging once again and expected to continue to lag behind the rest of the country. Lagging—not even on par, falling behind, and you've got this government here that wants to identify Ontario as the economic engine of Canada? That isn't what the data and statistics tell us, is it? The loss of jobs in this province has been those high-wage jobs, unionized jobs, value-added manufacturing jobs, and all the service sector jobs in the world don't make up for the loss of half a dozen value-added manufacturing jobs. Those value-added manufacturing jobs are the wealth creation jobs. You

don't create wealth in a casino economy; you simply stir it around a little bit. You don't create wealth in the hospitality sector. You create wealth in steel mills, in lumber mills, in pipe mills. You create wealth when you're building ships and building airplanes and helicopters. You create wealth when you're processing food and foodstuffs. You create wealth when you're taking raw materials and adding value to them, with the labour of hard-working Ontario women and men.

We've got a government that's indifferent to the plight of small- and smaller-town Ontario. Let me deal with one issue alone, the issue of brownfields. In the city of Toronto or in the city of Winnipeg or Vancouver, brownfields could be remediated by the private sector, because the value of land is so extraordinarily high that the, yes, acknowledged incredible cost of remediating toxic lands is part and parcel of the investment, and there'll still be return on the investment from the private sector at the end of the day. But down where I come from—places like Welland or Thorold or Port Robinson or Port Colborne or St. Catharines; quite frankly, Peterborough; parts of Niagara Falls as well—the value of land simply isn't adequate to support the private sector investment if that investment includes the cost of remediation. There are acres and acres and acres of toxic land—I was going to say “lying fallow,” but that would be a contradiction of their toxicity. But there are acres and acres of inner-city land that would be efficient places to develop on—you talk about efficiencies, right, Mr. Leal?—but they can't be developed because they're former industrial sites, some of them going back 100-plus years.

1030

Smaller-town Ontario—yes, places like Peterborough, I dare say, and places like where I come from—Welland, Thorold, Port Colborne, Port Robinson, Thorold South, St. Catharines—need some direct assistance in remediating those brownfields. You want smart growth? You want places to grow? Help those communities in Ontario. Restore those brownfields to the point where they can be built on and developed. Inevitably, they're inner-city. They're already serviced or a hair away from being serviced. They contribute to the vitality of those communities, should they be developed, yet they are being left behind in a disturbingly centralized approach to planning on the part of this government, a very disturbingly Soviet approach to planning, which ignores the potential of grass-roots development, grass-roots input and, quite frankly, smaller-town community-building.

I'm grateful to Mr. Sterling because his bill today permits us to discuss that facet of the reality of Ontario.

I'll tell you this: For most of Ontario the services underground don't consist of subways; they consist of a rotting infrastructure—sewer pipes, water pipes. Not just a disturbing number but a radically alarming number of sewer systems in communities across Ontario still aren't segregated, where either storm water is flowing into sewage treatment plants and communities are bearing an incredible cost—there's a real cost. The cost to the community is not the potable water; the cost to the commun-

ity is the sewage treatment. So millions of gallons of surface rainwater are flowing through sewage treatment plants, and similarly, there is an inexcusable amount of sewage flowing into natural waterways still, in the year 2005.

I admire those municipal leaders who understand that perpetual growth isn't the solution. Again, it's the dog chasing its tail. But what happens when you have growth that isn't self-financed, when you have growth that's on the periphery rather than the utilization of brownfields within the boundaries and in the inner parts of those cities, is that you have older-town Ontario subsidizing newly developed Ontario, at great risk not just to older-town Ontario but to the community in general. By subsidizing, I mean that municipalities have, under the surface, sewer systems and water systems, among other things, that are deteriorating, that are not up to code, not up to par in the first instance and that continue to deteriorate, whether it's under the surface or whether it's the foundation of roadways, so that at the point in time when you are going to address them in terms of repairing and rebuilding, the cost is 10 times, 10-fold, 20 times, 20-fold, what it would have been had it been addressed at an appropriate time, which in the case of most municipalities was 10 and 15 years ago and certainly, at the latest, now in the year 2005.

We'll hear, as we did last week, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade talk about the jobs he's bringing into Ontario. He says he's bringing jobs into Ontario. OK, like the cleaning jobs at the new hotels in downtown Toronto. Oh, yeah, we need more of those \$9-an-hour and \$10-an-hour jobs; they really help economies. Oh, yeah. Then of course you've got a government that wants to extend card-based certification only to—we know that unionized jobs are safer jobs, that unionized jobs are better-paying jobs, that unionized jobs have benefits and pension plans attached to them. We know that. That is clear. We've got a government here that wants to continue to pursue the anti-union, anti-worker agenda of the government before it by continuing to deny the vast majority of the workers in this province the right to card-based certification when it comes to organizing a trade union in their workplace.

Unions in workplaces mean better wages. Better wages mean more affluent consumers. More affluent consumers mean a more active economy. A more active economy means that more people get to share in the prosperity of this province rather than just the Conrad "Tubby" Blacks of the world, the robber barons of the 21st century, who will soon, hopefully, be Martha Stewart in his own right. Skip the ankle bracelet for Conrad Black and his partner, Ms. Amiel.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): She's done pretty well by that.

Mr. Kormos: Ms. Amiel's done pretty well by that, Runciman says, which gets him into Hansard as an interjection. Runciman participates in the attack on the excesses and the criminality of Conrad Black and Babs Amiel, and it's nice to see an ally. Mr. Runciman is a

law-and-order guy in his own right and has been consistent in that regard. He's not just about throwing drug traffickers and people who hurt other people into jail; he's about throwing crooks in general in jail, and in my books, that means Conrad Black and Barbara Amiel, along with a few others, Nortel-related, in their own histories.

I look forward to being able to vote for this piece of legislation. It's about making smaller- and small-town Ontario better and healthier places to live, stronger places, which means a stronger, better, healthier Ontario. It's about restoring prosperity that the historical advent of free trade, among other things, have undermined. Young people in this province deserve to have some of the same hope for the future that our hard-working parents and grandparents generated for us.

Thank you kindly, Speaker, and thank you to the author of the bill.

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): I appreciate this opportunity to speak to Bill 187. I will be supporting Bill 187, I would like to say at the outset. But I would like to preface my remarks on the bill with, why now? Why at this stage of life here at Queen's Park? Why now? We had eight years when this bill could have been brought forth, eight years when the member for Lanark–Carleton could have stood up for the constituents of his riding and all the ridings in eastern Ontario and worked with his government at that time to get an Eastern Ontario Economic Development Fund Corp. established. But I'm delighted and very pleased that, at least now, it's being brought forward in a private member's bill, and that's why I say this morning that I'm going to support the bill brought forward by the member from Lanark–Carleton.

I was elected to represent a riding from eastern Ontario and I came here to do my very best to promote any opportunities for economic development for the citizens of the riding, for organizations that work so hard in those ridings. This is just one example where it's important that I support the establishment of the Eastern Ontario Economic Development Fund Corp.

I know of the hard struggles we've had in recent months in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh with some of the problems at Domtar—we're trying to work on some solutions with regard to stabilizing opportunities there at Domtar—and then the closing of Gildan Activewear, a textile facility in my own municipality of South Stormont. This kind of corporation, this kind of funding, would certainly help in keeping industries, establishing industries and giving some sound foundations to the industries that are there or that want to locate.

I also want to say that we as a government do have a very important program, COMRIF, in place to help our small, rural municipalities.

This past Monday I was delighted to attend at the council chambers in North Stormont in my riding to announce some very important supports for bridge replacement and rehabilitation. I think we had about six

bridges on our list, and I know that three municipalities were absolutely delighted with what we were doing.

With that, and with what my good eastern Ontario member from Lanark–Carleton is doing, I would like to say I will support this bill that he has brought forward.

1040

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke):

It is indeed a pleasure and a privilege to speak this morning to my colleague from Lanark–Carleton’s Bill 187, An Act to establish the Eastern Ontario Economic Development Fund Corp. It is not hard at all to make a prima facie case for the approval of that bill.

For years we have been saying in eastern Ontario how difficult it is to develop our area when we seem to always be playing at a disadvantage. Governments talk about funding formulas as being fair and equitable. Well, “equitable” does not necessarily mean “fair.” That’s why years ago the northern heritage fund was instituted, because it addressed the inequities faced by people in northern Ontario. Is it equal? No, it’s not. But it’s fair because they’re not playing on a level playing field. In fact, we’re not doing that in eastern Ontario either.

If you look at the median incomes in ridings in eastern Ontario—and I’ll speak more specifically about Renfrew county for the most part, but in eastern Ontario in general—they are far less than the average in the rest of the province.

Years ago the Eastern Ontario Wardens Caucus began. Those people have made a tremendous difference, as they have articulated the needs and concerns of eastern Ontario to various provincial governments. I give them a lot of credit. When Minister Gerretsen visited AMO this year and basically insulted them with the offer, I give the Eastern Ontario Wardens Caucus a lot of credit for forcing the McGuinty government to come up with a new formula within a couple of days. They were the ones who were front and centre in saying, “I’m sorry, but this is simply not enough. Pay your bills.” In fact, they forced and embarrassed the government into doing just that.

When you talk about funding formulas, you talk about something that applies across the province. Those things are usually designed by bureaucrats who are looking for something: They analyze information and say, “Well, this is the formula,” and then they apply it across the board. Across the board simply doesn’t work. We’ve been disadvantaged in eastern Ontario and, in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, particularly Renfrew county, for years because of an education funding formula that does not address the specific needs and inequities that are faced by Renfrew county and most of eastern Ontario.

If there were a fund such as the one that Mr. Sterling is proposing, it would make it far easier to attract much-needed doctors to Renfrew county—a minimum of 17 short today, and that number is growing. This kind of fund would assist us in attracting physicians to those rural communities that we simply can’t under the current arrangements. Also education transportation funding: We’re not even eligible for rural and remote funding in

Renfrew county because of geographical quirks. If there’s any county that is justified to have special funding for education transportation, Renfrew county, the largest county in Ontario, is it.

Crown land: 40% of the land in Renfrew county is crown land. There’s no tax revenue off that land for those municipalities. How are they supposed to compete with areas in southwestern Ontario, where there’s virtually no crown land? How are they supposed to compete when they’ve got all of these vast tracts of land they must service but get no revenue from? I could go on and on.

I want to give a couple of quotes. Norm Lentz, the good reeve of Brudenell, Lyndoch and Raglan, is very much in favour of this: “Bill 187 would greatly help eastern Ontario’s communities and in particular communities in Renfrew county.” Sandy Heins, the good mayor of Renfrew: “...we applaud and support your efforts in this initiative.” Bob Sweet, warden of Renfrew county and chair of the Eastern Ontario Wardens Caucus: “We want to thank you for bringing forward this necessary legislation in support of eastern Ontario.” And Neil Stewart, the good reeve of McNab/Braeside, is very supportive of this.

My time is just about up. I’m wholeheartedly in support of this bill and I thank my colleague Norm Sterling for bringing it forward.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): I’m delighted to stand up and speak about this bill. Off the bat, I want to congratulate the member from Lanark–Carleton for bringing this forward. If I could, I’d vote twice, if the Speaker allowed me.

Coming from an eastern municipal area, I’m delighted he’s doing this. I’m also very delighted that he had a change of heart, because while he was minister under that government, we had a program and they cancelled it. I was a municipal politician. To make matters worse, they downloaded a whole pile of infrastructure that municipalities had to take over.

Why would I not support this? I will. I guess I want it to be a bit more specific. During their era, I happened to be a municipal politician in one of the communities that the member referred to in this bill. I was also the chair of the Northumberland tourism advisory committee and chair of the Quinte Economic Development Commission, which is part of the greater eastern Ontario economic development folks who are doing a great job.

Mr. Leal: They brought a speedway to Brighton.

Mr. Rinaldi: Well, they didn’t quite do that, but they did help a lot of people. I know campgrounds in my riding that benefited. In my municipality, they were able to get extra assistance.

The challenge was, as I mentioned, that the municipalities, which in turn affect businesses, were given an extra burden with the downloading of functions and responsibilities and, at the same time, we lost a great function to look after eastern Ontario.

I’m in overwhelming support of this, and also for it to go to committee to make sure that we get it right, to make sure that we have things in place to do the right things for

these communities, to complement some of the things the present government is doing. As a matter of fact, the COMRIF announcement we made in the last week will be another cog in the wheel to help those municipalities. For example, I want to refer to my riding. Under the new municipal partnership program to replace the old CRF, we were \$3.1 million to the plus in my riding. So the municipalities in my riding were a total of \$3.1 million positive. With that in mind, with the COMRIF announcement we just made in the last few days, my community, my riding, benefited to the tune of just under \$1 million to help with its infrastructure needs. If we can put in something like this to stimulate economic development, there is hope for eastern Ontario.

I'm going to leave some time for my fellow members to comment further, but I'm prepared to support this.

Mr. Runciman: I'm pleased to participate and give acknowledgement to the member from Lanark–Carleton, one of the deans of the Legislature. One of the reasons for his continued success at the polls over the years is his never-ending advocacy on behalf of eastern Ontario. This is another example of that, and I compliment and commend him for introducing this legislation.

It sounds like the bill is going to pass, and that is hopefully good news for eastern Ontario. Frequently I think that eastern Ontario is not a subject of discussion in this place, and that's regrettable. When people look at eastern Ontario, generally, if they don't live there, they tend to look at Ottawa and perhaps Kingston. When you look at economic results, again, they tend to look at some of those larger municipalities rather than focusing on the smaller communities, which indeed are having very difficult times.

1050

This is something that has been the case for many years. I recall that Paul Dick, a former member, I think from the same riding as Mr. Sterling, did a study when he was a member of the Mulroney cabinet that indicated quite clearly that in eastern Ontario the poverty levels, in certain pockets within eastern Ontario, were the highest in Ontario.

Look at some of the statistics that Mr. Sterling provided about differences in median income across the province. He indicated that in Haliburton they are 30% lower than median income levels. Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry is close to 18% lower. That should be a concern of the government and should be a concern of members of the assembly, and we should all wish to do something about it.

A couple of members of the government asked the question: Why now; why is this bill before the House now? I can just speak to my own riding and the impact of a decision that is also directly impacting on Mr. Sterling's riding, and that's the expedited closure of Rideau Regional. We're talking about 800 very good jobs. When those jobs are lost it will have a devastating impact on both Mr. Sterling's riding and my own and certainly right across eastern Ontario in the villages and small, rural communities we're talking about.

The government has decided not to proceed with phases 2 and 3 of the St. Lawrence Valley Correctional and Treatment Centre. This was going to be designed as a centre of excellence to treat inmates in the corrections system in Ontario. We did phase 1, which deals with sentenced inmates who have some degree of mental illness—very innovative and the first of its kind in Canada. Phases 2 and 3 would have involved the transfer of OCI from Brampton and would have built, here in Ontario, a centre of excellence for the world in terms of treatment of inmates with a variety of afflictions.

I must point out that Mr. McGuinty, at the time the opposition leader, went into Brockville before the election and was asked the direct question, "Will you continue and complete phases 2 and 3 of the Brockville treatment and corrections centre?" He said, "Absolutely. This is worthwhile. This is something we want to see happen." We know that that now has been cancelled. Minister Kwinter has said, "Forget it; it's never going to happen while there is a Liberal government in office." You have to wonder about the rationale for that. Was it pure politics? Certainly it was an indifference to eastern Ontario and the financial challenges that many, many small communities are facing in eastern Ontario.

I have a couple of letters here today.

Robert Lawn, an outstanding mayor in my riding, an outstanding mayor in the province, from the town of Prescott, talks about the population decline in Prescott, a 5.6% drop in the last census; that they are providing filtered water and waste water treatment, and the cost is almost insurmountable; that they have lost a number of their manufacturing facilities; that they're losing their tax base; the senior population is increasing significantly above the Ontario average; low-income households.

Peggy Taylor, the mayor of the township of Edwardsburgh/Cardinal, Leeds–Grenville, reiterates the concerns of Mayor Lawn, also endorsed by a number of other municipalities in my riding.

This is a growing crisis, one that the current government seems unwilling or unprepared to recognize. One of the things we can do immediately is pass Mr. Sterling's legislation, but we can also look at the decentralization of government operations, which was standard practice by the Bill Davis government and had an enormous and positive impact on that part of Ontario.

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward–Hastings): I'm also pleased to join the debate on this bill. I want to make it clear up front that I could not be more supportive of economic development in eastern Ontario. Eastern Ontario has faced some particular challenges over the years, and I certainly would support an initiative that I think is going to improve their situation.

But I'm kind of intrigued at how suddenly caring and creative the former government became when they moved from this side of the House to the other side. If this was truly a wonderful idea, why did the former government kill what was doing essentially the same thing? I don't have an answer to that. I believe that Mr. Sterling is an extremely intelligent man. He's an engin-

eer, by definition an extremely intelligent person, intelligent enough not to be in the profession, as I have chosen—seemingly intelligent. So why was it killed at the time that this member was at the table? I believe there may be a better way to do it than this.

I know that municipalities face challenges. When we go to attract industry to my community, one of the first questions they ask is, will their employees get a family doctor? That's a crisis in all of Ontario, certainly in eastern Ontario, but it isn't a crisis that developed in 2003. That was a crisis that existed for some time. During the previous government's term, we didn't see substantial increases in the number of doctor training positions. Foreign-trained doctors, during those eight years, continued to drive taxicabs, while at the same time my constituents suffered without a family doctor. I'm thrilled at some of the things our government has done to address that. I think the family health teams that were announced about a week ago will do wonders to attract doctors into eastern Ontario, and industry will follow that.

I know that one of the major challenges facing municipalities is the cost of the downloading they incurred under the previous government. One of best attractions for an industry to come to your community is for someone from that industry to drive through your town and see empty fields with fire hydrants sticking out of them. That says to anyone who's looking that the land is developed, is ready, and, "We can move into place and get going." But municipalities have struggled with just maintaining their current stock, without having the hope of finding funding to expand.

The downloading of provincial highways, with the bridges being part of that—sure, there were some one-time dollars, but municipalities now struggle with that. The COMRIF funding announced last week will go a long way to address that, but that's a problem the previous government created that has had the effect of limiting development in eastern Ontario. COMRIF is going to help them. Costs were passed on to municipalities because of public health units, and we're seeing our government take it back.

Eastern Ontario has many attributes to attract industry. We have an extremely skilled and highly motivated workforce. We have a high quality of life—I believe, an extremely high quality of life. The markets that exist within 500 miles of eastern Ontario, which is a criterion for industry, are abundant. But I believe that the best advocate for my community is someone who lives in my community. I see my municipalities working together. I see Quinte West and Belleville sharing so many initiatives, saying that what's good for one is good for the other.

I see this initiative in this bill as more centralization. I support anything we can do to help eastern Ontario local communities thrive, but not this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Sterling, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Sterling: I recommend to the previous speaker that he read the bill and understand how the Northern

Ontario Heritage Fund Act functions, because one of the attractions of this bill is that all the directors are taken from eastern Ontario. For the first time, the fund actually has local input, local control, and who better to decide the priorities for eastern Ontario than people from eastern Ontario themselves?

We can talk about the past—if the government wants to upload former provincial highways, let them do it—but let's talk about the present. Let's talk about higher energy costs. Let's talk about recent events with regard to the closure of Rideau Regional, as my colleague said; 800 jobs lost out of Smiths Falls and the Lanark-Leeds area. Let's talk about Domtar in Cornwall. Let's talk about the continuing decline of population in these areas.

We need to give hope to this part of our province. We need to give hope to eastern Ontario, where the young people are leaving our communities and going to the larger urban centres. We need to give our younger people some chance of opportunity in these areas.

Over the last 28 years, I've had two occasions when I've represented people both inside the boundaries of the now city of Ottawa and outside. There is a marked difference in the financial ability of people who live within and without those particular boundaries. This bill is designed to give those people who live outside those boundaries and who have not benefited from the past two or three decades of growth, wealth, opportunity—to give those people in those small communities some indicia of hope.

Lastly, the Eastern Ontario Development Corp. is nothing like this particular institution; therefore, let's not go through that particular debate.

Thank you all for your support.

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HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (SCHOOL CROSSING GUARDS), 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (PASSEURS SCOLAIRES)

Mr. Brown moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 142, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to school crossing guards / Projet de loi 142, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui a trait aux passeurs scolaires.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr. Brown has up to 10 minutes.

Mr. Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I'm delighted to have the opportunity this morning to discuss Bill 142. Bill 142 is an extremely simple and straightforward bill, but before I start to speak about it, I would like to acknowledge those folks at Spanish Public School in Mr. Solomon's class, who I understand are watching this proceeding this morning. They should be most proud of their council in the township of Shedden and their councillor, Debbie Solomon, who brought this issue to my attention. As a matter of fact, Ms. Solomon at AMO,

which took place in Ottawa last year, came and made representations to us with regard to providing the safe passage of individuals across Highway 17 during the time that the school crossing guards would be there. I'm going to use Spanish as an example because it could apply to many of the municipalities I represent and perhaps—well, I'm sure—to municipalities across the province.

Spanish is a small community of about 800 people, maybe 900. The schools are on one side. Highway 17 more or less goes directly through the village. The speed limit in the village is 60 kilometres per hour. It has all the truck traffic of Highway 17, which is, as we know, the Trans-Canada Highway—a very busy highway and at times a very dangerous highway—and it bisects the village. There is no stoplight in Spanish. We do have a flashing light at the main intersection, but there is no stoplight. What happens in this community and, frankly, in many others, even in larger cities and towns—I'm thinking of Elliot Lake, for example. They tell me they have the same difficulty, where people with disabilities, where people who may be a little slower than others in getting across the street, have great difficulty getting across. The school crossing guards, by legislation, are not permitted to help anyone but children across the street.

When I was canvassing the members of the Legislature about this bill, people were absolutely astounded that this was the case. Everybody said, "I thought they could help anyone. If Mike Brown was out there and needed assistance crossing the street, and the school crossing guard was there, I thought the school crossing guard could help him." Well, that apparently isn't the case. The act, which was first made in 1976, just speaks to children; only a child can be helped by a school crossing guard. I think we can understand how that may incur some liability.

One of the things that we need to know about school crossing guards, I think, is that they're employed by municipalities; their employers are municipalities. It may be that the municipality, in some cases, contracts it to a corporation to provide the school crossing guards, but their employers in essence are the municipalities. I've had some people believe that it's the school boards, but it's not; it's the municipalities. Some of the municipalities, particularly the ones in Shedden and Spanish, expressed the concern that there are some liability issues around this, as we might expect. So it's good to make it clear in the legislation that persons can be helped to cross the Trans-Canada Highway.

I think I'd be remiss if I didn't show the Legislature some appreciation for the hard work and dedication of school crossing guards. This is obviously a part-time job for people, and they take it very seriously across the province. They work very hard in ensuring the safety of our children, and now hopefully others when the Legislature gives my bill third reading and royal assent. They work very hard. They come out in all kinds of weather to help our young people get safely across the street to school.

The main street in a large part of my constituency is Highway 17, the Trans-Canada Highway. It goes through Webbwood. It goes through Massey, Walford, Spanish, Serpent River and Blind River through to Thessalon, Bruce Mines etc. We have crossing guards in many of those communities who have experienced the same problems.

What we're asking here—I think this is a rather simple amendment, obviously; it's a relatively brief bill—is that we afford the opportunity for school crossing guards to help more than the children who are crossing the road. I presume that you don't have to be a student, the way the act is written; at the moment, you just have to be a child. The idea that this is only for students is not the case even today.

As we well know, the government has some amendments in Bill 169 with regard to school crossing guards. It's presently before this Legislature. We have started the debate, I believe. It does some things already that will assist, and one of the things that I think is most important here is that it adds a penalty for contravening the Highway Traffic Act. It says, "Every person who contravenes subsection ... (3) is guilty of an offence and on conviction is liable to a fine of not less than \$150 and not more than \$500." It's the first time there has actually been a fine, I understand, associated with not obeying a school crossing guard. I think that would be helpful.

I think of a gentleman I know in Bruce Mines who worked for some time trying to make sure that children crossed Highway 17 safely. He had quite a time trying to slow traffic down. As people who would know Bruce Mines, the school is pretty much at the western boundary of Bruce Mines, which means traffic coming in was supposed to reduce its speed from 90 kilometres an hour to 60 kilometres an hour. Some of them chose not to slow down as quickly as they should, and that was a real problem for the school crossing guard as he tried to get a little bit more enforcement to get the speed of the traffic down as the children tried to cross from one side of Highway 17 to their school on the other side.

I don't think that this is the most difficult issue the Legislature will face. However, it is an important issue, it's a significant issue and it will have real benefits for people in our society who need to cross busy highways or busy municipal streets during times when there are school crossing guards available to us. I urge members to help me help people, perhaps people with disabilities and perhaps seniors, to have better access to their communities. I would ask for their support.

I just wanted to point out, in case people didn't understand how busy Highway 17 through this area really is—we often hear around here about Highway 69 and how busy Highway 69 is. In truth, it is far more dangerous to be on Highway 17 between Sault Ste. Marie and Sudbury than it is between Sudbury and Parry Sound. I think that would surprise a lot of people, but the truth is that there are unfortunately more collisions. There are more fatalities. There is a growing and higher percentage of truck traffic moving through the area as we increase the

amount of goods that move from western Canada and the western part of our province through to the eastern part and vice versa. The forest industry is very active in the area. That necessitates a lot of chip trucks—I don't mean french fries—and a lot of major transportation, cross-Canada carriers.

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With all of that, I think it behooves members to make a relatively simple change to the Highway Traffic Act to allow all people to avail themselves of the services of school crossing guards, who are employed, I would remind members, by the municipalities. The Legislature has recognized their importance in that way. I'm just asking to do something that many people thought was always possible.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm pleased to participate in this debate this morning on this bill brought forward by our colleague Mr. Brown from Algoma-Manitoulin. I want to commend the member for taking this initiative. To those who encouraged him, who are watching in a classroom, as Mr. Brown indicated, I want to thank them for the initiative.

Isn't it interesting how, when someone becomes engaged and becomes involved in the political process, this place can actually work? This is how laws are made. This is the place where laws can be changed. We have a good example here of average citizens—in this case, a teacher—as was indicated by the member, his class very interested, bringing forward an issue of concern. Their member of the Legislature took the initiative, brought it forward, and so we have here before us in the Legislature a bill that calls for a very specific amendment. It's interesting. Not often do we have a bill before the House that effectively makes only one change. In this particular case, I again commend the member from Algoma-Manitoulin for, in its very simplicity, making what can be a very significant impact on the lives of people in this province.

As a former Minister of Transportation, this issue is particularly close to my heart. Having been involved in the entire time that I was Minister of Transportation, dealing with public safety and dealing with safety on our roads and highways was the absolute priority for me. I recall on a number of occasions working with the member on very similar issues. In fact, one particular case the member brought to my attention on this very busy highway was the fact that there was a need for some additional signage coming into the town. I worked with the member to ensure that that was done.

Once again, when the member brought this forward, I too had to take a second look to say, "What is this all about?" Surely there must be legislation already in place that deals with this, that a crossing guard, if that crossing guard happened to see a senior or someone who is physically challenged and required some assistance, would be able to do that. Of course, that is the civil thing to do.

As a child growing up, I was taught by my parents that if you see someone who needs help, particularly if it's a

senior or someone who is challenged, you go out of your way to help. Unfortunately, in today's society, if you do that, often there's a liability. If something goes wrong, by being just a good Samaritan you end up actually risking a monetary liability. How sad that is; nevertheless, that's a reality of our time.

There was, as you know, a piece of legislation that was passed in this House just a few short years ago that was, in fact, called the Good Samaritan Act. It was brought forward initially by my colleague Steve Gilchrist. His purpose was to ensure that if there was an accident, that if there was an emergency, whether it was someone who was in the medical profession who happened to be in the area or anyone else who came to assist that individual, by doing so there wouldn't be liability for that person, and they should feel free to provide that assistance. To the credit of this House, that bill was passed; in fact, it received royal assent.

What we have before us here is something of a very similar nature. I'm certainly going to support this bill. I will be voting for it today. I would like the member and all members here in the House to consider doing this. As was indicated, the government has brought forward Bill 169, which deals with a number of safety issues related to the Highway Traffic Act. There are two things that we can do here. It's unfortunate that this provision wasn't included in Bill 169. By passing this legislation today, the House is sending a very strong signal to the government that this should be done. So I would expect, at the very least, that this amendment would be incorporated into that bill before it's passed so that we have it in law.

The other option available to us here today in this House is that after we pass this for second reading, the normal course of events would be that it would be referred to committee and then, after it's dealt with in committee, referred back to the House for third reading and then await royal assent. I would be fully supportive if, following a vote here on second reading, the member stood in his place and called for unanimous consent to have third reading on this bill without further delay and that it then be brought forward by the government for royal assent. I would be supportive of that.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I'm going to do you one better, Frank.

Mr. Klees: I'm sure that I would then get support from Mr. Kormos, who has already indicated that he'll do one better.

Mr. Kormos: I'm going to see you and raise you five.

Mr. Klees: OK. That's good.

The bottom line is that we're in support of this. It's an appropriate piece of legislation. It's the right thing to do. I commend my colleague for doing it.

As the member for Algoma-Manitoulin indicated, we take these people for granted. I drive from Aurora to the Legislature every day. I always take the same route. I come along Wellesley from Parliament, and I always pass the same crossing guard. I have no idea of the person's name. I just know that they are there consistently, rain or shine. They obviously take their responsibilities

very seriously. To those people right across the province who serve us every day this way, I say thank you. Thank you on behalf of the community, thank you on behalf of the government, thank you on behalf of those children who take for granted—I'm sure kids don't really think about the fact that someone is going out of their way to provide this kind of protection and help. I'm sure these people very seldom hear a thank you. On behalf of the Legislature, I want to say thank you to them.

I also want to take this opportunity—I just happened to come across this on the town of Richmond Hill Web site. The town of Richmond Hill is in my riding. I'm very proud of my riding of Oak Ridges, which includes the town of Richmond Hill, the northern part of Markham and the town of Whitchurch-Stouffville. For those who are interested, here is a posting today on the town of Richmond Hill Web site. It reads as follows:

“School Crossing Guards

“The engineering and public works department is now hiring qualified individuals for the following part-time position:

“School crossing guards—various locations

“Do you want to play an important role in your community?

“Do you want to help keep children safe?”

Following the passage of this, do you want to help not only children, but do you want to help keep our communities safe?

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“Then the town of Richmond Hill has an opportunity for you!

“Keeping children safe is a priority for the town of Richmond Hill. School crossing guards are a vital part of our community. They ensure the safe crossing of children as they travel to and from school. These highly dedicated men and women are working on the street every school day assisting children.”

The posting goes on to say that the rate of pay is “\$11.50 per hour, increasing to \$12.25 after one year.

“Daily travel allowance of \$2.50 per day if crossing location is greater than 1.5 kilometres from your residence,” and “up to 15 hours” of work. So I encourage people, whoever is watching this, to go to the Richmond Hill Web site and make an application. It's an important job, and we commend those who do it.

I want to take this opportunity as well to make one other comment about this issue of helping seniors and helping those who are physically challenged in our community. When I was Minister of Transportation, we attempted to bring forward some initiatives but we ran out of time to do so. But I implore the government to give serious consideration to this. We have legislation that we're discussing now in terms of how to help people in our community who are seniors or physically challenged.

There are some ways we can do this without it costing government any money. Let me give you just one example. The taxi industry has a very real opportunity, simply by training its people, to provide a level of service

that is a step above and yet appropriate for seniors and for the physically challenged. I don't know if you've observed this—I have—where a taxi will pull up in front of a store or a particular location and an elderly person is struggling to get out of that car, particularly if the weather is inclement. A very simple requirement would be a standard of practice that respects the elderly and respects those with physical challenges. That is, if you want to be a taxicab driver, then you treat your customer with respect. If it's a senior, if it's someone who needs help, you get out of the car and you help that person get from the car to where they're going. That just seems like common decency to me. These are the kinds of things that I feel, unfortunately, often are left unsaid and undone in our society.

This bill brought forward by the member from Algoma-Manitoulin fits into the “common decency” parameter that I speak to. For that reason again I commend him for bringing it forward, and we will be supporting it. I look forward to my colleague's comments, which I'm sure will assist us in ensuring that we give this bill rapid passage.

Mr. Kormos: I'm pleased to speak to Mr. Brown's bill, a modest proposal, one that carries with it eminent good sense and has the capacity to save lives. It seems to me peculiar that if a municipality is employing security guards—and I'm an advocate of that—municipalities should be assisted in ensuring public safety, especially when you're talking about smaller-town Ontario, where the community is accessed not by a secondary road, by a feeder road, but where the highway is the main street. It poses unique circumstances, and again, it's like so many of the communities down where I come from.

This is straightforward, clear as a bell and eminently commonsensical. For the life of me, we're talking about changing children to persons. The debate around adequacy of financing for crossing guards and the need for them to be a properly trained and backed-up resource is a different argument, a different debate, one which may well flow from literally enhancing the responsibilities.

I seek unanimous consent for this bill to be immediately put to second reading vote and to then be immediately called for third reading, with no further debate, and put to a third reading vote.

The Deputy Speaker: I've been advised that the standing orders dictate that the vote can only take place at 12 o'clock because of a division.

Mr. Kormos: A division? Thank you, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Well, let's do this right.

Let me clarify that. Under the standing orders, the Speaker can only put the question at 12 o'clock at the latest. It is a matter of when the question is put, and that it should be at that time.

Mr. Kormos: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate that. I ducked as that monkey wrench flew in my direction.

Let me put this to you, sir: I seek unanimous consent to set aside the standing orders for the balance of this member's private members' public business hour and then to immediately proceed to second reading vote,

voice vote only, and to then call the bill, if passed, for third reading immediately, with no further debate, voice vote only.

The Deputy Speaker: This is obviously a bit unique. When the House is composed for private members' business, there really are not pardons, and it is composed for the purpose of all private members. So it isn't appropriate to dispense with the standing orders under those circumstances. Again, that should be dealt with when the time allowed for private members' public business has expired.

Mr. Kormos: Thank you very much, Speaker. That monkey wrench was followed by a spanner of mammoth proportions, but those things happen.

The Speaker has ruled. Look, it is pretty obvious where most people, if not everybody in this chamber, stands. I, for the life of me, can't see anybody voting against this eminently commonsensical proposal.

There are some issues. All of us remember with affection from our own childhoods—and, yes, all of us did have childhoods—the school crossing guard. When we were little kids, that school crossing guard seemed so much older, and they were probably no older than we are now, assisting us, and they acquired that incredible supervisory—this is what we've talked about in education, for instance, for a long time. It's not just the teachers; it's that whole educational community: secretarial staff, teachers' assistants, the housekeeping staff and the role they play, and that school crossing guard too, in that broader educational community in terms of providing security, creating a safer environment and being there in so many other roles as well.

I am not aware of any argument that could be made by people engaged in the role of school crossing guard. They are probably eager. I know these folks. They don't do it for the money. There are modest stipends for the people who do this. They're out there in cold weather, in rainy weather, in mucky, unpleasant weather. They're out there whether they feel like being there or not, whether they're ill or not; they know that there is a heavy responsibility attached to this, sadly, very low-paying job, but to the final one they perform their role with an enthusiasm and a vigour and a zeal that's all about public safety.

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I regret to draw the inference that there could well be some municipalities which, because of the legislation as it now stands, feel compelled to tell their school crossing guards, "Don't escort adults, but restrict your role to children." I'm only presuming that that's regrettably the case and that those arguments are probably made by hyper-cautious municipal lawyers about liability and so on.

This bill has been in the hopper long enough, since November of last year, that if the insurance industry had any concern about it, we would have heard from those scoundrels already. Think about it. They're ready to try to manipulate and control legislation. Look what they've done in terms of auto insurance over the course of my

lifetime here at Queen's Park, and certainly even over the course of the last couple of years: increased deductibles and reduced payouts in terms of new limits on payouts. It's the insurance companies' game right now.

As Mr. Bradley raises his eyebrows in concern, he and I both know that a public auto insurance system like we have in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia is the way to provide fair automobile insurance, fair premiums and fair benefits. Heck, you've got British Columbia with consistently lower premiums than Ontario, full tort—in other words, the innocent accident victim is entitled to receive all of their economic loss—plus a healthy no-fault plan. How can you top that? It's just irresistible logic that the public auto insurance system is the way to go.

Again, had the insurance industry had any concerns about this, they would have been bouncing off the walls by now. There would have been high-priced lobbyists telling the Premier to shut down Brown. There would have been; you know it. Clearly it isn't of concern. It has been around since November. The bill has had some publicity. Mr. Brown has made sure of that, because that's obviously one of the things you want to try to guarantee when you're introducing private members' public business. It's hard to conclude that the insurance industry isn't aware of it. So that argument is revealed in an anticipatory way as somewhat specious and not one that should be given any weight whatsoever. There's just no reason not to do this.

I suppose the other concern is that you've only got school crossing guards, and their workday is determined by the school schedule. In other words, you don't have a school crossing guard there during daylight hours. However, I put to you that persons who might be legitimately concerned about their safety when they cross the street—especially the kind of highway Mr. Brown is talking about where you're far more likely to see a school crossing guard. You're going to see him there because it's a high traffic area and because there are other peculiarities, idiosyncrasies around the environment that put that pedestrian at risk in that crossing zone.

Let's say I'm a person using an assistive device to get around, to generate my mobility. What I'm going to say is, "I hate crossing." You know how you were talking about Highway—

Mr. Brown: Highway 17.

Mr. Kormos: Highway 17. I've driven it many times.

If I've got to go to the supermarket and the pharmacy and I really feel uncomfortable crossing that highway, I'm going to go at 12 noon because I know that's when there's going to be a school crossing guard. I don't think that's an unfair assumption to make in response to the argument that this legislation tells the school crossing guard to assist all persons crossing the road but doesn't compel him or her to be there during daylight hours.

This is what happens. I've got places down in Welland—Fitch Street, for instance—where you know where the hotspots are. The seniors will call you and let you know. They're the ones who, even if you were a former

city councillor or mayor but you're in the provincial Legislature now, still call you, telling you where that crosswalk or that stoplight should be for a pedestrian crossing. You don't need high-priced consultants. The people know where these hotspots are. They know they're vulnerable because it scares the daylighters out of them because they've got to scramble across before some guy, inevitably in an imported car—I'm a big fan of buying North American-made cars, as you well know, Mr. Brown. It sort of gets them just as they're halfway across and you've got to pull your behind in to avoid getting clipped by somebody racing through an intersection. So folks know where these are. I'm sure they would obtain a level of comfort knowing that there are times during the day when there is assistance at that crossing, and that's when they're going to use that crossing to get to where they're going.

I hope this bill passes on second reading. I hope Mr. Brown refers it to committee rather than committee of the whole. I certainly will not be utilizing any single member's role in determining the outcome of the bill after it receives second reading vote. That's up to Mr. Brown entirely. I'll respect his views in that regard. But I suggest to him that there may well be in the offing a scenario where House leaders will be meeting to agree upon a list of bills that are to be prioritized for committee hearings and therefore to be reported back to the House with the stamp of approval or disapproval of a committee. Mr. Brown—far be it from me to tell you how to conduct your private member's public business today—short of a quick consultation with the minions, the high-priced help in House leader Dwight Duncan's office, might refer this to a committee so he can then twist his House leader's arm to make sure this bill, in view of the unanimity of support for it, gets addressed in committee.

So far be it from me—it's Mr. Brown's bill. It's between him and his God—which are the clerks, of course, and his House leader. All I'm saying is that New Democrats support the proposition. We're pleased to support it and pleased to see it progress through this Legislature, and look forward to the enhanced safety of all people, kids and non-kids alike, crossing dangerous thoroughfares.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It is a pleasure for me to support my colleague the member from Algoma-Manitoulin on Bill 142. As a former city councillor, it's interesting that some of the most sought-after jobs are often advertisements for school crossing guards. Individuals who retire around age 55 take on these jobs. They provide a real degree of safety for children, because often they have these jobs over a long period of time and they get to know the kids and they know when kids are missing. It's almost like an additional safety factor that these adult crossing guards provide for a community. As a former mayor of Essex, Mr. Speaker, you would know that one of the things you often get petitions from residents about is to introduce adult crossing guards at a particularly busy crossing.

I think this bill is important because over the last decade in Ontario we've introduced software packages that control our signal lights, and often, through the introduction of these software packages, the cycles have been shortened considerably so that people often have some difficulty on the crosswalk in getting across. Having had the opportunity to be on committee to review Bill 118, which is the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, little things crop up. This is an issue that was highlighted by a number of individuals from the disabled community: the opportunity to get across a busy street. When you think of a disabled person who may get dropped off through disabled transit with their children in the morning, it's an opportunity to get across the street.

This is one of those obvious things. I was really surprised to learn, when I had a conversation with my colleague the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, that indeed crossing guards in Ontario couldn't assist anybody else across the street except children. I'm pleased he has brought forward this bill because it will really enhance the safety of many of our citizens—I've highlighted the disabled community and seniors—who, because of the shortening of signal light cycles, often have difficulty getting across, particularly at busy intersections. As a former municipal councillor, I would often get, as I indicated, petitions from local residents wanting the introduction of an adult crossing guard, particularly in a school zone where there were high volumes of traffic. Perhaps it's just an observation, but people seem to be moving faster and faster all the time in their vehicles. Often they're on cell phones. I have actually witnessed women putting on makeup and trying to drive at the same time. We're often not aware of our driving habits, and we're not going as slowly and being as observant as we should. I have also witnessed males with portable razors shaving as they're driving in their cars, and doing all these other things that tend to distract us. So anything we can do to enhance the amount of safety we can provide—I think this bill needs to be supported and moved forward as quickly as possible.

1140

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I too am pleased to rise in support of this bill, and I commend the member from Algoma-Manitoulin for bringing it forward. It's not so much what the bill does but the fact that it is being brought up, as the member from Oak Ridges explained in his presentation. It's the type of thing that governments never tend to get around to doing, and it becomes very obvious.

I'm quite sure that when the Highway Traffic Act was written to deal with the issue of school crossing guards and they used the word "children" in two places in the introduction to the function, they didn't intend that to mean that crossing guards would not be able to help a handicapped person or any person to cross the street while they were there. I want to commend the crossing guards in my community for not having realized the consequences—what could happen to them—and their liability if they did that, because I've seen many cases

where crossing guards in my community are already doing that. For those of us present who have spoken this morning, I think we all thought that was an appropriate approach to dealing with this matter. I commend the member opposite for bringing this forward to cover the liability that municipalities now realize is there: that if crossing guards help someone across the street, indeed they could get in trouble for doing that.

As we speak this morning, I think it's more important to talk about bringing this forward than what it actually does. I just want to point out to my constituents at home and to those others who are watching that this bill really just changes the word "children" to "persons" in two places in the Highway Traffic Act, so that crossing guards in my communities and in communities across the province can, in fact, do what they have signed on to do, which is to help people across the street where traffic could be a barrier to that happening.

I want to point out that school crossing guards, although they use the word "school," are not part of the education system but are part of the municipal transportation infrastructure. In fact, it's the municipalities that have decided we need to help children cross in school crossing areas. I don't think there's a municipality in the province that would deem it inappropriate to help other citizens to cross at the same time.

Again, I commend him for bringing this legislation forward.

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): First of all, I would like to commend the member from Algoma–Manitoulin for bringing forward Bill 142, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to school crossing guards.

When I received the information from the member from Algoma–Manitoulin, it was just another opportunity for me, as a former municipal politician, to reflect on what my municipality had done in the past with regard to providing school crossing guards at strategic locations in my township of South Stormont and an opportunity to drive into the city of Cornwall to see the numerous school crossing guards at strategic locations in the city. It never crossed my mind that there are restrictions with regard to what's permitted to a school crossing guard assisting those crossing the street. The liability issue never crossed my mind with regard to assisting perhaps the frail and the elderly, perhaps those with disabilities and what not. It never crossed my mind.

It was about two years ago that I was in the city of Cornwall, heading to a school to make a presentation. I had retired and had been invited back. It was toward the end of the day, and I was speaking to a student council class after school. I was heading over, and a school crossing guard was standing at the corner, with no one else around, and she stepped off the curb, held up her stop sign and assisted me across the street. I thought to myself that I really didn't need that assistance, but after it was over I thought what an opportunity she had to show to her community that there's more to her work, that in all kinds of weather conditions there's more than just chil-

dren who may need that assistance. I remember I turned around and said thank you to her.

I look in my own community of South Stormont, where we have a high school, an elementary school and a Catholic school all located within close proximity. For a school crossing guard at a strategic corner, at the corner of Dickinson Drive and College Street in that community, the community is assisted by a senior high school student. After I retired, I had an opportunity of going to the high school and to spend a little bit of time doing some volunteer work there and saw the school crossing guard, this young fellow, out there doing his work every morning and right after school, certainly in good weather—but they had smiles on their faces too even in sleet, snow and rain.

I think this is an issue that certainly the member from Algoma–Manitoulin was provided information on. I understand that it was brought to his attention by councillor Debbie Solomon from the township of Shedden. This is one more opportunity of making the Highway Traffic Act better, and I commend the member for what he's done. I certainly think that, with all-party support, we can get it through this Legislature and it can very quickly become part of an amended Highway Traffic Act. I thank the member from Algoma–Manitoulin for his work for his community.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): It's my pleasure as well to support my colleague from Algoma–Manitoulin. As the member from Oak Ridges identified, one just assumed this was part of the act to begin with, the fact that the good Samaritan law would provide for an individual having the capacity to help another individual across the street and not have any kind of liability or penalty that would be applied.

It's fascinating to read in the piece of legislation that school crossing guards only apply to children, and yet, as someone who was involved with the school sector for a long period of time, I couldn't tell you how many times I've seen parents with children being escorted across the street by school crossing guards, or any number of people, as a matter of fact, as at that busy corner around my area they automatically did, knowing that they had actually contravened the law, because they were only supposed to help those with children.

It makes eminent sense to be able to say that it should be applied to all persons, and that there should be the restriction of Ontario's Good Samaritan Act that limits any possibility of liability. It is a civil action to be able to help someone cross the street, whether they have a disability or simply have two bags of groceries and need some support to get across. It just makes sense, and, as someone indicated, it's just basic good manners as well.

I'd like to say to the councillor out of Shedden that one of the things I thought was most important was that she had worked together with her provincial member to bring forward something that was important to the community. It's a really good example of people working together to make a difference on behalf of the community they serve. It's another example, in private members'

time, where something that makes such good sense across the province is welcomed and supported by all members in the House, and this is a good example today.

1150

As people recognize, this simple change—and it isn't a difficult change—in a piece of legislation could make a difference in virtually every community on behalf of the safety of the children as well as that of other individuals. Again, it just makes eminent sense to do it.

Although there are speed limits of 60 kilometres an hour in many areas right across the province and that I've been through in the far north, the truck traffic that has increased so significantly makes it a barrier to people who are trying to cross the road at any given time. That's not to say that they necessarily deal with the same speed limit when they do cross. Any time we can provide additional safety just makes good sense within those communities.

When you look at the issue of weather conditions, it's not just about when things are perfectly sunny and the sky is blue; we're also looking at the winter or snow or fog or any other kinds of weather conditions and putting into legislation what many people have been doing for a long period of time anyway: enable somebody to help someone else across the highway or across the street.

I would like to say to the member, thank you very much for bringing this forward. It makes eminent sense. Thank you for working with your colleague and the children in the north to identify an area that makes some difference.

I also wanted to comment that this morning I had a taxi driver who opened the door for me as I got in and opened the door for me as I got out, and helped me with a piece of luggage. Maybe it is my grey hair and the fact that I look a little more like a senior, but I have to say that there are a lot of taxi drivers I've had the pleasure to travel with who have been very cordial in working with me, certainly as I have entered and exited. It is a civil action that I just expect. It's no more than saying "good morning" or "please" and "thank you." These are just parts of our everyday nature.

To the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, thank you for bringing this forward. I agree; I hope that there is speedy passage of this. It just makes common sense. It's a very small change to a piece of legislation which could have a significant impact on a lot of people across this province.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? If no other members wish to speak, Mr. Brown, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Brown: I was looking forward to the intervention from the member for St. Catharines. Nevertheless, I want to thank the members from Oak Ridges, Niagara Centre, Peterborough, Oxford, Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh and Etobicoke Centre.

This is one of those issues—I think someone on the other side said it—that make good sense that somehow governments just never seem to get around to. That's one of the things we can do in private members' hour: make

sure that some issues that don't get addressed by big governments doing big things—because sometimes these common sense, reasonable proposals get put forward by private members working with their community. I think this is about democracy; this is about a relatively small municipality with a council that saw a problem and saw a solution. Debbie Solomon came to me and brought this to my attention, and I'm pleased to be here on my constituents' behalf, making this change.

I was happy with the opposition being anxious to get this piece of legislation passed very quickly. I am hopeful that the government will see to that. We obviously have some rules around here about how these things happen, and that is a good thing.

I think there are two opportunities here. I will be asking for this bill to be ordered for third reading, and hopefully we will get the unanimous consent of the House for that to happen. But in the meantime I'll let the Minister of Transportation know that I would be hoping that when Bill 169 goes to committee, it might be amended to carry this section anyway. So there are two opportunities in the next little while to make this a reality.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you to all the members and to the table; this has been an interesting morning. As a matter of fact, the time allowed for private members' business has not yet expired. I'm going to give you a little explanation of some of what went on.

There are the standing orders and there is precedent, of course. But private members' public business is a little different from the rest of the operation of the House. There are no parties, as I mentioned earlier; there are no whips. So members are entitled to know that the vote will not be taken before the time allowed for private members' business has expired. So what we're going to do is suspend the proceedings for—well, it depends on which clock you look at—about three or four minutes. So just enjoy conversation.

The House recessed from 1156 to 1200.

EASTERN ONTARIO ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT FUND ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LE FONDS DE
DÉVELOPPEMENT ÉCONOMIQUE DE
L'EST DE L'ONTARIO

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you for your patience. If the members will take their seats, we'll deal with ballot item number 63, standing in the name of Mr. Sterling.

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

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): I seek consent to have this bill referred for third reading.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Sterling has asked unanimous consent that the bill be ordered for third reading. Agreed? Agreed.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT
(SCHOOL CROSSING GUARDS), 2005
LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LE CODE
DE LA ROUTE (PASSEURS SCOLAIRES)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We shall now deal with ballot item number 64, standing in the name of Mr. Brown.

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

Mr. Michael A. Brown (Algoma–Manitoulin): I would ask unanimous consent of the House for this bill to be ordered for third reading.

The Speaker: Mr. Brown has asked unanimous consent that the bill be ordered for third reading. Agreed? Agreed.

It has been an interesting morning. All matters relating to private members' public business having been dealt with, I do now leave the chair. This House is adjourned until 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1201 to 1330.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Might I ask for unanimous consent and permission to wear the black and yellow ribbon in honour of the fallen on Day of Mourning?

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): The Minister of Labour has asked for unanimous consent. Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CANADA-ONTARIO MUNICIPAL RURAL
INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): Earlier this week through COMRIF—the Canada-Ontario municipal rural infrastructure fund—some transportation projects in and around Waterloo–Wellington will be receiving funding. I'm sure that these funds will be put to good use in communities like the county of Wellington, the township of Centre Wellington, the town of Erin, the township of Guelph/Eramosa, Wellesley township, Wilmot township and the city of Kitchener.

While federal-provincial money for bridge and road projects is always welcome, there are some other projects that cannot be forgotten by this provincial government. These projects are contained in the Waterloo–Wellington transportation action plan, which has been before this government since the day after it was elected. The action plan was made in partnership with our local governments, and it represents their top transportation priorities.

Their key priorities include Highways 7 and 8 between Kitchener and Stratford, a new four-lane Highway 7 from Guelph to Kitchener, assistance to Wellington county to

rebuild Highway 24 from Guelph to Cambridge, a repaired and upgraded Highway 6 from Fergus to Mount Forest, Waterloo region's light rail transit initiative, and OSTAR-like funding for other transportation-related projects.

As it stands now, Highway 7 is becoming a parking lot—congestion is stifling mobility and prosperity—while Highway 6 from Fergus to Mount Forest has deteriorated badly and needs an upgrade for safe travel now.

This brings me to the question: Why hasn't the government announced funding for priority projects like Highway 6 and Highway 7? Is it because the federal and provincial Liberals have misallocated millions of rural dollars on city projects as a federal election looms? I ask the government to cut the partisan pandering, unclog the bureaucratic congestion and finish the jobs on Highways 6 and 7.

EARTH DAY

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): I rise in the House today to commend our government for having the courage to close the Lakeview coal generating plant. I also want to commend the 150 volunteers who joined me in the cold spring rain last Saturday in honour of Mother Earth. This past weekend, Hamilton celebrated Earth Day by planting over 950 trees along Hamilton West's picturesque Princess Point, a valuable and delicate marshland ecosystem stemming from the shores of Lake Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, you should have seen these volunteers. We were dripping wet. The trees were planted alongside the shoreline of the marsh in order to develop the fragile nursery for the many different types of fish that inhabit the shallow waters. The frigid, wet weather would have frightened away many less devoted volunteers, but those who appeared through the torrents of rain that morning showed a real dedication to our environment.

Among the volunteers involved were Jed Goldberg, the head of Earth Day Canada, who said it was a perfect day for planting trees, and Marilyn Baxter, the executive director of the Bay Area Restoration Council. The sponsors included the Royal Botanical Gardens, Earth Day Hamilton, Suncor Energy Foundation, and Sunoco, who donated over \$12,000 for this worthy event.

I would like to thank everyone involved with our tree planting endeavour and applaud the commitment they showed on a cold, damp April morning, and also to let everyone know that our government cares about the environment.

UKRAINIAN EASTER

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I rise to inform all members of the House that Easter will be observed this weekend under the Julian calendar. On Sunday, May 1, many Eastern Orthodox and Catholics around the world, beginning in Jerusalem, will mark the original Easter date, including Greeks, Ukrainians, Russians, Bela-

russians, Romanians, Ethiopians, Egyptian Copts, Syrians, Bulgarians, Serbians, Arabs, Asian Christians and others.

As a proud Canadian of Ukrainian ancestry, I grew up in a home that observed the rich traditions associated with what is our most important religious holiday of the year.

The service that leads up to Easter Sunday begins tonight with the reading of the 12 Passion gospels. This is followed on what is called by the Christian East "Great Friday" rather than "Good Friday," with the veneration of the shroud that is carried around the church three times before being placed amid flowers before the altar.

Early Sunday morning, the first song of Pascha, which means Passover, is intoned in unison by the entire church parish, beginning with the words "Christ is risen." Everyone then shares the original paschal candles, and soon the entire church is bathed in the light of Easter.

One of the most famous of Ukrainian Easter traditions is the beautiful decorating of the pysanka, or Ukrainian Easter egg, which represents Christ breaking the bonds of death through his resurrection.

On behalf of my leader, John Tory, and the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus, I extend my warmest best wishes to the many Ontarians who will experience the joy of Easter this weekend. Khrystos voskres.

MICHELLE AND BRETT QUANCE

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): People in this Legislature will remember Michelle and Brett Quance, familiar faces in my community who have been here so many times. The members of my community are once again coming together to hold a fundraiser for Brett and Michelle's four-and-a-half-year-old autistic daughter, Tennyson. The fundraiser will be held on the evening of Thursday, May 31. It will be an evening, we hope, of comic relief at De La Salle College, with some really excellent entertainment. Tickets are only \$40, with all of the proceeds going to the family's cost of providing IBI treatment for their young child.

Last year, the Beach community held a fundraiser for them as well, and it raised \$45,000, which to some people might seem a lot of money, but at \$6,600 a month, the need for even more funds is never-ending.

Last week in the Legislature, we were told that Tennyson's wait for provincially funded IBI treatment would now be longer than ever as a result of the Ontario Superior Court's ruling that Ontario must provide IBI therapy for children over the age of six. We were told that that court ruling now complicated the waiting list for children under six. Parents of under-six and over-six children will not, however, be divided as a result.

While this family and countless others wait, communities and friends will spring to action to give autistic children the help they must have now. While I encourage all of you to support this worthy endeavour, I have to say that I hope it's the last fundraiser that Tennyson and her family will have to have.

COMMUNITY LIVING OAKVILLE

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I rise today to recognize Community Living Oakville, which is a great agency in my riding of Oakville. Community Living Oakville, through families, paid employees and volunteers, provides services to people who have an intellectual disability, to allow them to live in and be a part of all the best aspects of my wonderful town.

I also rise to acknowledge and pay tribute to the Community Living agencies across our province, in many of your own ridings as well. As a province and as a country, we can be proud of the work that is being done by these agencies in promoting the inclusion of our most vulnerable citizens in our communities. Many of these agencies were started by ordinary families who had a vision that their son or daughter who had an intellectual disability should be included in all aspects of our societies.

May is Community Living month, a time when we can reflect on and celebrate this important ideal, which is to include our constituents who would otherwise be excluded from many of the simplest aspects of our society.

There is a saying that a nation should be judged by how well it treats its most vulnerable citizens. As we know in this House, sometimes that can be an onerous task, but in Canada we have the assistance of Community Living to help us make that ideal a reality in all of our ridings. Today, I think we owe them a debt of gratitude.

KINGSTON ART DISPLAY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): Today's National Post contains a very disturbing article informing us of so-called art drawn by a man convicted of killing a police officer being publicly displayed in the city of Kingston.

What makes this story so disturbing is the nature of the drawings and the background of the individual who drew them. They portray police officers as racists wearing Ku Klux Klan masks. The man who drew them is in prison for the cold-blooded murder of a 38-year-old Ottawa area policeman with two children, David Upton.

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I would argue that the public display of anti-cop art by a cop killer is deeply offensive at best, and at worst may constitute hate propaganda. The Criminal Code, section 319, speaks to public communications that incite hatred against an identifiable group. I believe these cartoons do attempt to incite hatred against police generally and that police, with a broad interpretation of the definition of identifiable groups, can qualify for protection from this type of attack.

I encourage the Kingston police to investigate, guided by hate crime legislation, and I would further encourage the good people of Kingston to withdraw their business from the commercial enterprise that promotes and displays this deeply offensive material.

EASTERN ONTARIO

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): As a proud representative of the riding of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh in eastern Ontario, I was pleased to participate in the debate this morning concerning the development of an Eastern Ontario Economic Development Fund Corp.

The obstacles facing eastern Ontario are unique and enduring. Creative dialogue and useful policy will do much to assist communities in eastern Ontario to overcome these hurdles. Unfortunately, statements that are contrary to fact presented during question period are not constructive. For a member who has committed himself to, and I quote, “a higher standard of legislative decorum,” it was unfortunate to hear the leader of the official opposition present inaccurate information on the new Ontario municipal partnership fund.

I want to inform the honourable member that this government is committed to eastern Ontario, and, contrary to the member’s numbers, the municipalities in my riding will receive an overall increase of 11% in OMPF funding this fiscal year. I would like to add that the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry are getting more money per household than any other upper-tier municipality in Ontario, at a rate of \$387 per household. Combine this with COMRIF announcements of this past Monday which will help three townships in my riding refurbish crumbling infrastructure, and we have a pattern of support from this government. Eastern Ontario is not overlooked.

I remain fully supportive of constructive dialogue, but I cannot support statements that are contrary to fact.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I want to point out to you that the member who just gave his statement made an unparliamentary statement about the leader of the official opposition having presented inaccurate information. I ask you to draw that to the member’s attention and ask him to withdraw that statement.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order. I would like to draw to the attention of the members that when a member stands on a point of order, I would like to hear it first.

If the member has used any unparliamentary language, I’m sorry; I did not hear it. But if it is so, I would ask him to withdraw.

Mr. Brownell: Mr. Speaker, I did not make such a statement.

Interjections.

Mr. Klees: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would, with respect, ask you to check the Hansard record and make a ruling on this.

The Speaker: The member has withdrawn.

Interjection: He did not withdraw.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I’m going to ask him one more time. I did not hear it, but if the member has made an unparliamentary comment, I’d ask him to withdraw it.

Mr. Brownell: Mr. Speaker, I did not make an unparliamentary statement, and I do not withdraw.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Members’ statements.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL
FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): On April 11, the Niagara Falls Chamber of Commerce wrote to the Prime Minister in support of Premier McGuinty’s request to narrow the \$23-billion gap between the government of Canada and the province of Ontario. In their letter, the chamber illustrated the unfairness of the federal-provincial arrangement by stating that under the \$600-million border infrastructure fund, Ontario will receive only \$305 million in federal funding over five years.

Sounds good, but it isn’t, because they continue to say that this only amounts to 51% of the total fund. For the House’s information, Ontario accounts for 75% of all Canadian truck crossings into the United States. This is not good economics, and, I will tell you, it’s not good news. The net result is a \$145-million shortfall in border infrastructure improvements that would further fuel Canada’s main economic engine.

What is significant about the Niagara Falls Chamber of Commerce letter is that it was totally unsolicited and it comes from a completely unbiased perspective that gives validation to the Premier’s position. Let me conclude by directly quoting from the president, Carolyn Bones, to the Prime Minister:

“Ontario is Canada’s economic engine.

“As such, our chamber is concerned about the funding levels the federal government provides to Ontario.

“We urge you to invest in Ontario’s future by increasing the level of federal government funding to this province.

“Help Ontario continue to move forward. We urge you to address the \$23-billion” gap.

“In doing so you will help ensure Ontario continues to drive the economy of our country. That helps everyone.”

This House owes a vote of thanks to the Niagara Falls Chamber of Commerce for their leadership in support of this debate.

STUDENT LEADERS

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): I’m very pleased to welcome the student health ambassadors from Ottawa to the Legislature today.

I would like to introduce these community leaders from Ottawa schools in my riding: Alex Beaudoin, Erin McConnell, Nathan Juhasz, Alexandre Lanctot, Karine Jolicœur, Camille Juzwik, Emilie Miller, Catherine Laska, Rowena Rodriguez, and Michel Nungisa. They

are student leaders, part of the Exposé Team, who have mobilized classmates across the city of Ottawa and have reduced smoking by their peers by at least 5% in Ottawa schools. Together, they work with public health nurses and their peers to help save their friends and classmates from cigarette addiction.

Our federal government spends \$27 million to get people off cigarettes. Big tobacco, on the other hand, spends \$77 million a year to get people hooked, to get these young people addicted. They rely on the dependence of youth for their future tobacco sales. Did you know that there is a 50% greater likelihood for you to smoke because of “power walls,” the enormous behind-the-counter advertisements in retail outlets?

I thank you for being here today to lend your support to this important legislation. Some 23,000 signatures petitioning us to have a smoke-free Ontario have been delivered to us today. No more power walls. Out of sight, out of mind. We must support these students, who have done their job to improve the lifestyle and life expectancy of youth who have never smoked or who have quit this addictive habit.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Introduction of bills. Member for Toronto-Danforth.

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): One of your favourite members, and you almost missed me.

BREAST IMPLANT REGISTRY ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LE REGISTRE DES IMPLANTS MAMMAIRES

Ms. Churley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 192, An Act to establish and maintain a provincial Breast Implant Registry / Projet de loi 192, Loi prévoyant l'établissement et la tenue d'un registre provincial des implants mammaires.

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

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): This is long overdue. The purpose of the bill is as a measure to protect women's health. Cancer survivors—and more and more, unfortunately, young women—are choosing to have breast implants. Little is known—or, in fact, there's a great deal known about some of the dangers associated with them. Given the potential comeback of silicone gel implants now, this is a critical bill.

1350

What it does is create a breast implant registry, whose registrar is appointed by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The registry contains specified information from health care practitioners regarding each breast implant surgery performed, from manufacturers, importers and distributors of breast implants on any rele-

vant health risks they identify, and from researchers regarding findings they make public if they accessed the registry in order to conduct their research. The registrar may contact users of breast implants and the health care practitioners who perform breast implant surgery on them in specified circumstances in order to provide them with information the registrar considers necessary to assist in assessing the risk to the user's health.

The bill amends the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, to make the registrar a health information custodian under that act with respect to personal health information and to make a related consequential amendment. The bill provides that information contained in the registry that is not personal health information may be disclosed by the registrar as prescribed by regulation.

PAYDAY LOANS ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LES PRÊTS SUR SALAIRE

Mr. Kormos moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 193, An Act respecting payday loans / Projet de loi 193, Loi traitant des prêts sur salaire.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): The bill enacts a new act entitled the Payday Loans Act, 2005. The act governs payday loans, which are defined as loans in an amount of \$3,000 or less that are made for a term of two months or less. The act imposes licensing requirements on persons who make payday loans and establishes procedures for revoking and suspending licences, subject to appeal provisions. Offences and regulatory requirements are provided for, as is a process for dealing with complaints.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice or further debate with regard to private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(g), the requirements for notice be waived with respect to ballot item 67.

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

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Today I'm proud to report that the McGuinty government has closed the first of five coal-fired power plants in Ontario. This morning, we closed the Lakeview generating station for good. We have taken the necessary steps to close the greater Toronto area's single biggest source of air pollution.

We're also the first jurisdiction in North America to say no to coal. Ontario is setting an example—an example that I expect will not go unnoticed across the continent. Ontario's coal commitment shows the world where Ontario stands when it comes to cleaner air, healthy Ontarians and a robust economy. We're not just talking about replacing coal; we're actually doing it.

We've been working with Hydro One to make sure transmission facilities in the GTA are upgraded so that we can continue delivering electricity safely and reliably without Lakeview.

By closing Lakeview, we're reducing harmful emissions. We're eliminating 26% of sulphur dioxides from our air, 8% of nitrous oxide, and millions of tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions from the GTA. Closing Lakeview removes the equivalent of 500,000 cars from our roads. What this means for our citizens is cleaner air and better health.

Our commitment to coal closure is also a big contribution to Canada's Kyoto plan. Ontario is doing its part to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and changing the way we generate electricity is a big part of that.

We're replacing coal because the cost to our health and to our environment is just too high. A report I released yesterday found a relationship between increased air pollution due to coal-fired station emissions and up to 668 premature deaths, 928 hospital admissions and 1,100 emergency room visits in Ontario every year. The true cost of using coal to create electricity is unacceptably high. Burning coal increases air pollution that contributes to the incidence of premature death, increased asthma symptoms, smog and adds large quantities of greenhouse gases to our atmosphere.

In sum, continuing to use coal when you consider the health and environmental impacts is just not responsible. What is responsible is that we are moving to create a culture of conservation and we're moving to the next generation of cleaner energy in Ontario.

Unlike previous two governments, the McGuinty government has made conservation our first priority. We are dedicated to transforming the way Ontarians think about and use electricity. We have an ambitious plan to install a smart electricity meter in each and every Ontario home and business by 2010. Last week, I announced that Peter Love will be the new chief energy conservation officer, who will develop province-wide conservation

programs. We directed local distribution companies to invest \$160 million in new conservation and demand management initiatives. More will come later this spring when we introduce new legislation on conservation.

We have also been acting aggressively on new supply. On renewables, we successfully procured enough power for more than 100,000 homes last November. Last week, we kicked off another renewables RFP for enough power for more than 200,000 homes. Two weeks ago, we announced the first four winners of the clean energy RFP, which will be able to produce power to power more than 650,000 homes.

We directed OPG to refurbish Pickering A unit 1, enough to power 350,000 homes. We also directed OPG to proceed with the Niagara tunnel project. As well, we appointed a negotiator to deal with Bruce Power and we are now reviewing a tentative agreement that will see enough power for more than one million homes come back into service.

This amounts to the creation of enough power for more than two million homes, or more than 5,000 megawatts, since we came to office.

As you can see, the McGuinty government is taking all the necessary steps to ensure the citizens of Ontario get what they deserve: a cleaner, greener Ontario. Closing Lakeview is an historic step in achieving our commitment.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Responses.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): Minister, yet another announcement. I'd just like the members of the House to stop—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Let me get your time. I'll call it again. Responses.

Mr. O'Toole: I'd just like the members to stop and take a moment to pay tribute to Elizabeth Witmer and our leader, John Tory. On March 26, 2001, it was Elizabeth Witmer who committed to the closing of the Lakeview plant on behalf of our government.

No one disagrees about the impact of dirty coal plants. What we disagree with is your reckless election promise to close all five coal plants, almost one third of Ontario's generating capacity, by 2007. Naturally Jack Gibbons will agree with you. I understand that. Our PC position was, and still is, to close the existing dirty coal plants by 2015. We are honest with the people of Ontario. We care about the environment and the economy.

1400

Minister, your problem is that you have no plan and you fail to keep your promises. The people of Ontario have no regard for your commitments. You have raised false expectations and the price of electricity—at great risk, I might say, to both the reliability of the system itself and our environment. Will you just simply, for once, tell the people of Ontario what your secret plan on the closing of the coal plants really is?

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): We closed it today.

Mr. O'Toole: Yes. As Mr. Bradley has just pointed out, that's their plan: to follow through on what was our plan and remains our plan. What's different is that we were straightforward with the people of Ontario.

Clearly the issue here now becomes one of management and integrity. Quite honestly, it reminds me of most of the 231 promises, of which this is just one. It's another broken promise. Why I say that is that in fact you have failed on many occasions to be quite straightforward with the people of Ontario, especially as it applies to the Nanticoke plant. Will you tell those communities today that your plan is on track to close Nanticoke by 2007? If so, tell us part B of the plan: What is the replacement power for the 4,000 megawatts? You're putting the economy of Ontario at risk. You aren't being straightforward with the people of Ontario.

I was at a presentation this morning by the Ontario Energy Association. These are a group of experts, and I went there to listen and to learn. I didn't see you in attendance and I suggest you should have been, if you weren't. Leonard Crook said this morning, after looking at the situation across the world of the importance of energy, that the plan on coal wasn't achievable. The energy sector knows it. The only person who doesn't seem to know it is you.

Once again, I want to repeat for the record the point that—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Minister, when you were giving your statement, the members on the opposite side listened attentively, without any disruption. The member from St. Catharines and yourself keep interrupting. I would like to hear his response.

Mr. O'Toole: I want this to be my concluding remark. On March 26, 2001, in response to a request from Hazel McCallion, the Ontario environment minister, Elizabeth Witmer, announced that the Lakeview plant would be converted from dirty coal by the spring of 2005. That's what's happening today. That's what the minister is announcing. I request the House to pay some respect to Elizabeth Witmer. In his remarks, he made no mention. They assumed they had the plan. They have no plan for energy except to raise prices and put the economy of Ontario at risk. I put to you that most experts in the field know it. Minister, you don't know it, and that's what's troubling. It's a case of not being able to manage and not being forthright with the people of Ontario. The price is rising; the supply is dropping.

The minister is now leaving the House because he is disappointed, and he should be disappointed. He has no plan for the people of Ontario except to raise the price. They're going to see it in their bills. It isn't about clean coal; it's about the lack of energy and the lack of a plan from the minister, who is not up to the job.

The Speaker: Responses. The member from Toronto—Danforth.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: Marilyn will be in favour.

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto—Danforth): Absolutely I'm in favour of closing down the Lakeview coal plant. Who wouldn't be?

It's funny listening back and forth to, "Oh, the Tories said they were going to do it, so it was their plan, but the Liberals carried out the Tory plan." Let me tell you something about Lakeview that most people don't understand: Anybody who would be in government would have closed down Lakeview by now, not necessarily to protect the environment, but because it's in such a state of disrepair that there is no viable alternative but to shut it down—right, Elizabeth? Remember when you looked at that plant when you were in government? It's laughable that you get up and say that this is just being done to protect the environment. You know, Minister, what state of repair it is in and that it absolutely has to be shut down. But whatever the reason, it is a good thing that Lakeview is finally closing down.

I want to underscore here, though, that the question still looms: Where is the plan to meet the election commitment to close down the remaining plants like Nanticoke and Lambton, which rank among the filthiest polluters in this province? What is the plan to replace them with clean supply from sustainable sources?

Where the McGuinty government is really going, as we heard yesterday and over the last few weeks, is to natural gas and nuclear, of all things. I invite people to take a close look at this nuclear/gas strategy, as my leader said yesterday, at the presumed health costs from the study the minister released yesterday. This slipshod study says that there are very few health and environmental damages with nuclear. As my leader said yesterday, we invite the McGuinty government to go to Elliot Lake and talk to the widows who live there about all the uranium miners—their husbands, their fathers—who died from cancer associated with mining uranium. Go talk to them and see what they have to say about how safe nuclear power is. I know the member from St. Catharines agrees with me on this.

"The McGuinty government produces a report that tries to say that there are no environmental or few environmental and health consequences associated with nuclear" and gas. That is not—let me say it the same way my leader did: That is a cooked report. "Even more, they then trot out a table saying that the costs of building nuclear plants are fairly predictable and low." I thought that was an April Fool's joke. "Was this the \$4-billion estimate that you gave for Darlington, and then, when you completed Darlington, it cost \$15 billion more—an \$11-billion cost overrun? Is this the billions of dollars that have been spent on refurbishing when it was supposed to cost only a little bit?"

What I find really interesting about this today is what is not included in the plan. There are blueprints from the Suzuki Foundation, from the Toronto Environmental Alliance and from the Pembina Institute telling you what you have to do. When the Tories ask and when we ask what your plan is to shut down the remaining plants, you don't have one. The blueprint has been here for a while,

and what did we see? There's no energy efficiency being considered as one of your options in here. For instance, what if you stopped using electric heat in the thousands of apartment buildings across this province that were built cheaply in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s and that use very inefficient and expensive electric heat? Did the McGuinty government take a look at that? No. They wouldn't look at that. Did they look at helping low- and modest-income people who have inefficient refrigerators or appliances in their home? No. Did they look at what a low-interest loan program would do in assisting those families to purchase energy-efficient appliances and reduce their consumption of electricity? No. The gas plants they proposed—and one was proposed in my riding—didn't even have the added benefit, as promised in the first place, that they would be more efficient by being cogeneration.

I say to the minister: Look at what is happening in Germany, France and in other jurisdictions—in the US—where they are phasing out nuclear and fossil fuels, talking about them as things of the past and looking to the future, with the cornerstones being energy efficiency, conservation and new, green energy. Until we turn that ship around, we are going to continue to have the same problems and you will not be able to close those polluting coal-fired plants.

DEFERRED VOTES

MANDATORY GUNSHOT WOUNDS REPORTING ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LA DÉCLARATION OBLIGATOIRE DES BLESSURES PAR BALLE

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 110, An Act to require the disclosure of information to police respecting persons being treated for gunshot wounds / Projet de loi 110, Loi exigeant la divulgation à la police de renseignements en ce qui concerne les personnes traitées pour blessure par balle.

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

The division bells rang from 1409 to 1414.

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

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Flaherty, Jim	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Arthurs, Wayne	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Parsons, Ernie
Barrett, Toby	Fonseca, Peter	Phillips, Gerry
Bentley, Christopher	Gerretsen, John	Pupatello, Sandra
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hardeman, Ernie	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bradley, James J.	Jackson, Cameron	Racco, Mario G.
Brotten, Laurel C.	Jeffrey, Linda	Runciman, Robert W.
Bryant, Michael	Kennedy, Gerard	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Klees, Frank	Smith, Monique
Caplan, David	Kular, Kuldeep	Smitherman, George
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Kwinter, Monte	Sterling, Norman W.

Chudleigh, Ted	Levac, Dave	Takhar, Harinder S.
Colle, Mike	Marsales, Judy	Tasca, Joseph N.
Craiton, Kim	McMeekin, Ted	Tory, John
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Witmer, Elizabeth
Dhillon, Vic	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wong, Tony C.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Duncan, Dwight	O'Toole, John	Zimmer, David

The Speaker: All those against, please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Horwath, Andrea	Marchese, Rosario
Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 57; the nays are 4.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? So ordered.

DAY OF MOURNING

JOUR DE DEUIL

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent for each party to speak for up to five minutes in recognition of Workplace Day of Mourning, followed by a moment of silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): Today is Workplace Day of Mourning, a day when we remember and honour those who have died, been injured or become ill as a result of their job.

Day of mourning is a time to reflect on the past to remember our fallen workers. It is also an opportunity to look to the future and to reaffirm our commitment to safe workplaces.

Le Jour de deuil est une occasion de méditer sur le passé et de commémorer les travailleuses et travailleurs qui ont péri. C'est aussi une occasion de regarder vers l'avenir et de réaffirmer notre détermination à garantir la sécurité au travail.

There are some who will find solace in the statistics. Great strides have been made in health and safety over the years. We should thank those who have fought for improvements and for justice for injured workers. Champions of health and safety are found in all walks of life: labour, business, the community, health and safety associations, our schools, the WSIB and government. They have made sure that injury rates have improved over the past 20 years and that Ontario leads the country in many ways. Young worker injuries in particular are down substantially.

But those same statistics tell another story. The overall rates of improvement have levelled off over the past several years. The human toll of workplace tragedy remains incalculable. The number of people injured in the workplace every year is over 300,000. That is the equiv-

alent of the entire population of my city of London. Over 100,000 are injured so seriously that they have to take time off work. Injury and occupational disease cost lives every year. The human toll is incalculable. No job is worth a life; no job is worth an injury. Every statistic is a life's story: their hopes, their dreams, shattered by injury or death; their loved ones—sons, daughters, parents, friends—touched by tragedy.

However much has been done, there is still so much more to do. Today we remember those who have been touched by tragedy. We will honour their memory today if we take action to ensure that no further tragedies happen tomorrow. Let us rededicate ourselves to prevention.

The government of Ontario is absolutely committed to preventing injuries. If we work together—labour, business, WSIB and all members of the community—we can achieve our goal of safer workplaces. When our loved ones leave for work, they must come home safely at the end of the day. We must hold those in positions of responsibility to account, and that includes every one of us.

1420

What can you do? It could be as simple as speaking to your son and daughter about health and safety before they start that summer job. As an employer, you can make sure that you have a safety talk with your employees and listen to their safety concerns. Let us take action today so that tomorrow we do not have to remember what could have been done.

Very shortly, we will observe a moment of silence. We will remember those who have died, been injured or become ill as a result of their job. We will honour their memory if every one of us takes action to ensure that no further tragedies happen tomorrow.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): Today I join my colleagues on all sides of the House to speak on behalf of our party about this, the International Day of Mourning, as we remember the many workers who have suffered injury, illness or death while in the workplace. Today is the day when we are all reminded of the terrible human, social and economic toll that workplace illnesses, accidents and fatalities can take. Today we join with workers and employers and others to express our sincere condolences to the families and friends of those who were killed or injured in the workplace.

Today is also an important day for us as legislators, because we can reaffirm our shared commitment to the prevention of illness and injury and zero tolerance for fatalities, for health and safety has never been a partisan issue; it is a human issue, and we all bear responsibility to move forward to do what we can to prevent illness, death and injury. I know that all three parties have worked to improve health and safety in the workplace.

As a former Minister of Labour, I have experienced the sadness and the sorrow that each workplace death brings to family and friends. I can remember, as Minister of Labour, receiving a visit from Paul Kells and his

family when their 19-year-old son had been killed in the workplace, and subsequently speaking to him about his desire to set up a foundation that would prevent similar tragedies to the one his family had suffered, and of course he did set up the Safe Communities Foundation. Recently, I met with Rob Ellis, who also lost his son and is now devoting himself to ensuring that no other young person loses their life.

There are still too many Canadians who die each year as a result of injury, illness and accidents in the workplace. It is important to work in partnership to ensure that our workplaces are healthy and safe. We need to develop programs to provide training that will prevent death, illness and injury.

At this time, as our students prepare to go into the workplace, many of them for the first time, it is important for all parents and teachers and others to inform our young people that when they go out to that summer job, they do have the right to say no, they won't do the work, if they feel they are entering an unsafe work area. It is important that our children know that they do have rights and that they can say no. We do not want anyone to put themselves in a position where it could cost them their life.

So on this day in this House, let us all renew our own personal commitment to the task of doing what we can, as individuals and collectively, to ensure that we do everything possible to eliminate future illness, injury and death.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): New Democrats, on this April 28, join with others in this Legislature in mourning the working women and men killed, butchered, slaughtered, maimed, poisoned in workplaces throughout the history of those working women and men in this province and in this country. It has been nearly a generation now that April 28 has been the day when people gather across Canada to mourn, recall and remember their sisters and brothers who lost their lives, who gave their lives, in their workplaces—whose lives were stolen from them in those workplaces.

Last year alone, in 2004, pallbearers carried the bodies of 328 Ontario workers whose lives were taken from them in their workplaces. They carried the bodies of 328 working men and women to their graves. Another 357,000-plus sought compensation for work-related diseases from any number of workplaces. Clearly some industries and some workplaces are more dangerous than others. The construction and building trades, with about 6% of the workforce, represent about 23% of all fatal occupational injuries in Canada. Missing from the record are thousands: among those an estimated 6,000 workers killed by cancer, lung disease and other ailments all attributed to toxic substance exposure in their workplaces.

So today we commit ourselves to mourning the dead but to fighting for the living, because if we truly honour those dead, we have to commit ourselves to fighting for

the living. To do that, governments have to act. We all know that unionized workplaces are safer workplaces, and that's why New Democrats are firm, consistent and adamant that every worker in this province has a right to belong to a union, including agricultural workers, and that all workers, not just some, have the right to join that union by virtue of card-based certification.

We need better legislation that recognizes occupational causes of disease and gives better protections. Nearly 10% of all cancer cases are the result of workers being exposed to hazardous materials in the places where they go to work to make their modest incomes, to support their families and to make their contribution to their community and to the economy. Because toxins linger in the body, their families and friends are also at risk.

When a worker dies of cancer after years of exposure to workplace hazards, that's as much a death in the workplace as the worker whose life is stolen from him at that job site. There has to be a real consequence for employers who allow this to happen, and that's why New Democrats in Ottawa are committed to criminalizing the workplace violence imposed upon workers by bad bosses who put profits before the health and safety of those workers.

There has to be a real push to get toxic substances out of the workplace, and there have got to be real protections for working women and men and their families. We've got to ensure that workers have a real right to refuse unsafe work. The right to refuse unsafe work is no right at all if that worker doesn't know what constitutes unsafe work or if, in this diverse community of Canada where English is not the first language—dare I say it? I suspect it's not for the majority of people in certain parts of this country—the right to refuse unsafe work isn't communicated in the first language of that worker, or when that right isn't reinforced when the worker knows full well that to exercise that right will not result in penalties being imposed or in consequences flowing afterwards.

Especially for young workers, the most vulnerable workers—teenagers on work sites during the course of summer jobs—the knowledge of what constitutes unsafe work, and information and education about the right to refuse unsafe work, has got to become an integral part of every high school curriculum in this province.

The Occupational Health and Safety Act has been in effect for just about a quarter of a century now. We don't need any more time or any more studies to figure out what has to be done. We just need a firm resolve and a strong, clear commitment to ensuring that every worker in this province has a right to return home, perhaps more tired, but as healthy as he or she was when they went to work first thing in the morning.

The Speaker: Would all members and guests please rise to observe a moment of silence in observance of Workers' Memorial Day.

The House observed a moment's silence.

1430

ORAL QUESTIONS

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Today's front-page headline in the St. Thomas Times-Journal, the hometown paper of the Minister of Agriculture, says, "Liberals Robbing Taxpayers." When you see this headline, you think possibly they could be talking about the Liberal Adscam in Ottawa. Then you think, no; maybe it's about the illegal health tax the Liberals are imposing, the McGuinty health tax. But in fact, when you go further, you see that it says, "Elgin county councillors blasted the province Tuesday, accusing Dalton McGuinty's Liberal government of 'robbing' \$3.7 million from area ratepayers."

Minister, I can't ask the Minister of Agriculture why he is failing his residents, so I'll ask you. Why are you forcing a 20% property tax increase on Elgin county residents?

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): I know the Leader of the Opposition has been on this attack this past week, but we are very proud of the new municipal funding formula we've come up with. That formula is fairer. It is more equitable. It deals with the unusual police costs in some municipalities. It deals with the additional social programs in some municipalities. The last system, quite simply, wasn't fair. Many municipalities had to retain consultants for their treasurers to figure out what the system was based on. We've come up with a system that pays each municipality at least the same amount they got last year, that in total is 6% more than was given last year, and that has a transition fund of \$233 million to deal with the reconciliations for 2003, 2004 and the new costs.

Mr. Tory: Again, they're all wrong and the minister and every other minister is right. Instead of hiring consultants, now they'll be hiring insolvency experts on your watch.

We have now asked 45 questions of this Liberal government on why they're hurting Ontario cities and towns, and they refuse to provide any answers at all. Last week the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex said he would be "screaming from the hilltops" if he thought his area was going to lose millions. The Chatham Daily News says today that municipal officials are trying—unsuccessfully so far, I might add—to set up a meeting to discuss what they estimate to be a \$13-million shortfall. We're still waiting for a whisper, let alone a scream, from the member.

Minister, I can't ask the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex why he's been so silent, so I'll ask you. Why are you forcing double-digit property tax increases on people in Chatham-Kent?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: It is absolutely fascinating to get a question from the Leader of the Opposition, from a party that did everything in its eight years in power to ruin the municipal world and municipalities by down-loading services, by causing great tax increases clear across this province, by not providing the necessary infrastructure funding so that municipalities could be looked after.

Earlier this week we made the COMRIF announcement, which will provide \$400 million in capital grants to municipalities clear across this province. There's a great need out there. There was a total of \$2 billion worth of applications. Nobody can deny that the need is there, but the need is there because that party, when it was in power, did absolutely nothing but download on municipalities and the municipal taxpayer.

Mr. Tory: We did get some screaming—from the minister, not from the member for Chatham–Kent–Essex. Of course we got some screaming, but no answer.

Sarnia Mayor Mike Bradley is musing about taking down the provincial flag to get the attention of this McGuinty Liberal government over what he calls “an injustice.” Sarnia is set to lose every penny—all \$230,000—in annual funding under your so-called fairer program. Lambton county will also lose all \$515,000 in annual funding, and yet the Liberal member for Sarnia–Lambton is absolutely silent. Again, Minister, I can only ask that the member for Sarnia–Lambton join us in fighting for her constituents, asking the questions she should be asking. But my question is for you. Why are you forcing people in Sarnia–Lambton to make up almost \$750,000 every year because of your cuts?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: If we were still using the old formula, which nobody could understand, which was totally unfair, then places like Caledon, which that member represents, would get \$1.2 million less. Kawartha Lakes, which another member in his caucus represents, would get \$2.7 million less. Port Colborne, which the municipal affairs critic represents, would get \$1 million less. Wasaga Beach would get \$765,000 less. Smiths Falls would get \$568,000 less. I could go on and on.

The bottom line is this: Municipalities are getting \$233 million more in one-time transition and reconciliation funding, plus the annual funding is going up by 6.1%, or \$38 million per year. We're proud of that program.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): New question.

Mr. Tory: My question is again to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. We're now up to 47 questions, and not once have you answered with respect to those people who are going to pay a huge price because of your unfair program.

We have the city of Kingston—one that's well known to you, Minister—and it's going to lose \$3.4 million in annual funding under what your Premier calls his good-news program. According to your hometown paper, Kingston Mayor Harvey Rosen has already complained about changes to your new program and the loss of money to Kingston. Eastern Ontario Wardens Caucus

chair Bob Sweet: “The Minister of Municipal Affairs”—that's you, by the way—“said the new formula would create winners and losers. The biggest losers will be our taxpayers.”

Minister, will you join my call for a fairer deal for residents of Kingston and the rest of eastern Ontario? Stand up and do it.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: We have a fairer deal for all of the municipalities across this province, because they are getting 6.1%, or \$38 million, more. Lambton county is getting a 14% increase; Huron county, a 16% increase; Perth county, a 16% increase; Essex county, a 90% increase. I could go on and on.

Our system is fairer and deals with those extra costs that municipalities have for social services and with the extra policing costs, which can vary as much as \$90 per head to \$600 per head in this province. That simply isn't fair. It deals with northern and smaller rural municipalities to make sure that they are dealt with fairly. This program is fairer. It will put more money into the hands of the municipal world here in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Tory: When we have all the wardens of eastern Ontario saying that the taxpayers are in line for, and I quote, “significant increases in future property tax bills,” and we have you, I'll take them, 10 times out of 10.

The counties in Peterborough will lose more than \$750,000 in annual funding under your so-called McGuinty fairer program. County treasurer Bryce McLean says that your new program “did not help fund ... costs at the county level.” To the member for Peterborough, who's not right in front of us at the moment, I say he should be joining us in the fight for a fairer program. Many of these people are residents in his riding, and they will be making up the \$750,000. Minister, why are you forcing those residents in the Peterborough counties to make up the \$750,000? Why are you doing it?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: In addition to Peterborough getting a family health team and a hospital, I might note that it is also getting \$1.22 million more this year under the new program, and Belleville is getting a 9% increase under the new program. As a matter of fact, municipalities in eastern Ontario are getting \$143.4 million under the new program. That's a \$16.9-million increase, or 11.8%, over last year.

We're proud of that program. It will stand the test of time, and the reason for that is because it's a much fairer system than the one you had in place.

1440

Mr. Tory: Lots of people, including Councillor Peter Chirico from North Bay, have figured this out. I'll quote him from the North Bay Nugget. He says he has “grave concerns” about the so-called fairer deal you're talking about. Your program will slash \$3.1 million in annual funding from North Bay, and the budget chief of North Bay said, “It does not look good whatsoever by 2008.”

In other words, why don't you lift the veil of your one-time funding and your cash advances for future years and tell us the truth, which is that there is a \$3.1-million hole that the taxpayers are going to have to fill? That is \$136

per household per year. Why is your member for Nipissing being silent? Why are you forcing North Bay residents to pay \$136 per year per household? Why are you doing that?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: Let me put it this way: We had a member from Nipissing in this House. For six years he was the Premier of the province, and he did very little for North Bay. Within the last month alone, North Bay has gotten a new hospital that the former Premier couldn't deliver. Just this Monday, I was in North Bay for an announcement and actual payment of \$45 million for a new water filtration plant.

Let me tell you—

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: I'm very pleased to see that the Leader of the Opposition is applauding this, because we're doing something for North Bay, we're doing something for the municipal world, which your former government didn't do for eight years. You downloaded upon the people of Ontario and you downloaded upon the property taxpayers of Ontario.

GREENBELT

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the failings of your greenbelt plan are upon us, as predicted. Six weeks ago, you were boasting that your greenbelt would be a cornerstone of the new regional plan to stop urban sprawl. Nothing could be further from the truth. Because your government failed to include south Simcoe in the greenbelt, developers are now finding new and creative ways to jump over it, including making huge donations of infrastructure money with no strings attached to target communities.

Minister, it is the Wild West of development and land speculation in south Simcoe. Developers are submitting plans to build stand-alone towns of 60,000 people and more on prime farmland—better farmland than you included in the greenbelt. What are you doing about it?

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): Let me first of all thank the member very much for her question and thank her and the progressive wing of her party for voting in favour of the greenbelt; I know that the regressive wing couldn't.

Let me tell what you we've done with respect to Simcoe county. At the AMO conference last year, I called the leadership of Simcoe county together for a meeting in Ottawa. It was jointly decided at that point in time that we would do a study as to the environmental effects and a planning study for the area. That was confirmed later on at a meeting that was held in Barrie just before Christmas last year. Funding was put aside by both the province and the municipalities in the area to make sure that study was done. The study is currently being done, both from an environmental viewpoint and from a planning viewpoint, and we are awaiting the results of that study.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I think there is feedback here. Those who have BlackBerries or whatever electronics, will you please turn them off—

Interjections.

The Speaker: —except for the member from St. Catharines. His doesn't feed back.

Supplementary?

Ms. Churley: I guess you're assuming it's a BlackBerry.

Minister, developers and speculators are engaged in a feeding frenzy right now on prime agricultural farmlands of south Simcoe. Right now, it's happening. Just this week, a major developer offered to purchase an option on future sewage capacity at Bradford West Gwillimbury in the southernmost part of Simcoe county. Developers are hunting cash-strapped municipalities with risk-free deals for infrastructure upgrades. They are actively participating in infrastructure planning and decision-making in secret behind closed doors. As predicted, your greenbelt has failed to stop urban sprawl, as I told you. But for the benefit of south Simcoe residents and the future of Lake Simcoe, will you today ensure that Bill 136 at least, your Places to Grow Act, will end this leapfrog development and planning chaos unfolding in south Simcoe county right now?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: Let me say once again: We are involved in a joint planning study with the county of Simcoe. As a matter of fact, we've committed two-and-a-quarter million dollars, and the municipalities are providing three-quarters of a million dollars, to deal exactly with the issues you are talking about. As to what kind of developments should take place, what areas should be protected, what areas should be part of the greenbelt, and all of those particular issues, as well as the environmental issues, particularly as it relates to the waste water runoff into Lake Simcoe and the situation connected with that, we are doing that right now. This government was very proactive in meeting with the leadership there because it realized something had to be done. We started that process last summer, and we're awaiting the result of that report right now.

Ms. Churley: Minister, get your head out of the sand and listen to what people are saying out there. Residents and farmers who are speaking out to protect their communities and farmland are being threatened and intimidated by developers and their high-priced Bay Street lawyers. I've seen it happen myself. A developer just wrote to the general government committee telling members we should discount the deputations of south Simcoe citizens who are trying to protect their farmland and rural way of life. They practically call them liars in this letter. If your Places to Grow Act does not stop the development rampage in south Simcoe, it will have failed.

Minister, again I give you the opportunity to stand up, stop your excuses and say you will stand up to the developers and speculators today, and ensure that Bill 136 protects prime farmland and communities of south Simcoe from your greenbelt-induced sprawl.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: I refer the matter with respect to Bill 136 to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I'm delighted to answer the question. I wish the member had directed the question to me earlier, because I could share with her that we have designated the city of Barrie as an urban growth centre to accommodate the future population and growth needs in the Simcoe region. I could share with the member the transportation investments and linkages we are planning to connect GO train extension. I know the member has not been supportive of those kinds of investments in the past, but our government has taken a leadership role to expand transit options right across the region. I know the member opposite, when she was in government, would have had the opportunity to protect valuable green space, but it was the courage of this government, of this Premier, to introduce a greenbelt, unprecedented land-use—

The Speaker: Thank you.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is for the Acting Premier. Last November the Minister of Children and Youth Services promised that Ontario would be the country's leader in child care. She said, "We need to be a leader in early child care development today." But yesterday, we found out who the real leader is: Manitoba, not Ontario. Tomorrow, Manitoba will become the first province to sign a child care agreement with the federal government. Thanks to your weak leadership and broken promises, Ontario is still without a deal. Acting Premier, what happened to the promises your minister made for child care? Where is the non-profit child care system Ontario families so desperately need?

1450

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The rhetoric of the honourable member notwithstanding, she had the opportunity, because she was in this House yesterday, to hear a very forceful presentation by the Minister of Children and Youth Services on the very matter at hand. In that—

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Take the opportunity, George.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I'd be happy to. Maybe the honourable member could get a question, and I'll have a chance to answer from—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): The member from Trinity-Spadina, come to order. It would be helpful if you directed the answer to the Speaker.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The highlight of the answer, as was brought forward in the House yesterday by the Minister of Children and Youth Services, was that, for the first time in 10 years in this province, we have a government that has invested in creating new spaces. We created 4,000 new spaces. We think that is a very significant beginning. Unlike the honourable member, who chooses to manufacture negativity every day in this

Legislature, we believe that we're making significant progress in enhancing the quality of services for Ontario's children.

Ms. Horwath: I'll just remind the Acting Premier that, in fact, the minister also admitted that it was federal dollars that were being invested, not provincial dollars, and it was you who promised \$300 million of new provincial funding, you who promised to be accountable for federal child care money and you who promised to lead the country on child care. But yesterday your government voted against your own promises on child care at the very same moment that, ironically, Manitoba became the new leader in child care by saying, "Yes, child care is vital to our families, our communities and our economy."

How far your government has fallen since promising Ontario's children a Best Start. You broke your promises again yesterday when you voted against your own words. Your rhetoric has not produced a federal deal. It has not produced a not-for-profit child care system rooted in the QUAD principles. It has produced nothing at all. When can we expect Ontario to follow Manitoba's lead? Where is Ontario's deal?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Ontario doesn't have to stand back and wait and watch and follow Manitoba's lead, because we're already leading. Our initiative with respect to a Best Start means that we don't have to wait for those circumstances. We're moving forward. We've got demonstration sites in Timiskaming, Lambton, Kent and Hamilton. We've already made the point that we've created more than 4,000 spots since coming to office. This is evidence that we're a government of action, notwithstanding the fiscal challenges that we confront as a result of the inaccuracies of the party that preceded us in office.

In respect of the important commitments we've made to Ontario's children, we are a government that has demonstrated significant movement on this issue. For the honourable member to have missed that and to have looked to another border with a view toward thinking that they're a leader, demonstrates that this is an honourable member who focuses on the half-empty cup.

Ms. Horwath: Not only does Manitoba have a deal, it has a real plan for not-for-profit child care that is supported by the experts. The Manitoba Child Care Association says it supports Manitoba's strategy for federal child care money, but the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care has condemned your plan, saying it won't produce the kind of child care system we need. It says that it's not seamless, it's not educational, it's not universal and it's not accountable for taxpayers' dollars. Acting Premier, where is your plan for child care? When are we going to catch up to Manitoba?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The honourable member makes the point about catching up to Manitoba, and I think this helps to emphasize why it has been so important, on the part of our government, to have a Premier who's leading in the challenge of getting the additional resources that are required, because we want to be in a position to be able to make those investments that are as

strenuous. Notwithstanding that, we've moved forward and we're making progress in these areas.

What are our demonstration sites on Best Start about? Early and ongoing screening of newborns to identify needs and support; early identification of specialized hearing and language and communication needs; a comprehensive 18-month well-baby check-up; a growing number of child care spaces; subsidies; a new capital building and renovations are needed; rapid expansion of child care spaces for children in junior kindergarten and senior kindergarten. All of these things woven together are a demonstration of a coordinated program that will be good for Ontario's children.

PROVINCIAL REVENUE

Mr. Jim Flaherty (Whitby–Ajax): My question is for the Acting Premier, in the absence of the Premier and the Minister of Finance. I asked the Minister of Finance in this place some days ago about the percentage increase in spending in the past fiscal year, and he was unable to answer. Today I want to ask about the revenue side and some disturbing words that are going around about what has happened in the past fiscal year on the revenue side in Ontario. The third-largest source of revenue for the government of Ontario is corporations tax, and your government brought in a massive tax increase on the corporations side last May, anticipating increased revenues from that taxation of something in excess of \$1.6 billion. It appears that that has not happened. The reason it hasn't happened should be obvious to you: As you increase taxes, you decrease the stimulus to economic activity, and corporations can book their profits elsewhere. My question is this: What is the revised anticipated corporations tax revenue for the past fiscal year?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): To the Chair of Management Board.

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I'd just say to the public that in a very short period of time, right here in the Legislature—not at Magna, not at General Motors or some auto plant, but right here in the Legislature—the Minister of Finance will report on the finances of the province and outline the plans for the future. I would just suggest to the member: Be here in your seat, right here in the Legislature and, in the very near future, the people of Ontario will see the final results. Just as has historically happened—with the exception of that government—when a budget is presented, the facts will be laid out here in the Legislature, as they should be. I think the member will find that informative.

Mr. Flaherty: So now we know they don't know the figure on the spending side for the past fiscal year, and they don't know the figure on the corporations tax side as well.

We do know this: We know that Ontario's real GDP for 2004 was 2.6% and lags Canada's average of 2.8%. We know that it's getting even worse now for the people of Ontario and the businesses of Ontario as we look

forward. We know now that for this year, 2005, growth in Ontario's real GDP will trail all provinces except Newfoundland, according to Toronto-Dominion Bank: 2.2%, compared to the prediction of 2.8% for our country.

This is what Ontario has fallen to under your government: high spending, low revenues. Our taxes are now the third-highest in the entire country, after only Newfoundland and Quebec. Will you come to the House next week, ask the Minister of Finance, get the Deputy Minister of Finance to give you the number, and report to the people of Ontario about the past fiscal year's corporations tax revenues?

Hon. Mr. Phillips: The public should be aware that, the last year they were in office, the real GDP in the province of Ontario went up 1.3%. Luckily, we are now seeing growth. As a matter of fact, I think just last week, if I'm not mistaken—you may have missed it—the budget predicted 2.3% growth. I think the numbers came out last week at 2.6%.

Again, I would say that, like any responsible organization, we are doing exactly as we laid out in our financial planning. We will be presenting our budget in the very near future, he will see the final numbers at that time, and, I would just say to the member opposite, it won't be in some auto plant; it will be here in the democratically elected Legislature, where we all will have an opportunity to see it and to debate it. Again I'd say that he may not understand the numbers well, but last year the budget predicted 2.3% growth and it has come in at 2.6%. Their last year in office: 1.3%.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): A question to the Acting Premier: Premier McGuinty's latest effort to bring down the Paul Martin government is a Web site and a series of pamphlets called StrongOntario.ca. My question is, has the government submitted these materials to the Auditor General to ensure that they meet your rules and standards, laid out in your legislation, regarding non-partisan advertising?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): To the Chair of Management Board of Cabinet.

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Again, I think the member may not realize the legislation. If the member remembers the legislation and has read it, it deals with paid advertising and it deals with literature distributed by bulk mail. It does not deal with the particular instance that you're talking about.

1500

In terms of the Auditor General, what the Auditor General has said to us is that, until his office is ready to deal with material, he does not want the bill proclaimed. We are awaiting his staffing up, and then we will proclaim the bill. But I would say that the bill doesn't apply

to this. The member should look carefully at the bill. This material is not part of that piece of legislation.

Mr. Kormos: Acting Premier, I read the bill carefully, but I also carefully looked at the Web site—which is reaching out, it purports, to thousands of people—and the pamphlets that are associated with their Web site. It's glossy, it's rife with commentary from the Premier, from Mr. Sorbara, and it's as partisan as can be, because it advocates defeating Paul Martin and the federal Liberals.

How do you justify somehow indicating—

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: A week ago you supported it, and now it's partisan.

Mr. Kormos:—that this isn't what your legislation, which was designed to control partisan advertising—how dare you suggest—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order. Member from Eglinton–Lawrence, will you come to order, please.

Wrap up in 10 seconds for me, please.

Mr. Kormos: How do you suggest that this material shouldn't be subjected to the review of the Auditor General? Or is this in fact the loophole that you can drive the Mack truck through?

Hon. Mr. Phillips: First, on the details of the bill, this isn't included. I would hope, and I think, all parties here in the Legislature are supportive of an approach by the province of Ontario to ensure that the people of Ontario get their fair share of federal revenue.

I would say two things. One is that the bill doesn't cover this. This approach that we are taking is a non-partisan approach designed to articulate Ontario's position that the federal government must respond to Ontario's real, demonstrated gap in funding from the federal government. I would actually hope that we could count on the third party to lend their shoulder to the wheel in trying to bring some fairness to the province rather than criticizing the effort—which, I might add, is an effort that falls quite within the piece of legislation that we have.

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Ms. Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke–Lakeshore): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. You recently announced the launch of the JobsNow pilot project to help people move from working for welfare to working for a living. Helping those who are currently on Ontario Works find and keep sustainable jobs is good social policy, good economic policy and good fiscal policy. Based on the principle that different people need different assistance to find those jobs, we need to match the right people with the right jobs.

There's a serious need for a program like JobsNow in my own riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore, where I've been working with my community to develop job opportunities, strengthen community resource linkages and get more people working. Minister, what can I tell my community is the best way for them to try to get a program like JobsNow working in Etobicoke–Lakeshore?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I appreciate this question. I think this is a very relevant question for all communities in Ontario. We did start with pilot sites for this program in JobsNow. The first place we went to was the city of Toronto. Toronto chose not to participate; at least, I hope it's "Not at this time." We hope to be able to go back to Toronto very quickly and show them some of the remarkable success that the balance of the pilot sites has discovered so far. We have over 1,000 job orders now in a hidden market.

If I may, the key here is that when we are working with this company that is partnering with us, what they do that is significantly different is that they actually go out into the marketplace, through their partnership with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, and look for the hidden job market, for those companies that don't post jobs but have them available. They then assist in matching the people who are on welfare for more than 12 months. It's working out very well; it is still early.

Ms. Broten: There are people living in Etobicoke–Lakeshore who are anxious to get back into the workforce. I saw this first-hand at my annual community information services and job fair last November, which was attended by job seekers, employers and service providers, with a view to helping match employees with potential jobs. Given the length of time the pilot project is anticipated to run, is there an opportunity in the future for residents of Etobicoke–Lakeshore and across Toronto to be part of JobsNow, so that they can start working in a job that's right for them?

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: I think there may be some opportunity. We can work with the contract we have already initiated. We are prepared to do that. I am prepared to speak to the city of Toronto again, and maybe the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore can join me in that discussion.

What I do know is that there are a number of people in Toronto who have been on Ontario Works for more than 12 months. We know that the lion's share of people who are on Ontario Works want to work. When we are looking at an innovative project like this, we know that so far it is working. There are jobs that are being found, and the skills set this company is bringing to bear in this area is actually finding the jobs and doing the matching. Quite frankly, in any area in Ontario where they have significant social service costs, to the extent that they have come to Ontario for help in this matter, it behooves our municipalities to look seriously at any opportunity that can help them get people back to work.

HIGHWAY 417

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, this is an issue of vital importance to people in my riding. The previous government did a great job of getting the 417 extended to Arnprior. With the com-

pletion of that highway to Arnprior, everything seems to have stalled.

There are two things you need for an area to grow: You need a skilled workforce and you need infrastructure. When can we expect an announcement on the further extension of the 417?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I am surprised that the member made the comment that their government did a great job. They had nine years to complete this highway and they didn't do anything about it. Now he thinks all of a sudden their government did a great job.

I want to assure the member that we are putting \$1 billion every year into highway expansions. We will take your suggestion into consideration and see where the priorities are.

Mr. Yakabuski: That's a very good non-answer, Minister. However, my county of Renfrew is taking a serious hit with the Ontario municipal partnership fund formula that you guys have come up with. It can't absorb many more blows. Rural Ontario is hurting. What we need to develop is an assured transportation infrastructure. The municipalities have done a great job of highlighting the importance of this issue. Will you, Minister, commit to the people in Renfrew county today that you will see that this extension gets priority in this budget?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: First, I am sure the member knows that highway expansion takes years of planning. If they had done any planning at all, we would have proceeded with this highway by now.

I also want to tell this member—maybe he doesn't know—that Pembroke is getting about \$418,000 more under the formula that we applied. If he would start reading this, maybe he would start asking a little bit more intelligent questions.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): New question. The member for Trinity–Spadina.

Interjections.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): Rosie, speak up.

The Speaker: In the alternative, I will tell the minister what to do. I would rather he didn't speak up.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): Thank you, Speaker.

Minister of Education, six northern schools are scheduled to close in a matter of weeks. Earlier this week, you announced a review of the closures, but the closings seem to be a foregone conclusion. The school board is moving ahead with their plans. Yesterday, they began their work to make space for students losing their schools. In a few days, I am told, they will begin moving equipment out.

Minister, if the proposed review is meant to save these schools, why are school boards proceeding to close them?

1510

Hon. Mr. Kennedy: Again, the Lakehead board is on record with their intentions, but they also have to contend with a provincial policy that changed. We did ask that board, as we did every other board in the province, to observe a moratorium. They chose to proceed and they now have to go through a procedure to confirm or change their decisions. It's a fair one that's treating the school board with respect. Frankly, it's also treating the students with even more respect, to make absolutely sure the students in the Lakehead board will be in a position to benefit from new provincial policies.

Former education minister Dave Cooke has already been in contact with people in the area and is going to be visiting it very shortly. He has already started to conduct his review. I have every confidence that he is going to be able to come up with a fair assessment of what it is the students of the Lakehead, Thunder Bay and area will need.

Mr. Marchese: Minister, you made a promise to protect northern schools. You have not flowed the pecunia to protect them. In fact, Ernie Eves, in his dying days, admittedly, invested more new money in small schools with declining enrolment than you and your Premier.

Now you promise parents and community members a fair and impartial review, but you haven't released the terms of the review, and the plans to close the schools are moving ahead as scheduled. Will you release the terms of the school closing review and ensure that the board stops all plans to close the schools until you personally approve those closures?

Hon. Mr. Kennedy: I think the member opposite may be aware—he has had some time in government—that they closed 155 schools in their time in government, so I think they've encountered this question before. The school boards in this province have legislative authority to close schools or to open new schools, but they're subject to provincial guidelines.

We saw what Dr. Rozanski had said, and we said, "That's not good enough. There has to be more protection for rural schools and northern schools." Last year, we invested \$31 million above what the Rozanski report said. We have provided for a fair system of value in schools.

I would say to the member opposite that he may wish to promote that idea all over the province because, simply put, we think we finally have the right kind of balance to make sure that students get the respect they deserve and to make sure that school boards are fully participant in this. We're not the last government, trampling all over them. We're not the government of the social contract, taking rights away. But we will find solutions—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member from Trinity–Spadina, come to order, please.

GROWTH PLANNING

Mr. Tony C. Wong (Markham): My question is for the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. Minister, you've been given the task of building strong, prosperous communities with healthy environments and an excellent quality of life all across Ontario. A plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe area is the logical first choice since this area will be expecting a population growth of close to four million people and about two million jobs over the next 30 years. Your draft growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe seems to address where and how that specific region should grow and how the infrastructure investments should be prioritized to support those specific growth areas. The draft plan also indicates how you plan to protect those areas within the greater Golden Horseshoe that provide food, water and recreation. Minister, why is growth planning so important to the McGuinty government?

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): Let me put the context to the answer. It's a very good question. By the year 2031, we expect some four million new residents here in the province of Ontario and over two million jobs to be created. Those kinds of growth forecasts will have enormous implications for the kinds of public infrastructure investments we need to make, as well as to augment the importance of building healthy and complete communities.

It's critical that this region called the greater Golden Horseshoe continue to be economically competitive and offer a high quality of life. That's why we need a solid growth plan. By determining where and how growth should occur, a growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe would help reduce sprawl, make transit a more viable option, reduce gridlock, improve our air quality, protect the environment and other valuable natural resources. At the same time, we want to avoid the kind of growth Ontarians have told us they don't want, that increases gridlock, chews up valuable green spaces, drives away investments. So the plan that we've introduced will create jobs, attract investment, protect valuable natural areas and ultimately improve our quality of life.

Mr. Wong: Can you elaborate on specific steps the government is taking to ensure that municipalities have been a key part of developing this plan?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: The growth plan will provide broad strategic direction on growth-related and cross-boundary issues on which municipalities have, for a very long time, asked for provincial leadership. In fact, I was really gratified that, during the Bill 136 committee hearings, we had municipal leadership: the mayor of Hamilton, the mayor of Burlington and the mayor of Oshawa. The member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford reminded me that Mayor Hamilton from Barrie came and spoke about the need for provincial leadership to assist municipal leaders in developing the kind of growth legislation and growth planning that will allow it to align long-range planning with capital investments.

We are working with our municipal partners to develop this kind of a plan, and we're going to continue as we develop sub-area growth strategies. Those municipal partners are working hand in hand with the McGuinty government after a long, long absence of provincial leadership. Thank God.

FABRY DISEASE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): My question is for the Minister of Health. It has been over 18 months since the issue of permanent funding for Fabry disease was brought to your attention. Since then, you have ignored desperate cries for help from people such as 28-year-old Darren Nesbit of Sarnia, and you have reneged on your written promise to Donna Strauss, of July 2004, where you say, "I will make certain of coverage for Fabry." Instead, you hide behind the common drug review process, a process that I, as a former health minister, know was not intended to deal with catastrophic drugs. I ask you today: Will you heed the desperate cries for help that I continue to receive and you do, and commit to permanent funding for enzyme replacement therapy for Fabry patients?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The honourable member's attempts at revisionist history notwithstanding, the answer that I've had the opportunity to convey so many times in this House continues to be, I believe, the appropriate one.

I've had the opportunity to work with my provincial colleagues on this. We're of the view that the Common Drug Review is the appropriate place to be reviewing this. In fact, the company, after the first round of common drug review analysis, asked that the product be looked at with a different set of data in mind. That's what's going on currently. In this circumstance, we think it's wholly appropriate that companies which voluntarily began to supply these drugs to patients in Ontario should continue with that supply until this process has come to its conclusion. In the meantime, we're also working hard with the federal government on the development of an orphan drug strategy which may go further in this area. But in the interim, I believe that we've taken the appropriate steps in the province of Ontario.

Mrs. Witmer: On March 30, when I asked about 28-year-old Darren Nesbit from Sarnia, this minister said he would ensure "that the product is ... available to that patient."

I want to read an e-mail I received from Darren yesterday: "Just writing to tell how bad I feel right now. My body hasn't been without treatment this long in six years. For the past few days, I have no energy to feel like a normal person. My question is, why is the health minister not helping me out? His office called, but they say he cannot help."

I ask you, Minister: Why will you not do what they have done in Alberta; that is, provide bridge or interim funding for ERT until such time as a national policy on orphan disease and catastrophic drugs is in place?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: That is about the third time in this House that that honourable member has raised this Alberta situation, and she has misinformed people. The circumstances that she has just said are the circumstances are not factual. We're in very close contact with my colleague the minister from Alberta, Iris Evans. Alberta is following the same process, to our very best understanding, as we are here.

The obligation is a challenging one, of course. We have sympathy for these patients. But the circumstance that has been created there—the expectation of or dependency on this treatment—is one that was started by drug companies themselves. It's inappropriate in the circumstance, until such time as the processes that they themselves have asked to be reconsidered in have come to their conclusion—that the obligation and the onus continues to lie with these companies that began these voluntary treatments.

1520

We'll continue to push these companies to fulfill the obligation that they themselves created while we determine the appropriate clinical efficacy. No drug plan can sustain—

The Speaker: Thank you. I have some concern about a comment you made that was unparliamentary, and I'd ask you to withdraw it.

Hon. George Smitherman: I do, Mr. Speaker.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. I tried for more than six weeks to get a meeting or even a return phone call from your office about the loss of second-stage housing in Hamilton. On Tuesday I asked you what you were going to do to preserve 28 endangered units of second-stage housing for Hamilton women and their children escaping violence in their homes. You said you would go to my city the following day, April 27, and meet with Family Services Hamilton and attend to this urgent matter. Within hours of that promise, you cancelled until May 5. Why did you break your promised appointment, and how serious are you about saving these 28 units of second-stage housing?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I appreciate the question, because it gives me a chance once again to explain to this House that when members stand up, I would appreciate accurate information being forwarded.

This particular agency, Family Services Hamilton, receives over \$350,000 from our ministry for a whole host of programs that they deliver. I agree: This particular agency has significant issues and has had significant issues for the last several years, and that started back in 1995 or 1996, when the former government cut all their funding for second-stage housing. We came in as a government and have begun the reinstatement of funding, not just to second-stage housing for transitional support, but

across Ontario, where the lion's share of women who are fleeing abuse never even enter shelters, let alone second-stage housing. We have committed to meet with them. I'm not interested in dates for this particular member; I'm interested in the dates we are arranging with the agency. We are working directly with the agency to secure when we're meeting.

Ms. Horwath: The minister must have misunderstood what I was saying, because nothing I actually said was inaccurate: You didn't show up, and you're still not giving a commitment about second-stage housing units operated by Family Services Hamilton. We can't allow those units to close in Hamilton. We have a genuine crisis: 28 families who have fled life-and-death situations are about to lose their safe housing because of you. Continuing to do nothing in this particular matter will force women back to their violent partners or into homelessness with their children. Family Services Hamilton doesn't have the resources to pay for your government's election promises on second-stage housing.

Minister, why aren't you meeting with them immediately, like you promised, to deal with this urgent crisis, and why don't you just commit right now, today, to signalling to those people that you're going to fund those 28 units?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: My office, this ministry and in particular the regional office for that area have been working with this agency, and we will continue to do that. I can tell you that when our government gives out money to organizations, they will be strong organizations that we know will continue to deliver good services. We know that this particular agency has undergone significant governance issues over the last several years. We are intent on spending our money well. I have spoken directly with the executive director of this organization, who knows full well that we are intending to sit down and act directly. I understand that this member would like me to check with her calendar, but quite frankly, I'm interested in getting to this agency as soon as we can and endeavouring to work with them so they can continue to provide good services. We have said that before, and we will say that again.

IDENTITY THEFT

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward–Hastings): My question is to the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. I hear a great deal in the media lately about identity theft. I know it's not a problem for us Liberals, because right now, nobody wants to be us. On the other hand, the Minister of Tourism and Recreation has reported to me that his BlackBerry is inundated with Internet scams that appear to want his identity. Recognizing that the Internet appears to be the weapon of choice, could you give us some information on identity theft?

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): Just for the record, I didn't write that question.

Identity theft is the fastest-growing crime in North America. The particular issue that the member from Prince Edward–Hastings spoke about is a relatively new phenomenon called phishing. It's a phenomenon where scam artists are actually sending fake e-mails to individuals, trying to extract consumer information, personal information. They also set up Web sites that replicate banks, financial institutions and credit card companies. My advice to consumers watching and members, if you'd like to share it with your constituents, is that a reputable bank or credit card or financial institution will never ask for personal information like PIN numbers or credit card numbers.

Mr. Parsons: I think I omitted the word “federal” in my second sentence, so if I could amend Hansard to include that, life would be much easier for me and others.

There appear to be certain individuals who are particularly susceptible to this type of activity, and I suspect that they're older individuals who are not Internet-savvy. I would ask what they should do to protect themselves particularly.

Hon. Mr. Watson: It's true that new Canadians and senior citizens in particular are vulnerable to this kind of scamming, but every citizen of our province can be a target. On Good Friday, for instance, I received a phishing e-mail at my home e-mail account asking for personal information. There was a link to a site that looked very much like a real bank site. So again I would encourage people to arm themselves with proper information and go to our ministry Web site, which is cbs.gov.on.ca. I'd also ask them to get in touch with their local Rotary Club; the ABCs of Fraud is a very reputable organization that can give seminars to seniors and other community groups; or contact PhoneBusters, which is operated in conjunction with the OPP, at 1-888-495-8501.

EASTERN ONTARIO

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): This is a question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. This morning the Legislature voted unanimously in favour of a bill to create a fund for part of Ontario—eastern Ontario, with the exclusion of Ottawa—similar to the northern heritage fund, to help out these communities. These communities have a low tax assessment base, they are declining or not growing in population, they have an inordinate number of senior citizens compared to the Ontario public, and their salaries and incomes are lower, much lower in some cases, than the average in Ontario.

Mr. Minister, in changing from the CRF to your new plan, why does this area come up \$4 million short under your new plan?

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): In actual fact that is not so, and if I can find the numbers here: Eastern Ontario is getting \$16.9 million, or an 11.8% increase, under the new program and it's receiving a total of \$143.4 million.

He has raised another interesting issue, though. It's unfortunate that your government, of which you were a very prominent and highly placed individual, for eight years did absolutely nothing for many, many parts of eastern Ontario. When you consider that eastern Ontario is the oldest part of Ontario, with great infrastructure needs, with a lot of old infrastructure needs, it is really too bad that you did absolutely nothing during that period of time so that the infrastructure needs of that part of Ontario could—they should have been attended to.

The bottom line is this: They're getting more than they did under your—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Thank you. Get it in in the supplementary.

Mr. Sterling: I'd like to talk about the \$50 million we put into Carleton University, the \$60 million that we put into the University of Ottawa, the \$200-million water protection fund that we put right across Ontario, and many of those projects were in eastern Ontario—the building of the 416. We did so much for eastern Ontario that it's unbelievable this member would not understand it.

1530

The minister talks about next year's grants to eastern Ontario. The Eastern Ontario Wardens Caucus has done all the numbers. They added up what the counties were receiving, they added up what the ward tiers were receiving, they added up what the single-tier towns were receiving. Their figures show that when this plan comes to maturity in 2008, they are going to be \$3.5 million short. Why are you doing this to one of the most vulnerable places in all of Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: Let me first of all say that we believe this plan is fairer because it deals with the inordinate police costs that some municipalities bear; it deals with the additional costs of social programs that municipalities bear. Having said that, we all know eastern Ontario needs help because during the eight years you were in power very little was done. It's interesting to note, though, that unemployment in eastern Ontario is down from 7.5% to 6.6%. As a matter of fact, in eastern Ontario, since March of last year, 27,400 new jobs have been created. Let me say this: More can be done for Ontario, more can be done for eastern Ontario, and that's exactly what this government is doing because we believe in strong communities, something your government unfortunately did not believe in.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Earlier, during members' statements, I raised a point of order with regard to a statement made by the member from Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh. In that statement, I submit to you, the member used unparliamentary language. I understand you cannot rule retroactively. I have presented you with the instant Hansard in which the member specifically stated that the leader of the official opposition used language in this House that misrepresented facts. I'm going to ask you now, Speaker, to tell the House whether in fact that is parliamentary language for future purposes, for the bene-

fit of members here, or whether it was in fact unparliamentary language.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I want to thank the member for that. I should also have said that I would only rule on what I hear at the time. If I go back to look at many things members have said, I would be ruling all day—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order—about some very unparliamentary things members have said. Yes, the language you show me, of course, could be unparliamentary, but I cannot rule retroactively on things that have happened. I thank the member for bringing it to my attention. That is not a point of order.

PETITIONS

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

“Whereas many owners of seasonal trailers kept at campgrounds have raised their concerns over the impact on property taxes on seasonal trailers and the unfairness of imposing a new tax on persons who use minimum municipal services;

“Whereas this new tax will discourage business and tourism opportunities in Ontario and will cause many families to give up their vacation trailers altogether;

“Whereas the administration of this tax will require a substantial investment in staff, time and resources across the province of Ontario;

“Whereas some representatives of the recreational vehicle industry, campground providers and trailer owners have suggested an alternative sticker or tag system to establish fees for seasonal trailers;

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

“That the Parliament of Ontario immediately abandon the assessment and taxation of recreational trailers used on a seasonal basis in 2004, and that the government of Ontario consult with all stakeholders regarding the development of a fair and reasonable sticker or tag fee that would apply to recreational trailers used on a seasonal basis.”

As I am in support of this, I will sign it.

ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): I’m proud to submit these petitions from high school students representing Ottawa–Orléans, Ottawa South, Nepean–Carleton, Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, Ottawa–Vanier, Ottawa West–Nepean and Lanark–Carleton:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas cigarette addiction is a major health issue affecting the citizens of Ontario; and

“Whereas tobacco companies spend \$77 million annually on power wall advertising; and

“Whereas youths are especially susceptible to tobacco advertising; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario has introduced Bill 164 to limit smoking in Ontario; and

“Whereas we, the students of the Exposé smoke-free project, have collected 24,000 signatures from Ottawa high school students;

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

“To support the law to make Ontario smoke-free, to act to prevent smoking in all public places and workplaces, and to ban the use of power walls.”

I’m pleased to have Alistair Butt, a page from Ottawa–Orléans, deliver these to the Clerk.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas during the 2003 election campaign, Dalton McGuinty promised to establish a standing committee on education to ensure transparency in education funding; and

“Whereas such a committee has not been established; and

“Whereas Ontario’s education system is not properly funded and there is no transparency in funding;

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

“To immediately establish a standing committee on education to hold public hearings every year on the effectiveness of education funding.”

Because I strongly agree with this petition, I will be signing it.

HALTON RECYCLING PLANT

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas noxious odours from the Halton Recycling plant in Newmarket are adversely affecting the health and quality of life of residents and working people in Newmarket; and

“Whereas local families have lost the enjoyment of their properties for themselves and their children, face threats to their health and well-being, and risk a decline in the value of their homes; and

“Whereas for the 300 members of the nearby main RCMP detachment, as well as other workers in the area, the odours are making their working conditions intolerable;

“Therefore, we, the undersigned, demand that the Minister of the Environment take immediate action to halt all noxious emissions and odours from the Halton Recycling plant, and take all steps necessary to force

Halton Recycling to comply with environmental rules, including closing the plant if the odour problems continue.”

I am in agreement with this, and therefore will affix my signature.

CREDIT VALLEY HOSPITAL

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I've got a petition here from a group of health care workers from the Credit Valley Hospital in Mississauga, a group that includes Hristo Todorow, Anton Fedyanov and Simeon Simeonov. It reads as follows:

“Whereas some 20,000 people each year choose to make their home in Mississauga, and a Halton-Peel District Health Council capacity study stated that the Credit Valley Hospital should be operating 435 beds by now, and 514 beds by 2016; and

“Whereas the Credit Valley Hospital bed count has remained constant at 365 beds since its opening in November 1985, even though some 4,800 babies are delivered each year at the Credit Valley Hospital in a facility designed to handle 2,700 births annually; and

“Whereas donors in Mississauga and the regional municipalities served by the Credit Valley Hospital have contributed more than \$41 million of a \$50-million fundraising objective, the most ambitious of any community hospital in the country, to support the construction of an expanded facility able to meet the needs of our community;

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care undertake specific measures to ensure the allocation of capital funds for the construction of A and H block at Credit Valley Hospital to ensure the ongoing acute care needs of the patients and families served by the hospital are met in a timely and professional manner, to reduce wait times for patients in the hospital emergency department, and to better serve patients in the community in Halton and Peel regions by reducing severe overcrowding in the labour and delivery suite.”

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this petition, to extend my complete support toward it and to ask Dara to carry it for me.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): This is from Mr. Albert Werry and many other people:

“Whereas the Hon. Michael Bryant is minister responsible for democratic renewal; and

“Whereas the Hon. Michael Bryant, Attorney General of Ontario, is elected to safeguard our justice system on behalf of the people of Ontario; and

“Whereas the ministry of our Attorney General may not be aware of the serious and important issues facing individuals involved in areas of the justice system even

though the Attorney General's ministry is continually monitoring;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Hon. Michael Bryant, Attorney General, for his in-depth investigation of the Ontario judicial system and [to] make the public aware of his findings immediately.”

1540

ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I've got a petition here on anaphylactic students signed by a number of people, including Ana MacPherson:

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

“Whereas there is no specific comment regarding anaphylaxis in the Ontario Education Act; and

“Whereas anaphylaxis 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 community; and

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

“Be it therefore resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the government of Ontario support the swift passage of Bill 3, An Act to protect anaphylactic students, that requires that every school principal in Ontario establish a school anaphylactic plan.”

It's a petition I support and I will be signing it.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I am pleased to submit this petition. The member for Lanark–Carleton was going to present one on the legal system, but I'm presenting one:

“Whereas the federal Income Tax Act at present has a minimum amount of medical expenses for which a taxpayer is entitled to claim a non-refundable income tax credit;

“Whereas the health and medical expenses of every citizen in the province of Ontario, great or small, affect their overall net income;

“Whereas the Ontario Liberal government moved in their 2004 budget on May 18, 2004”—they actually did it here—“to delist publicly funded medical services such as chiropractic services, optometry examinations and physiotherapy services;

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

“That the Income Tax Act remove the present minimum amount of medical expenses for which an Ontario taxpayer is entitled to claim a non-refundable income tax credit.”

I am pleased to support this in the interest of preserving health care and John Tory's vision for Ontario.

ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition here from a group of people in Mississauga and Toronto about banning smoking in public places in Ontario, a petition for which I'd like to express support to my colleague from Ottawa–Orléans. It read as follows:

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

"Whereas some 16,000 Ontarians each year die of tobacco-related causes; and

"Whereas the inhalation of direct and second-hand tobacco smoke both lead to health hazards that can ... cause preventable death; and

"Whereas more than four out of every five Ontarians do not smoke, and this large majority desires that enclosed public places in Ontario be smoke-free at all times; and

"Whereas preventing the sale of tobacco products, especially to young people, and banning the use of tobacco products in public and gathering places of all types will lower the incidence of smoking among Ontarians, and decrease preventable deaths;

"Be it therefore resolved that the Ontario Legislative Assembly enact Bill 164, and that the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care aggressively implement measures to restrict the sale and supply of tobacco to those under 25; that the display of tobacco products in retail settings be banned; that smoking be banned in enclosed public places or in workplaces, and banned on or near the grounds of public and private schools, hospitals and day nurseries; that designated smoking areas or rooms in public places be banned, and that penalties for violations of smoking laws be substantially increased."

I wholeheartedly support this petition. I'll sign it and ask Madison to carry it for me.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): I have a petition from some students at All Saints High School in Kanata in the city of Ottawa who have been working very strongly on anti-smoking initiatives, because they understand the detrimental effects to the health of the people of Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas smoking and exposure to second-hand smoke is the number one preventable killer in Ontario today, and there is overwhelming evidence that retail displays of tobacco products (power walls), in plain view of children and adults increase the use of tobacco, we have collected 862 postcards signed by persons from our school and community supporting a smoke-free Ontario in 2005 and banning the use of power walls which promote tobacco use;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to make all public places and workplaces smoke-free and ban the use of power walls. The city of Ottawa has been smoke-free since August 2001. All of Ontario deserves clean air."

I congratulate all of these students.

ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): It's my pleasure to rise today to add my voice to those reading petitions to protect anaphylactic students, and the petition reads as follows:

"Whereas there are no established Ontario-wide standards to deal with anaphylaxis in Ontario schools; and

"Whereas there is no specific comment regarding anaphylaxis in the Ontario Education Act; and

"Whereas anaphylaxis 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 community; and

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

"Be it therefore resolved....

"That the government of Ontario support the swift passage of Bill 3, An Act to protect anaphylactic students, that requires that every school principal in Ontario establish a school anaphylactic plan."

This petition comes from a group of students in the Meadowvale and Lisgar areas of Mississauga. I'm pleased to sign it, to support it, and to ask Paula to carry it for me.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Pursuant to standing order 55, I'd like to rise to give the Legislature the business of the House for next week.

On Monday, May 2, in the afternoon, Bill 183 and Bill 92.

On Tuesday, May 3, in the afternoon, Bill 186 and Bill 92.

On Wednesday, May 4, we're going to have an opposition day.

On Thursday, May 5, Bill 176.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE SECURITY AND
INVESTIGATIVE SERVICES ACT, 2005LOI DE 2005 SUR LES SERVICES PRIVÉS
DE SÉCURITÉ ET D'ENQUÊTE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 21, 2005, on the motion for second reading of Bill 159, An Act to revise the Private Investigators and Security Guards Act and to make a consequential amendment to the Licence Appeal Tribunal Act, 1999 / Projet de loi 159, Loi révisant la Loi sur les enquêteurs privés et les gardiens et apportant une modification corrélative à la Loi de 1999 sur le Tribunal d'appel en matière de permis.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I understand that at this stage it is the official opposition who have the time to speak.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm pleased to participate in the debate on this bill before us. The Private Investigators and Security Guards Act currently is being replaced by this bill. At the outset, I want to express my support for the bill. I certainly will be voting for it, and I believe I will be joined by my colleagues in the official opposition.

I believe all of us can support updating this important framework for ensuring that the private investigators act does in fact do for us what we expect it to do. It has not been revised since 1966, and we know that the world has changed dramatically since then. I believe in those days basically what we were dealing with were what were called watchmen. The environment within which security guards work today is very different. The kind of work they're expected to take on is considerably more challenging and certainly more dangerous. As a result, we need in place a legislative framework to ensure that those who are in the business of selling the services of private investigators and security guards are appropriately regulated. That is essentially what this bill does.

1550

I do want to give credit to my colleague Mr. Garfield Dunlop, who brought before this House his own private member's bill some time ago. That was Bill 88, entitled the Private Investigators and Security Guards Amendment Act, 2004. That was on June 1, 2004. That bill, I believe, was in many ways perhaps even more comprehensive than the bill that the government has laid before us today. I would have preferred, frankly, to have this comprehensive nature of Mr. Dunlop's bill incorporated into this government bill. However, that is not the case, and so we're going to deal with this legislation as it is before us.

Clearly, what we have in this legislation are licensing requirements that are imposed and procedures that are put in place for revoking and suspending existing licences, subject, of course, to appeal provisions, and that's appropriate. But there needs to be a mechanism through which government has the authority to repeal existing licences if, in fact, the business is not being carried out in a responsible way.

This bill, as well, contains offences and regulatory requirements and a process for dealing with complaints from the public. As with many of these industries, often the problem is that there isn't an appropriate mechanism through which a member of the public can register a complaint and then see appropriate action taken to be satisfied. As a result of that, you know well, Speaker, that often complaints aren't brought and the authorities don't know what is being done within the industry that may well be inappropriate. So, again, I support those provisions that are contained in this legislation.

The minister has taken upon himself the responsibility to make regulations, to set out a code of conduct for private investigators and security guards. Again, in that

regard, we would have preferred to see those regulations. We expect that we will certainly, as legislators, have an opportunity to participate in that regulation-making, or at least have an opportunity to have input into what those regulations ultimately look like.

In large part, I believe that the industry itself is highly responsible. I know that the minister has responded not only to the public in terms of this issue but also in terms of the industry itself. The responsible players in the industry understand and recognize the importance of this legislation and of having a meaningful framework. No doubt, they will be working co-operatively with the minister to ensure that whatever regulations are set in place are workable, and that they do the work that the minister intended to have been done.

Once again, I just want to be on record here in the Legislature that I fully support the legislation before us. I look forward to the minister opening up the process of establishing the regulations and working with the industry, and hopefully it will allow members of this Legislature—members of the opposition parties, as well—to have some input in that process.

I want to take this opportunity to bring to the attention of the minister a broader issue that relates to the security industry. I offer the minister the benefit of some of the work that I have done in the past that relates not specifically to private investigators but to another aspect of the security industry that isn't being addressed in this legislation. I do believe it's very important that either this minister—or perhaps the government wants to deal with some of these other matters through another ministry, but it should be addressed, and that's the issue of the alarm and security industry. The minister will know that that is a growing industry in this province, and unfortunately there too is a lack of regulation, a lack of standards. There is nothing in place in Ontario that regulates, through licensing, from the standpoint of government; there is nothing in place in terms of a self-regulatory framework.

As a result, we have people opening up businesses every day in Ontario who represent to be putting in place, whether in homes or businesses, a security system, and then people are convinced that they can now rely on these alarm systems protecting either their persons or their homes when they are not there. In many cases, of course, even if they are at home they're designed to signal a warning that someone is entering the premises.

I conducted extensive consultations over a period of two years on this issue. We had meetings here at Queen's Park and we travelled the province. There were a number of recommendations as a result of my consultation with representatives from the industry that I was in the process of bringing forward. I want to deliver them to the minister for his consideration. He may well want to take an initiative in this regard.

The ministry had suggested at the time that the industry is facing a number of emerging issues. One was, as I indicated, the emergence of unethical business practices and the loss of trust by consumers in the industry,

and the resultant increased cost of false alarms, for example, to police services. A number of steps are being taken now, but I believe there is a serious need for this to be considered.

I say to the minister that of some concern for me is the implementation period for this legislation. I understand that we have to work with the industry. What you can't do is bring legislation down and have it implemented in 90 days, because there are serious implications. There are cost implications to some of the requirements that this legislation will put forward for the industry, so there's a need, obviously, for a transition period. I would have preferred to see some of this implementation accelerated for the benefit of community safety to ensure that the intent of this legislation is in place sooner than we'll see it under the current schedule. However, that is the minister's call, it's the government's call, and we will live with that.

In closing, I just want to say again that I commend the minister for bringing this forward. I do not want to miss the opportunity to express my appreciation to my colleague Garfield Dunlop for the work that he has done on this file. We look forward to this legislative framework being implemented in the interest of community safety.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): I just want to agree with some of the comments made by the member from Oak Ridges, particularly with respect to the issue of when these regulations will be implemented. He raises an important point. I will speak to that as the next speaker and elaborate just a little on that.

I think the member from Oak Ridges probably would agree with me, with respect to issues of consultation, that we should have some hearings so that we can hear from people who otherwise have not been consulted. From my understanding, United Steelworkers have not been consulted at all in this regard. They represent about 26,000 guards. My sense is that the member would agree with me that they should be consulted in some form or other and that hearings would provide for that. I wondered if he had an opinion with respect to it.

1600

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I want to comment on the comments from the member from Oak Ridges. If you don't mind, I'd also like to state a little bit of background on the bill, in line with his comments.

I got a phone call one day from a lady whose son had died in an altercation at a shopping mall. She felt that somehow her son may have died without any recognition, so I went over to see her, to talk to her. Her name was Mrs. Shand; I think she's been mentioned here in the Legislature. She reviewed with me the circumstances, and I thought she made a good point. I talked to the local police just to see what was going on; appropriately, I think. At the appropriate moment, after the criminal investigations were complete, I did ask the coroner if this

was a case that would merit a coroner's inquest. The reason I point all this out is that there is an individual who took some action. She pursued it, and out of a tragedy, in my opinion, will come something quite good.

I just wanted an opportunity to get that on the record; I think the minister had already commented on her. Sometimes one individual can make a difference, and in Mrs. Shand's case, I think this bill is heavily as a result of her persistence in trying to make some good come out of her son's tragic death.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): I want to compliment the member for Oak Ridges, who has given a fine speech this afternoon: very thoughtful and constructive. I've long admired the member for Oak Ridges. I sit right behind him; I watch his back every day. He does a great job on behalf of his constituents.

I know he would have wanted to mention in his speech, but perhaps didn't have time because of the time limitations, that he's been a long-standing supporter of double-hatter firefighters. He supported my private member's bill, Bill 30, way back when I first introduced it, approximately three years ago. I'm pleased that the minister of public safety and security is present in the House today, because I want to inform the House that the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs is having their conference next week. They're one of the groups that has long supported the concept of legislative protection for double-hatter firefighters.

For those of you in the House who perhaps don't know—I would hope all know—this is an issue that has been going on for many years now, and it's something that I've been raising for three years. In many cases in small communities in rural Ontario where we are served by volunteer fire departments, there are double-hatter firefighters who live in a small town but who may work in a city department nearby. On their free days and on their time off, they want to serve as volunteers in their home communities. The Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association has taken the position that this is not appropriate, and they have in some cases laid charges, believe it or not, against some of their members, threatening them with expulsion from the union if they don't quit as volunteers. This has meant that a lot of our small communities have lost hundreds of double-hatter firefighters.

I understand the minister is going to be there on Monday morning to speak to the chiefs' association. I'm looking forward to being there too, to hear what he says and to continue to encourage him to do the right thing: to bring forward some steps on the part of the government to ensure that these small communities don't lose these double-hatter firefighters that they need so desperately.

The Acting Speaker: In response, the Chair recognizes the member from Oak Ridges.

Mr. Klees: I want to thank the members who participated in this debate. To the member from Trinity–Spadina, I want to be on record as agreeing with him that it would be helpful to have some hearings on this bill, and I would hope the minister would support that as well.

There is never any risk of harming a piece of legislation when we ask for further input; it always will improve it. So I would certainly support that.

To the Chair of Management Board, I thank him for making reference to the Shand family, and I would recommend that when this bill becomes law, it should be called the Patrick Shand bill for that same reason, because it is true that out of a tragedy we are at least discussing a very positive piece of legislation that I believe will save many others from harm for years to come. To Mrs. Shand, we also express our appreciation for her courage in taking this issue forward.

I want to thank the member from Waterloo–Wellington for his kind remarks, and I want to reaffirm, in the presence of the minister, my support for the member from Waterloo–Wellington's initiative relating to double-hatters. I come from a riding where volunteer firefighters play a very important role. I believe that whole issue has, unfortunately all too often, been misunderstood and that this ministry has the opportunity to do the right thing not only for firefighters, volunteer firefighters, but for municipalities across the province. As I say, it's not often that we, as members of opposition, have an opportunity to endorse legislation that comes before the House. I do so wholeheartedly for this, and I look forward to the minister doing the same for double-hatters.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Marchese: I'm happy to speak to Bill 159, on security guard regulation, and I want to say that there are some positive things about this bill and things we want to raise that are concerns, which hearings might obviously deal with, if not solve.

On the positive issue, the bill replaces the Private Investigators and Security Guards Act. Yes, it regulates private investigators, security guards and those who are in the business of selling the services of private investigators and security guards. There are mandatory requirements laid out for security guards and investigators, including that you've got to be over the age of 18, you've got to have a clean record and you've got to complete the prescribed training. All that is positive. No one can sell security services unless they are licensed themselves or are in the employ of a licensee. This is helpful, obviously. Additional requirements that one needs include insurance coverage, carrying a licence at all times and not lying about being a police officer. All of that is helpful. The bill will set by regulation criteria for uniforms and displaying of a guard's name, criteria for vehicles used by guards, criteria for mandatory training programs, criteria for testing programs, the term of validity of a licence and what qualifies as a clean record.

All these things will be dealt with by regulation, and the problem I have about the issue of regulation as it relates to the matters I have raised is that they will not be implemented until 2007. The member from Oak Ridges made reference to it, and I want to elaborate briefly and simply ask, why the delay? Why does it take until 2007 to set out the regulations around the issues I have pointed

out? Why can we not do it any faster than that? My hope is that the response to this debate and/or any Liberal who speaks later will point out the reasons as to why the regulations will not come into effect until 2007. There is no logical reason that I am aware of to explain the delay. There might be reasons, except I haven't heard them, and I hope that in this debate, assuming the Liberals will speak to it, we'll get some answers to the question of the delay.

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It happens often that some regulations are not implemented at all. It happens often that some regulations are implemented and some are delayed. I understand that. It happens to all governments—Conservative, Liberal, New Democrats—but to delay all of these regulations until 2007 makes no sense. That's why we need debate. That's why you need everyone in the House to participate. If you can't have five Liberals speaking, 10 Liberals speaking, you can at least have a couple of them speaking to address some questions that are raised in this Legislature. I'm optimistic we'll get some responses; if not, debate for at least 10, 15, 20 minutes. So the question of regulation and the delay is something I have spoken to.

I've got something to say, and I want to put it on the record. Steelworkers represent 20,000 workers—26,000 guards. To my knowledge, they have not been consulted at all. Representing 26,000 guards equals half of the 50,000 guards who serve in their capacity in this province. That's a whole lot of people that the Steelworkers represent. You would think that the ministry, the minister or this government would be interested in consulting them in some way. I'm not even suggesting that the consultation need have been in depth, just some kind of meetings, short or long, to get their input. It can be argued that the union representing 26,000 guards will get their opportunity when we have hearings. I understand that. But normally when bills are drafted, government, ministers, ministry staff tend to consult all of the various players who have something to say or to do with the bill. Given that this bill has not been revamped, amended, since 1966, it is an opportunity for the Liberal government to consult with Steelworkers.

I know that my colleague from Eglinton–Lawrence supports that, because he's very close with labour. I know the Minister of Labour is close with labour as well, as are a couple of other Liberals. There aren't too many, although they all pretend to be closely allied with labour. But given their closeness to so many in the union movement, with union leaders, if not bosses—

Mr. Mike Colle (Eglinton–Lawrence): Carmen Principato.

Mr. Marchese: Carmen Principato just retired, evidently, yes.

Mr. Colle: Local 506.

Mr. Marchese: Local 506. He was there for 20 years or so, if not longer.

Mr. Colle: He's still there. There was a tribute to him.

Mr. Marchese: A tribute to him. He's still there. There was a tribute for Carmen Principato, Local 506,

representing the bricklayers. My colleague from Eglinton–Lawrence was just telling me this.

I didn't get a chance to go. Were you there?

Mr. Colle: Yes.

Mr. Marchese: That's very nice. I didn't see you mentioned in the *Corriere Canadese*.

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: With Milano. I can't believe that a southern Italian would support Milano. I'm telling you, a lot of Milanese are separatists, equal to so many Québécois who want to separate from Canada. There's a league in the north, and so many Milanese support the separation of northern Italy, which includes, by the way, separating itself from Bologna south and Bologna's pretty north. I can't believe that my colleague from Eglinton–Lawrence would be supporting the Milanese team, which is on the extreme north on the left side, if you're looking at Italy this way. I've got to tell you, you should be supporting Reggina, which is much closer to you, or Messina Palermo, which is much closer to you than Milan, for God's sake.

I don't know. I'm a bit confused by it. I mean, as a fan, we want to prop up the south in some way or other to counteract the very discriminatory forces of the north against the south which has gone on for so long, which includes you, Mike.

Mr. Colle: We've been oppressed.

Mr. Marchese: You and I have been oppressed by so many northerners—and you too, Mr. Tascona. Given your heritage and where your parents might have come from, I suspect we share some commonalities in this respect. But that's not the subject of this bill we're speaking to. My colleague forced me to divert from the bill, unwittingly, because the Liberals want me not to prolong this debate, and I appreciate that. Is that true?

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): No, I want to hear from you.

Mr. Marchese: Exactly. That's why you came into the House. That's why you've been here in the environs for quite some time.

To continue, the Steelworkers ought to be consulted because they're a big player, representing 26,000 guards. I know that Mr. Caplan, the minister of infrastructure, is very close to labour as well, and it may have been an oversight not to have consulted with them, but I know he will want to correct it and that the opportunity will be given to them when we have hearings. Given that we are amending this act and that it hasn't been changed since 1966, this is a golden opportunity to improve the bill in more ways than have been suggested by this government. So that's another issue I wanted to put on the record.

I also know the government may be delaying, or is still reviewing—with no promise, by the way, of any action—recommendation 11, which is, “Mandatory training should be delivered by qualified trainers certified by the ministry. There should be an established competency level defined by the ministry.” The other recommendation, 12, says, “The ministry should develop a mode of

evaluation and a system of record-keeping for the delivery of mandatory training.”

I appreciate that these two recommendations have some costs attached to them. That's one of the reasons why the Liberals may still be reviewing these two recommendations. I can't imagine this would be an incredible cost to be borne by the government. It would seem to me the government would want to move ahead as fast as it possibly can on items 11 and 12, dealing with mandatory training, for qualified trainers certified by the ministry. No need to delay. We must have that training. As far as I know, the government is still reviewing the matter. I raise that for the record. I have no doubt that they will be raised when the hearings begin and that the minister, of course, will be clear in his support for recommendations 11 and 12, once the amendments are proposed in those second reading hearings.

I have concerns about the fact that so many of these security guards earn only an average, as I understand it, of \$28,000, and \$28,000 can barely pay the rent; \$28,000 in this society, particularly in the big cities, particularly in Toronto, is not a whole lot of money. Most policemen and women earn an average of \$60,000, and that does not include overtime, but security guards are underpaid. If we review what Quebec is doing, where they use a sectoral bargaining approach to set standards, we know it has been proven effective that key provisions of collective agreements such as those relating to wages and hours are extended by law to non-union employers. This effectively takes wages out of a competition.

Speaker, I'm getting a sense here that we don't have a quorum in this place, and I really want a quorum so that members of this Legislature have an opportunity to hear, in the couple of minutes I've got, what I have to say.

The Acting Speaker: Is there a quorum present?

The Deputy Clerk (Ms. Deborah Deller): A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Are you going to continue to debate?

Mr. Marchese: Of course I am.

Mr. Colle: Make it more interesting.

1620

Mr. Marchese: Michael Colle, the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, is not happy with my performance today. He doesn't see me as passionate as he normally does, so he's obviously concerned and worried for me. Is that correct? I want to give him an opportunity to speak after me for at least two minutes in response to what I've said, and I want you, after the two minutes, to take at least 10 or 20 and chew the visceral stuff that you guys have and just put it right out in defence of this bill, or of anything else, including defending the Milanese squad. I can't believe that you're supporting Milan. Good team, but you and I have to support the south: Palermo, Messina, Reggina—even Lecce, for God's sake; good teams as well.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): You're annoying Hansard.

Mr. Marchese: I'm annoying the doctor.

Mr. Qaadri: Hansard.

Mr. Marchese: The good doctor normally pays attention to me as well.

I want to say to some of the Liberals who might be paying attention that they are evidently creating a registrar who will monitor the act and can issue and/or deny licensing along various grounds, and some can be debatable. But the idea of creating a registrar is a good thing. I was debating for something similar when we were debating the Ontarians with Disabilities Act. We argued on that bill that we needed to have a commissioner of sorts who would have the power, similar to the Environmental Commissioner, to monitor on a regular basis what this government was doing vis-à-vis disability issues.

I introduced a motion—to be fair, the Tories introduced a similar motion, but different—to the effect of having someone who would be able to monitor the effectiveness of that bill and on a regular basis report to this Legislature and tell us what the government was doing vis-à-vis that bill. It got defeated. They defeated my amendment, they defeated the Tory amendment and, lo and behold, on a bill being debated today we see the creation of a registrar who will monitor the act. So I raise concerns, for those who were debating this particular issue on my committee, because if you can justify a registrar to monitor this act, why would it be any less important to have a commissioner monitor the other act?

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): It's a different situation.

Mr. Marchese: My Liberal friend from the riding of Don Valley West says it's a different situation. I don't understand.

Mr. Qaadri: The times they are a-changing.

Mr. Marchese: No; that's a different song.

Why would you not hire a commissioner whose sole duty would be to monitor issues of discrimination as they relate to people with disabilities? You include the language that recognizes, finally—because you didn't have it before and you had to be pushed along—that people with disabilities have been discriminated against for a long, long time. Admitting that, you would think you would be interested in having a commissioner who would monitor how well you were doing or will do in the course of 15 or 20 years, because you refused another amendment of mine that would see dealing with issues of discrimination as they relate to people with disabilities diminish from 20 years to 15 years. You defeated that amendment. If you're going to have something dealt with within 15 years as opposed to three or four, surely you would need to have an accessibility commissioner who would be able to guide us, help the government along, from time to time criticize the government if it was not doing what it was supposed to be doing. Why would those conditions be any different from this one?

Ms. Wynne: We've got the Ontario Human Rights Commissioner.

Mr. Marchese: The member from Don Valley West argues that we've got the Ontario Human Rights Com-

missioner. We know that each and every case that goes before the Ontario Human Rights Commissioner takes anywhere from six months to three years, and some issues never get dealt with. We also know that many who are affected by some issue of racism or discrimination will not ever get to the human rights commission, because it takes time, stamina, guts and money to be able to take your issue to the commission. So how can you argue, "We've got that, so that's enough"? No. We needed a commissioner whose sole purpose would be to monitor how you as a government and any future government are dealing with issues of discrimination or dealing with issues of access as it relates to the bill you will pass in this session, and you refuse to accept that.

How do you find the money to create a registrar for this particular bill when you can't find the money to create a commissioner on disability issues? How do you square the contradiction of the two? The circumstances indeed are different, but the issue of monitoring is the same. Monitoring issues surrounding this particular bill are no different than monitoring issues surrounding disability matters. They're the same.

I've raised these concerns with you. We will surely hear from deputants who will come to the hearings, because I know this government is interested, as we are, in having many hearings far and wide in Ontario so people can be heard, including our labour friends—I know how close the Liberals are to them—and I look forward to those hearings.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Colle: I want to add my commentary on the speech and the debate from the member for Trinity-Spadina.

The clear issue here is that we all agree that there are too many so-called security guards in this province who don't have the proper training, who aren't professional enough to enhance public safety and also to protect themselves, because they could put themselves in great danger. That's why this bill has received pretty wide support.

Not to undermine the points raised about consultation—and I think there will be continued consultation on this bill as it goes forward—I just want to also comment that supporting a soccer team doesn't necessarily mean you support the geographic or geopolitical underpinnings that relate to the location of that soccer team. Just because a person happens to support the Montreal Canadiens doesn't mean they support separatism. He implied that because I support a soccer team from Milan in northern Italy, I support the separatists of Lombardi and Bossi in the north. I just think that AC Milan is a great soccer team that just defeated one of the top Dutch clubs by a score of 2-0, and they are now waiting to take on the winner of Liverpool and Chelsea to see who will be determined the champion of champions.

Soccer aside, what this bill is about is good, fair protection for the citizens of Ontario, ensuring they have security personnel who are trained, professional, competent and identifiable by the public, because right now it's sometimes difficult to discern who is a police officer

and who is one of these security officers. That's why this legislation has been called for, and Minister Kwinter is taking decisive action. This is supported quite widely in the province.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): It's interesting. This debate has turned into a discussion of European soccer and who the best teams are.

Interjection.

Mr. Chudleigh: Of course, the lack of NHL hockey this year has probably added to that debate. It will be very interesting to see, when and if the NHL strike ever ends, whether or not they will regain the position they had prior to that strike. Members in the House have been getting their sports fix from soccer this winter, apparently.

It's interesting as well that the number of security guards in this province has increased phenomenally in the last 15 or 20 years. Certainly in the last 10 years it has increased a lot. I suppose you could say that in the last five years, since 9/11, there has been an added emphasis on security, and security guards have increased phenomenally, necessarily, because the number of police officers we have on the streets of Ontario is not what it should be. In fact, this government has suggested there should be 1,000 more police officers. They've said they're going to bring that in, but they have not yet funded that program and the police officers from that program have not hit the streets, which increases the need for private security forces.

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The Shand inquiry was mentioned here. I should point out that the member for Simcoe North, Garfield Dunlop, brought in a wonderful, very succinct, complex and complete private member's bill, which addressed all 22 of the recommendations in the Shand inquiry. This bill does not do that. This bill falls short of the member for Simcoe North's bill, and that's too bad. It would be a wonderful thing if this bill could be strengthened, and perhaps it will be through the hearings and the debate.

The Acting Speaker: Response? The member from Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Marchese: I'm glad to see there's a great deal of excitement here today. That's why I always try to encourage and stimulate discussion; otherwise, it would be terribly quiet in this place. Have you noticed?

Ms. Wynne: Not as long as you're here, Rosario.

Mr. Marchese: No, exactly. That's why I'm trying to help.

I want to thank the friends and the foes as well, and to point out just a couple of things. The Shand inquest recommendations call for urgent changes. The minister has already admitted that regulations won't be in place until 2007, and they're still not sure whether they'll act on all the recommendations. But the inquest said we need urgent changes.

Secondly, the ministry is simply avoiding the important role the Shand inquest demands of them. They're still reviewing whether to set up the training system that the

inquest said was essential. Why they're still reviewing that I'm not quite sure.

Thirdly, the government talks about consultation, but they haven't even contacted worker organizations that represent thousands of security guards. The United Steelworkers represents 26,000 security officers across Canada, and no one, to my knowledge, has spoken to them. I know that employers are happy with the bill—God bless; that's OK—but some people are not happy, and they haven't been consulted; hopefully they will be. That's why we're calling on the government, obviously, to have plenty of hearings so that everybody can be heard. Given the opportunity to change a bill to which amendments have not been introduced since 1966, this is the time to make the bill the best that it can be.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Arnott: I'm pleased to have the opportunity this afternoon to speak briefly with respect to Bill 159, An Act to revise the Private Investigators and Security Guards Act and to make a consequential amendment to the Licence Appeal Tribunal Act, 1999. This bill stands in the name of the minister of public safety and security and was introduced in this House on December 9, 2004. I recall the date—

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: Just to correct the record, the member, for whom I have a great deal of respect, keeps using a name that is no longer the name of the ministry. I'm the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. I just wanted to correct the record.

The Acting Speaker: I'm sure the member will note that.

Mr. Arnott: I apologize to the minister if any offence was taken; none was intended. I still call you the Solicitor General, I'm afraid. I'm that far behind the times. But he's a fine fellow, and he has done a very extraordinary job as minister in many respects and on many files. I continue to work with him on a number of issues, as he knows.

I'm here today to speak to Bill 159. I recall vividly the day that bill was introduced. The minister was in the House to do a minister's statement, to talk about why the bill was necessary. I recall distinctly that he gave credit to the member from Simcoe North and acknowledged the role the member had in terms of bringing this issue forward. The member for Simcoe North brought forward his own legislation pertaining to this issue, Bill 88, which was called An Act to amend the Private Investigators and Security Guards Act. It was introduced June 1, 2004. As the House has heard many times during the course of this second reading debate, the bill brought forward, Bill 88, by the member for Simcoe North, was intended to respond to the recommendations of the Shand inquest.

As we know, Patrick Shand died of injuries received during an altercation with store employees and security guards outside a Scarborough grocery store on September 14, 1999. The coroner's inquest came up on April 23,

2004, with these 22 recommendations dealing with a broad range of issues.

Some of the issues that were covered by Bill 88, brought forward by the member for Simcoe North, included: mandatory multi-level training and standards for use of force, firearms and making arrests; different classes of and portability of licences; restrictions on the equipment that licensees are authorized to use or prohibited from using; prohibitions for licensees on uniforms and markings and colours of security vehicles that resemble those of police officers; prohibitions on licensees on use of badges or other insignia that resemble those of police officers; record-keeping of use of force that is required to be reported annually; a code of conduct which licensees are required to comply with when acting as a private investigator or security guard—it's my understanding the code of conduct was specifically referenced in the bill brought forward by the member for Simcoe North.

Members of the Corps of Commissionaires and private investigators and security guards whose work is confined to acting for only one employer would no longer be exempt from legislation under Bill 88, and the penalty for a corporation that is convicted of an offence under the act would be increased to a fine of not less than \$50,000 and not more than \$100,000.

This was covered under Bill 88, brought forward by the member for Simcoe North. One of the concerns our party has articulated during the course of the second-reading debate on this issue is that when you compare Bill 159, brought forward by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, and Bill 88, the private member's bill brought forward by the member for Simcoe North, the government bill leaves much of this to regulation later on. When you're in opposition, you ask questions about that particular issue whenever it's included in a government bill, and there is good reason for it.

In many cases, the people of the province are not in any way involved in that decision. Members of the Legislature, unless you are a member of the executive council, are unable to participate in those discussions. We can raise it in the Legislature from time to time, but unfortunately, when the decision-making power is left to the cabinet through order in council, in terms of establishment of regulations, we hear about it after the fact. It's done behind closed doors in the cabinet room in consultation with a select few public servants, but the members of the Legislature in most cases do not have any direct influence over those decisions.

From time to time, when bills are drafted this way, leaving much of the detail to regulation later on, members of the Legislature in opposition tend to ask questions about that, and rightly so. We are concerned about that, and we would like to see the government consider amendments to this government bill when the bill—I am pretty sure the government is planning to send this bill to committee. I think that has been the stated intent of the government during the course of this second-reading

debate. Assuming that is the case and assuming the bill does get referred to a standing committee, I would hope the government will be prepared to listen to the amendments that might be brought forward by the opposition parties.

I am quite confident in making the statement that our critic, the member for Simcoe North, will want to be involved in those hearings. I'm quite sure he will bring his expertise forward in the context of discussion on amendments. I would ask the government to listen to him and be prepared to consider the constructive proposals that I expect he will put forward.

I have known the member for Simcoe North since just before he was elected to the Legislature. He was one of our class of 1999. There weren't very many of our new members coming in the door in those days, but he was one of the few who was elected in 1999 as a newly elected Conservative MPP. I played a rather small role in terms of recruiting him, helping to recruit him to join our caucus, and to run as a Conservative candidate. Our party was quite impressed with the work that he had done as a local municipal politician in Simcoe county. He served as the warden of Simcoe county; he served as the deputy reeve of Severn township. He was a councillor for Coldwater.

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He and his wife, Jane, have two kids and three grandchildren, and the one concern he had when our party was attempting to recruit him to run as the Conservative candidate when the incumbent member had decided to retire was that he wondered whether or not he would have time for his family. He really felt strongly. If he was elected as a member of the Legislature, the one concern he had in his mind was, could he do the job justice as a member of the Legislature and still have time for his family? He is a real family man.

I was pleased to have dinner with him, and my role was to tell him what I did in terms of ensuring that I was able to balance my responsibilities as a member of the Legislature and also maintain my status as a father and a husband. I attempted to explain to him what I did. The main thing I have always tried to do is set aside time for my family and stick to it. If somebody tells you you've got to go somewhere else and you have set that aside as family time, whether it's your party leader telling you or your leader's office, or perhaps in some cases your constituents, you do have to try to carve out some time for your family and stick to it. From time to time, there may be opportunities that you miss as a result of that, but over the long run I have never regretted carving out time for my family in terms of my public responsibilities. I tried to emphasize that to then-Warden Dunlop, and I guess to some degree he was convinced that it was possible to do it. He does it, and he does a great job representing his constituents as well.

He is our critic for the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, and that fits in very well with his constituency duties because, as the member for Simcoe North, in his riding he has the OPP headquarters in

Orillia, as we know. There is the Central North Correctional Centre, which is more popularly known as the superjail for that part of the province, and he represents the community that has that within its boundaries. He represents Simcoe North, and of course within Simcoe North was Project Turnaround, which was more popularly known as the boot camp. Again, I think it's interesting that he serves as our party's critic for this ministry, because there is so much within his community that touches upon the ministry. So it's quite appropriate that he does this job.

In terms of the government's bill, if we look at the explanatory note that is included within the bill, the government's bill "replaces the Private Investigators and Security Guards Act. It regulates private investigators, security guards and those who are in the business of selling the services of private investigators and security guards.

"Licensing requirements are imposed and procedures are put in place for revoking and suspending licences, subject to appeal provisions.

"Offences and regulatory requirements are provided for, as is a process for dealing with complaints from the public.

"The minister may make regulations setting out a code of conduct for private investigators and security guards."

Again, this is one of the key areas where we as an opposition party have concerns, in terms of how the code of conduct will be set out, and if the government has the power to make the regulations, we obviously want to know more about how it plans to proceed. Therefore, I would say again that we look forward to the hearings that may be forthcoming on this issue, and I would ask the government to reconfirm that they do plan to send this bill to committee so that members of the opposition will have an opportunity to continue to raise their issues, but certainly to ensure that the interested public groups have an opportunity as well to express their issues, their concerns, and to have their issues addressed.

This bill that the member for Simcoe North brought forward is, I think, in the finest tradition of private members' bills. I always felt, as a member of the Legislature, that Thursday mornings are a very important opportunity for members of the Legislature to bring forward ideas and issues that perhaps are not otherwise part of the debate within the Legislature. Right now, I've got four bills before the Legislature, and I would like to go into them very briefly.

One is to protect double-hatter firefighters, as I've already alluded to earlier.

I have a private member's bill before the House that would provide a provincial sales tax exemption for children's booster seats, because, as we know, the government has passed legislation recently that will compel families to have their kids in booster seats until these children are 80 pounds or eight years old. Right now, if you buy a child's car seat for an infant, there is a retail sales tax exemption on the purchase of the car seat for the smaller child. But, at the same time, people who buy a

booster seat are expected to pay retail sales tax. I would again ask the Minister of Finance to include a provision in his upcoming budget which would allow for a retail sales tax exemption on the booster seats that the government is now telling us we have to purchase for our children across the province.

Another issue that I brought forward as a private member's bill is to call upon the government to hold a public inquiry into the issue of gambling addictions, and until they do so, I've asked that they not open any new gaming facilities or expand any existing ones. I continue to be very concerned about this issue because we've seen a lot of information come forward lately about the severity and scope of gambling addictions in Ontario. I would submit that the government is not doing enough to assist people who have this addiction.

The final issue that I've raised, in terms of private members' bills, is the need for what I would call true real-time disclosure of financial donations. The government in its election platform in 2003 has committed to doing this. In recent days, in response to a number of very serious concerns that have been brought forward by the opposition about fundraisers that have taken place in certain communities, while at the same time the greenbelt boundaries were being developed, where developers were being asked to spend \$10,000 a ticket to come to a fundraiser, and we don't know who was at the fundraiser, the government finally, under pressure, brought forward legislation it had long since promised to have real-time disclosure. Unfortunately, the government's legislation doesn't give us real-time disclosure in a number of respects. My private member's bill on this issue, which I've introduced before the House and is at first reading, would compel the political parties and the riding associations to disclose in real time, the day they cash the cheques, who has given the money, and put it on a Web site. That, I believe, is what I would call real time. I believe it's something that is doable and it's something I would continue to advocate for in the context of the private members' bills process.

Having said all that—I think you've given me some latitude, Mr. Speaker—I was trying to get back to the whole importance of private members' bills: Bill 88, the member from Simcoe North bringing forward a private member's bill, and now we see the government appearing to respond to it in a meaningful way; not going far enough, perhaps, but at least responding to a sincere and serious initiative that was brought forward by a member of the opposition.

I look forward to further discussion on this bill and certainly to the discussion that may very well take place at committee.

The Acting Speaker: Any further debate? OK. Does the minister care to reply?

Hon. Mr. Kwinter: I move adjournment of debate.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: No, you don't.

The Acting Speaker: Do you care to reply, Minister?

Hon. Mr. Kwinter: I will. I found it interesting. I learned a lot about soccer. I learned a lot about Garfield

Dunlop. I thought maybe he had died. I'm happy to hear that he hasn't. I'm also happy to hear that the two-hatter issue is still alive for the member.

In all seriousness, I want to thank all the members for their contributions. This is a bill that is important. It's the first time the bill has been amended in over 40 years. I just want to respond to a couple of issues that were made, one from the member from Trinity-Spadina: I want you to know that we had sent out 600 information pieces on this bill, and asked for inquiries, and the union in fact did respond in writing.

I should also comment that the reason we can't initiate this sooner is that there is going to be required mandated training. In order to do that, we have to set up the courses. We can't set up the courses until we have the regulations so that the community colleges that are going to be delivering this particular course will know what they have to teach. We also require time for some of these industries that are already in place to make the adjustments so that they can comply. It isn't practical to do it in any less time, and this is what the industry has told us. They have said that we can't do it unless we have this time.

The other aspect about it, of course, is that we are going to provide people who will be able to be recognized as professionals. They will have the adequate training, they will have security checks and they will pass an examination. As a result, it will elevate them to a professional status and, because of that, and without question, they will be able to command higher salaries. People will be happy to pay that higher salary for them because they're getting someone who they know has passed a security test, has passed an examination and has been trained. So it's a win-win for everybody.

That is why even—and I say “even”—organizations like the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires, who are a long-standing, highly respected group, totally support it. They say, “We're satisfied that our people will be able to meet the standard. Whatever standard you set, we'll be able to meet it,” which means you don't have to take the course; if you have the training already, you can just write the examination, get tested and you meet the requirements of the act.

With that, I want to thank all of the members who participated.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Kwinter has moved second reading of Bill 159, An Act to revise the Private Investigators and Security Guards Act and to make a consequential amendment to the Licence Appeal Tribunal Act, 1999. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

I have received a slip from the government whip:

“Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on the motion by Mr. Kwinter for the second reading of Bill 159, An Act to revise the Private Investigators and Security Guards Act and to make a consequential amendment to the Licence Appeal Tribunal Act, 1999, be deferred to May 2, 2005.”

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of adjournment of the House? I say it's carried. This House stands adjourned until next Monday, May 2, at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 1653.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Règlements et projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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