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**Thursday 5 May 2005**

**Jeudi 5 mai 2005**

Speaker  
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président  
L'honorable Alvin Curling

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 5 May 2005

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 5 mai 2005

*The House met at 1000.  
Prayers.*

### PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

#### ONTARIO PRODUCE

**Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton–Kent–Middlesex):** I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should develop a framework for promoting Ontario-grown goods.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Mrs. Van Bommel has moved ballot item number 65. Pursuant to standing order 96, you have 10 minutes.

**Mrs. Van Bommel:** I think that it is time to develop long-term and innovative solutions that will ensure a sustainable and profitable agricultural sector and a healthier Ontario. As a government, we need to focus our attention on the promotion of Ontario products to a well-informed consumer. Ontario food is safe, plentiful and nutritious, and we need to market those qualities.

Our farmers have responded to consumers' demands for safe food. Farmers use processes and practices such as on-farm HACCP, hazard analysis and critical control point, to ensure traceability of everything that enters the food chain on their farms and beyond the farm gates. We have quality products that are researched to meet the demands of consumers and the criteria for healthy food, but we need to develop a framework that will not only encourage domestic production and promote the high quality that is produced on our Ontario farms, but will also make the link in the minds of consumers between the food that goes into their bodies and where it comes from.

We need a framework that will make the connection between what farmers are doing and what consumers expect from their food producers. To do this, we need the support of both the rural and urban people. We need the support of farmers, government, industry and consumers.

Consumers dictate what is on the grocery shelves, and processors and retailers respond to those demands. Consumers should not only demand Ontario products, but they should understand why they want those products. Farmers must explore new marketing methods and develop new products for niche markets, such as bio-based and organic products. Farmers' potential is limited only by their imaginations in this field.

Our government can help by creating marketing policies that encourage local and regional food systems and markets. This means developing a government policy framework to assist farmers, processors and consumers to become part of that synergy, policies that provide consumers with information to make knowledge-based decisions about the food they buy.

This, in turn, will increase the economic viability for farmers. Farmers want to make their living from the marketplace, not from the mailbox. Safety net programs should be just that: for economic security in difficult times. I feel that by increasing consumer demand for Ontario products, that will ultimately lead to more dollars in the pockets of our farmers.

We can compete with any other country, but consumers need to be convinced that by buying Ontario first, they are doing something that is important and that will benefit not just themselves but our entire economy. It's all really very cyclical. Strong domestic markets are an incentive to farmers and producers to go to higher levels of quality and production. Give consumers the assurance that the Ontario food they have is better because it is nutritious and safe and is produced in an environmentally responsible way, and they will return over and over again to purchase those products.

Consumers significantly influence the marketplace, and this government, through the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, has the potential to capitalize on the purchasing power of consumers. Foodland Ontario is a brand that is widely recognized, but we need to develop a marketing strategy that will take that brand beyond the grocery shelf to represent a comprehensive system of delivering quality-assured traceable foods to consumers. Consumers can be strong supporters of Ontario farmers, as they've proven during the BSE outbreak, when they deliberately set out to purchase Ontario and Canadian beef in support of our beef producers. We know that informed consumers will support their communities.

Some commodities already have marketing programs to promote individual products, but there is no coordination between them. Other groups are doing research into things such as alternative crops that they hope will catch the imagination of consumers. But there is no common plan, a plan that would work toward securing consumer preference for Ontario products.

There are local groups who have recognized this opportunity and have already started to work toward creating local marketing strategies. One of those groups is the GTA Agricultural Working Group. I attended one of their meetings this past winter and came away with

their proposed GTA agricultural action plan. In it, they explore an approach that will lead them to agricultural self-sufficiency in the GTA. They recognize the value of being near a market of millions of people. They brought together farmers, community and stakeholders, and their goal was to develop a strategy that would keep the agri-food industry in the GTA competitive and strong. They looked not only at their farms and potential markets but also at the other forces that impact the operations they have, forces such as changing consumer demand, new technologies and research, government and municipal policies and laws, labour requirements and standards, current coordination between producers, research organizations and, ultimately, the marketplace, and they looked at their own ability and willingness to change.

#### 1010

This process is being repeated over and over in localized areas of the province or by specific commodities, often in isolation. These groups of people recognize the potential and have answered the call to do something about it. With a provincial framework, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food would be able to bring all these groups together in a common strategy, a strategy that will bring a knowledgeable consumer together with a knowledgeable, responsible and responsive producer.

Health-conscious eating is in vogue now, so we need to exploit that opportunity and create a consumer demand for Ontario product. We need to make it fashionable—or, as they say in the ad game, sexy—to buy Ontario first. Exotic items are becoming the norm in this province, and we have the potential to supply a growing ethnic population. During the greenbelt consultations, we talked about the population growth of more than four million people by 2031. Much of that is going to be coming from immigration and from a specialized market. We need a plan that not only delivers new products to these consumers, but a plan that causes consumers in Ontario to choose Ontario product deliberately, even to demand it. A framework for promoting Ontario-grown goods will create new opportunities for farmers as they explore new value-added and niche markets.

I want to take a minute to talk about our own farm. On our farm, we produce poultry. We have good markets for that poultry, and that's because we are involved in a marketing system called supply management, which allows us to produce to a domestic market. Nevertheless, trade rules require that we also import product. So it's very important for producers in the poultry industry to have the market predominantly taken by Ontario product. We need our consumers to understand when they're buying Ontario chicken and when they're not, and we want them to ask for Ontario chicken.

There's a retail group that, during the BSE crisis, were selling beef. Many people go to these shops. What people didn't realize was that they were not selling Ontario or Canadian beef in those shops. But during that particular outbreak, people recognized that and they asked for Ontario product. That is the kind of support that we are looking for. We want people to look for things such as

strawberries in season that are produced here, and not simply to grab a quart of strawberries off the shelf and assume that they're Ontario product.

The ultimate result, I feel, will be that we will have a healthier Ontario consumer and a strong agricultural economy for both farmers and producers, once we have that kind of framework in place.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford):** I want to thank the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex for putting this motion forward. I very much appreciate that, and I think we all realize that to help our farming community, we need to do more to encourage people to make sure that they consume Ontario-grown products.

I believe that I agree with needing the government to do more. I'm a little surprised that this member would deem it necessary to put this motion forward. I totally agree with it, but it would seem to me that the minister has been telling us that he's already doing this. I guess what it really comes down to is—at this point, I think the member must agree with me—that the minister, with what he is doing, either doesn't understand what he's doing or what his ministry is doing or he has absolutely no plan at all to deal with trying to get people to do more.

I think it's important that we recognize and that we put this motion forward, so that if that's the case—if I'm right that there is no plan in furthering the consumption of Ontario products—this will help. Although I do want to say that the motion reads, “that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should develop a framework for promoting Ontario-grown goods, “and the presentation that the member made seemed to include a much broader issue as a framework of how we deal with the agriculture community in Ontario, which is suffering great stress at the present time and, as a government, we definitely need to do more to help it along. Again, I support that principle that more needs to be done. I just want to make sure. This motion really doesn't do that; it just talks about a framework for promoting consumption.

At this point, we already have Foodland Ontario that deals with the produce. We have a supply management system for a lot of our commodities in agriculture that helps the issue of people eating Ontario product because that's what's on our store shelves. A program that just helps to convince people to eat is not necessarily the answer; it's to convince people to eat Ontario products.

As we speak of Foodland Ontario, I am somewhat surprised that as we drive down the 427 coming into Toronto, at the food terminal, on the big sign that is used by Foodland Ontario to advertise to the good folks driving down the highway, there is no specific Ontario commodity on the market that we're advertising. You drive by and you see food products advertised from all over the world: “Buy Prince Edward Island potatoes.” “Buy citrus from California.” It would seem to me that as a government, we would do better to use that billboard to advertise other products that are available here in Ontario, grown in Ontario, to encourage people to purchase those products. But I expect that the rules, as they were set up

many years ago with the billboard, are something to the effect that it must be produce that is advertised on the board, because that's what is sold at the Ontario Food Terminal. Again, as part of a plan, it would be great to look at that to see whether that could be changed so we actually advertise and promote Ontario products, as opposed to a certain type of Ontario product. It's just a suggestion I would make.

Of course, I very strongly support promoting Ontario products. I'm sure everyone in the House this morning will recognize, and a lot of the people watching will know, that the Progressive Conservative government has always felt that it was important to promote Ontario-grown produce. In fact, it was the Davis government that opened up the Foodland division in the agriculture ministry. Premier Davis recognized the importance of Ontario-grown foods. I'm going to take a moment to give you a bit of a history lesson on Foodland Ontario and how it came to be. It's important to recognize the importance of this motion as it relates to Foodland, because I think what's really being asked for in the motion is to do for the rest of agriculture what Premier Davis did for the produce people. For those of you who don't spend all your time researching the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Web site, I'll read some of the information that is available to our consumers.

Foodland Ontario, founded in 1977, was, and still is today, a consumer promotion program where the ministry works with Ontario produce growers to help them achieve maximum penetration of the Ontario market for provincially grown fresh fruit and vegetables.

One of the main objectives of the program is to encourage consumer intent to purchase Ontario produce. Their goal is to keep purchasing at the 80%-plus threshold, which helps Ontario growers maximize their market share.

Although Foodland works with all agriculture sectors, efforts are concentrated in the area of fresh fruits and vegetables, since this area is subject to the greatest challenge in the market and has a limited ability to respond due to resource restrictions.

To achieve the market objective, Foodland communicates the benefits of Ontario produce, encourages the purchase of Ontario produce, coordinates promotion and research activities with producer organizations and industry stakeholders, and promotes the Ontario brand.

Foodland Ontario consists of five program components: consumer advertising, retail marketing, public relations, trade liaison and market research. All components work in a complementary fashion to address a common target market: the primary and secondary food purchaser.

During the life of the Foodland program, the target market has evolved from the principal grocery shopper, mothers 25 to 49, to adults 25 to 64 years. The latter definition includes both males and females and reflects recent research that food buying is a shared activity. Many household have two principal grocery shoppers.

#### 1020

When the Foodland program began, the advertising message informed consumers of the wide variety and

availability of Ontario-grown food products. Both the theme line "Good things grow in Ontario" and the Foodland Ontario symbol encourage consumers to buy Ontario by promoting and identifying quality Ontario products. The advertising message evolved further to include economic benefits and commodity-specific attributes. In 1986 the slogan "Good things grow in Ontario" gave way to the more competitive slogan "Ontario: There's no taste like home," in order to better communicate the single most important Ontario food benefit: taste.

Consumer communications have evolved a two-pronged promotion approach, focusing on taste through community-specific messages and a local/home message. The introduction of Foodland's television commercials in 1997 supported a two-pronged strategy, the first of which reinforced the attributes of buying fresh, high-quality, locally grown produce and introduced a new theme, "Invite Ontario home for dinner." These commercials expanded Ontario's close and local message to mean more than distance: strong values, strong community, and trust.

The second stage of this campaign builds on the attributes of buying fresh, locally grown, high-quality produce. It focuses on the more subtle element of trust. "Trust" refers to trust in Ontario's farmers, in their products and in their contribution to the fabric of Ontario's society and economy.

When the Foodland program began, the advertising message informed consumers of the wide variety and availability of Ontario-grown food products. But both the theme line "Good things grow in Ontario" and the Foodland Ontario symbol encouraged consumers to buy Ontario by promoting and identifying quality Ontario products.

Retail marketing identifies and promotes Ontario foods in grocery stores through the distribution of point-of-purchase material and in-store promotions to 1,600 stores across the province by Foodland retail representatives. Thanks to the full retail support, food stores continue to be the main source of awareness of the Foodland Ontario symbol. An annual retailer awards program recognizes the contributions of retailers to the program.

Public relations encourages media support for Ontario-grown food products through the development and distribution of media releases, newsletters and broadcast appearances. Consumer publications and other promotional activities are also developed to support Ontario food products. In trade liaison, Foodland Ontario works closely with commodity groups and associations to share information and encourage co-operation and participation in specific activities and the use of Foodland symbols in their own marketing efforts.

That ends the history lesson. I think the Davis government got it right when they decided to brand Ontario produce as the best that people can buy. I agree with the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex that we should be promoting Ontario eggs, beef, lamb, pork, chicken—and I could go on for 10 minutes on all the other Ontario-

grown goods that we should be promoting through Foodland Ontario or a similar type of program.

I know my colleagues would also like to speak to this. At this point, I would like to say that I think the motion very much addresses the issue that we need to expand a Foodland Ontario-type program for all the things that are produced in agriculture.

Last but not least, it's great to set up a framework to do that for all Ontario products, but the thing that makes it work is the funding for it. I do not share the confidence of the member who introduced the motion that the government will put enough money into the budget coming up next Wednesday to expand that program. Many of the other commodities have asked the minister in the past to include their products in the Foodland program, but it can't be done at the expense of the program that's successfully running now for the produce; it requires more funding to make this program work on behalf of all agriculture in Ontario.

I commend the member. I ask all members of the House to vote for this motion and to encourage the Treasurer and Minister of Finance to put enough money in there to make it work.

**Mr. Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls):** I'm pleased to have the opportunity to participate in the debate this morning, and I want to compliment my colleague from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex for putting the motion forward that the government of Ontario should develop a framework for promoting Ontario-grown goods.

What better place to make a confession than right here in the Parliament Building? I will tell you that, as the member for the Niagara Falls riding and having spent 13 years on city council, much of my time was involved with economic development, and that was tourism. That was the economic development in our community.

When I first ran for office—the riding covers Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Thorold South—I never realized how important that economic development of agriculture was to Niagara-on-the-Lake. I didn't realize the significance of a \$1.3-billion industry and how it affected not only Niagara-on-the-Lake but the Niagara region and the province of Ontario, and how important the economic health of the farm industry was going to be to build sustainable support for our greenbelt policies. Now I know. I have the honour and, more importantly, the trust to represent one of the most important agricultural districts in Canada, and that's why I'm so delighted to have the opportunity to address the assembly.

I will tell you that the greenbelt hearings were an eye-opener to me. They were an exciting time. I was really proud the other day when the regional chair attended our Niagara Week event and stood in front of many of the MPPs from our caucus and other caucuses, and many of the ministers, and proudly said that he and the region were in support of the greenbelt. That was fabulous to hear, although I'd always heard that unofficially.

When I was first elected, one of the very first things I did was to invite the farmers to come down and meet with me at a town hall meeting. I expected 20 or 30; I

wasn't sure what the results would be. I expected maybe a half-hour meeting. We arranged for it at Niagara College. One hundred and twenty-five farmers came out, and three hours later we were still talking. I learned so much from those people in those three hours. Two things I learned: number one and number one. Their number one was the issue of economic viability, and number two—but I say it's number one as well—was, "Buy Ontario first." They must have hammered that into me for three hours.

Promoting Ontario goods and beverages is particularly important to the Niagara and Niagara-on-the-Lake farming community. Did you know that they are the largest and most productive per acre agricultural land in Ontario? Did you know how big the greenhouse industry is? Did you know that the tender fruit industry is huge in our area? Just drive down there through the summer and you'll see all the fruit stands and you'll have a chance to sample some of the greatest produce in all of Canada. Did you know how big the wine industry is?

It is time for long-term and innovative solutions that will ensure a sustainable and profitable agricultural sector in Ontario. The number-one concern of the growers of the Niagara Peninsula is economic viability and sustainability. I want to tell you that foreign markets are being closed off to Ontario because of huge farm-gate and backdoor subsidies in other countries. We've already lost the grape juice industry, and we're in danger of losing the tender fruit industry. We must sell our products at home. If we can't sell them at home, where else can we sell them? The alternative is not acceptable.

Ontario growers produce world-class food and wines, and these qualities need to be properly marketed at home. Just opening up a few fruit stands or VQA stores doesn't work. Marketing isn't just about a flyer or two during harvest season or a bottle of wine or two advertised in the LCBO publication; marketing development is a serious business. As my colleague said, it's a sexy business. It's the business of this government, and it has to start at home. In order to achieve this, the government of Ontario needs to focus our attention on the promotion of Ontario products and the elimination of artificial barriers to local markets. We must provide better and stronger promotional programs and better access to shelf space for home-grown products, and the sooner the better.

The Ontario government—our government—needs to develop a visible and supportable framework that will enable us to encourage domestic production and promote our high-quality products of fruits, vegetables and wine. Through this type of framework there is a great potential to contribute to a healthy, prosperous economy, and it's time to act. Consumers here in Ontario have the potential to significantly influence the agricultural marketplace. This government, through the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, needs to continue to capitalize on the power that consumers hold and work toward establishing a marketing brand for Ontario products. A "Buy Ontario First" marketing strategy is an integral component of achieving a sustainable agri-food system. The marketing

strategy must work toward changing consumer preferences and creating the demand for Ontario products, like our world-class VQA wines.

**1030**

I'll tell you, as a non-drinker, my knowledge of wine, liquor or beer is very limited. I was quite surprised, shortly after being elected, sitting with the grape growers, who explained to me that a bottle of wine that's labelled "Ontario" can have as little as 20% of grapes from Ontario and as much as 80% of foreign grapes from Chile. When I travel around, I carry these two bottles of wine and I ask people that question, "How much is from Ontario?" They're quite shocked when I quote them that figure.

The marketing strategy we have to work toward is something that will benefit all of us. In order for this to occur, our government, through the Ministry of Agriculture and Food and the LCBO, needs to create policies that will foster a marketing system that brings locally and regionally produced food and beverages to the consumer.

I was particularly proud that recently, through the efforts of a number of ministers—Minister Jim Watson, Minister Bradley, Minister Sorbara, Minister Cordiano, and a number of MPPs in areas that have this type of industry—we've formed a wine caucus. We met for the first time—a very productive caucus. I think it was fabulous that we all got into the same room and had a chance to express our views, our concerns and our ideas, but we did it collectively. That was just the start. I talked to Minister Watson the other day and that caucus is going to continue, and we have a number of things that we're working on.

Developing and expanding markets is one of the keys to improving the profitability of farmers and ensuring long-term viability in the industry. What that brings me back to is the Niagara growers, the ones who came into my first town hall meeting, who complained that the current practices they've been under for a number of years were promoting foreign grain subsidy products. They told me that something is wrong and they said it's time it was fixed.

I'm pleased to support this motion, a great motion, and I ask the House to support it as well.

**Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock):** It's a pleasure to stand today in support of the motion brought forward by my colleague from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should develop a framework for promoting Ontario-grown goods.

It was mentioned before by the member for Oxford that Foodland Ontario is set up and is doing a good job of promoting Ontario produce. It's a consumer protection program of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food and its main objective is to maintain an 80%-plus threshold for Ontario produce and its content. So I think it is successful, but, yes, you're right, we need to do more to promote locally grown products.

Last week, I believe it was, FarmGate5 was here. That's a group of supporters of Ontario's dairy and

poultry farmers who feel strongly that Canada's government must continue to work to support a balanced trade position in the WTO. It brings together people and organizations that believe in a strong agricultural sector and a prosperous food industry. That is an example of a large organization.

Locally, in my riding, there are two terrific examples of how to promote locally grown products. I know of Kawartha Choice Farmland Foods, involving Peterborough city and Peterborough county, and the member from Peterborough spoke in the Legislature about that. It promotes a wide variety of products grown and produced in the Kawartha region. They quickly moved from a "Buy Local Beef" campaign to include other products. It's had a wide range of support from the chamber of commerce and producers and local businesspeople. So it is a great initiative. I was pleased to be there on April 20 for their "BBQ in a Bag" launch, to do more promotion of that area. There, you can buy everything from beef, emu and elk to buffalo, and there's even a winery in Buckhorn that is in their group. So it's a great initiative.

In the city of Kawartha Lakes, we have Kawartha FarmFresh, which was launched last year. They had a VIP farm tour to promote more awareness for the politicians. It was hosted by Great North Premium Foods, Sunderland Co-op, the beef farm operation of Paul and Robin Brown, who had us for lunch. Margaret Cunningham, Carolyn Puterbough and David Amos of the city of Kawartha Lakes have done a great job in promoting that.

It was in the Victoria Haliburton Federation of Agriculture, the fact that more than \$86 million is generated in farmgate sales in the city of Kawartha Lakes. So the focus is on the importance of agriculture to economic development and on striving to impress upon people that they should buy locally. I know the farmers' markets are soon to start up. Kawartha FarmFresh has brought a lot of farmers together. They have their labelling, as does Kawartha Choice, so that people go into stores, or if there's a sign on the end of the farmgate, people will stop in, and not just our locals; we're trying to attract tourists, who have already started to come into the area. Both of these local initiatives have Web sites that people can tap into. I know that Kawartha Choice is [www.kawartha.choice.com](http://www.kawartha.choice.com), and Kawartha FarmFresh is [www.kawarthafarmfresh.com](http://www.kawarthafarmfresh.com).

This is a great local initiative. I support the member's motion here today. I think that we can't do enough to educate our young people on the importance of food and food safety in Ontario. If we can spur economic development and do anything more to support our farmers locally, we should be doing that. The intent is great, brought on by a very strong member who's been promoting the agricultural sector. What we would like to see in the budget, as my colleague from Oxford mentioned, is some money to go forth to support our farmers.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay):** I really appreciate an opportunity to participate in this debate, and I want to congratulate our good friend Mrs. Van Bommel for bringing this resolution forward. I first of all want to say it's been a pleasure working with her over the

last year and a half in the Legislature. I find her to be quite a reasonable person to work with, and you can put that in your election leaflet; all right? So I've said something nice now.

Listen, a couple of things: I'm going come at this, obviously, from the perspective of the area that I represent, which is northern Ontario. I just want to say up front that I support the motion; I think the motion makes infinite sense. We should be doing all we can to promote the purchase of Ontario goods within the province. That makes ultimate sense. I think the more we say about that, we're just going to convince ourselves, so I support that.

I want to talk about a couple of things in regard to agriculture from the perspective of northern Ontario. I'm going to start from the far north, up on James Bay. There used to be a time many, many years ago—which is not some of the best history we have in northern Ontario, but nonetheless, it is part of our history—where at one point there was a small amount of agriculture happening in communities like Fort Albany and others. Now, unfortunately it was farming around residential schools, and I wouldn't advocate that we go back there again.

The point here is that what the Catholics and Anglicans learned is that in order to provide food on the table for the people in their care, there was an opportunity to do some farming in places like Fort Albany or Kashechewan or Attawapiskat. In fact, there still is a gentleman up in Attawapiskat who has a bit of a potato farm. It's not a farm as we know it in southern Ontario, meaning Timmins or Sarnia or wherever it might be, but a particular gentleman cultivates potatoes on the big island out in James Bay, the one next to Attawapiskat. Look at the map: Akimiski. I never say it right. The point is that there is a potential to do a certain amount of farming in communities like that.

What I would implore this government to do is to open a dialogue with First Nations about what we can do provincially in order to support those First Nations to provide some of their own food by way of farming or livestock. There's really never been any attention by the federal government to this particular item and this particular issue. I think it's a real shame because, as we know, we have high levels of unemployment in those communities. If you go to any of our communities across northern Ontario, north of Highway 11—the fly-in communities, as we call them—unemployment levels are anywhere from 90% to 95%. That creates, along with everything else in the community, a certain sense of despair. I think one of the things that we could do, which is not going resolve the 90% to 95% unemployment issue but would certainly give the community an opportunity to care for itself a little better, is to do something about providing some funding in order to assist those individuals or band councils who are interested in doing something when it comes to some form of agricultural activity within or around their community. As we know, the Mushkegowuk Cree up in the northeastern coast of James Bay, or the Crees further inland, were hunter-gatherers, and have basically survived for the millennium

living off the land. But they've done it from the perspective of gathering, either when it comes to fish or when it comes to game. There was also a certain amount of food that they were able to get off the land, berries and different things.

#### 1040

All I'm saying is that we have never looked at this very seriously. One thing that would be interesting to do is for the Ministry of Agriculture to sit down with some of the First Nations individuals, probably at the band council level or the tribal level, or even within NAN itself, Nishnawbe Aski, in order to talk about, is there a possibility of creating some sort of pilot program that would allow a First Nation, or individuals in a First Nation who were interested, to start growing potatoes, to maybe keep and raise chickens, or whatever it might be? I don't know what the possibilities are, but I'm sure they're there. The problem is, the community—the band council, the tribal council or the individual—has no money. Let's be real clear. We're talking 95% unemployment. There's not a lot of disposable cash; whatever cash they've got goes to trying to survive.

So there may be an opportunity, in order to provide somebody with a bit of a business opportunity within their own community, to grow some of the food that would go into the food chain for that community, that would create a business opportunity for an individual, and/or you could approach it from the community farming perspective, where people are able to do something. We know things like carrots, lettuce, beets, potatoes and certainly some livestock could be cared for in the James Bay or northwestern part of the province. I would urge the government: If we're talking about trying to encourage the use of goods grown and produced in Ontario, we should look as well at what is possible in the far north.

On the issue of the far north and First Nations communities, I want to say again—because any time I get a chance to say this, I want to say it over and over again so people get it—the federal government drops the ball when it comes to First Nations. They're terrible. They're absolutely terrible. If the federal government were to be measured as far as its success or its diligence when it comes to dealing with First Nations communities, they would rate very, very low on whatever rating you create. I've travelled the world and I've seen some places that have poverty, and we can compare some of that to what's right here in our own backyard. The basic problem is that the federal government just doesn't get it. They think that because those communities are isolated and out of the way, they can throw a couple of dollars, through what's called Indian Affairs—INAC, as we refer to it—and somehow issues will go away. I'll give you just one good example.

Last week I had the opportunity to fly up to Kashechewan with Minister Kwinter, the minister responsible for community safety. I want to, on the record again, thank him for coming up. He was very responsive. The issue? There was a flood. Minister Kwinter went up, and as he was there he noticed what was going on in the com-

munity. When he came out, we had a bit of a chat. The minister said, "My God, Gilles, I can't believe that these communities are in that shape. That's terrible." They've been on a boil-water advisory off and on for the last eight years. Do you know why? Because the federal government doesn't provide the money to train the water plant operators. The same situation that killed people in Walkerton, we're allowing to happen every day in our First Nations communities.

Now, we've managed piecemeal to find some solutions. For example, in the community of Attawapiskat, which is north of Kashechewan, we managed to wangle some money out of the federal government, after a whole bunch of effort on the part of the previous band council and myself and the then federal member. We got money from INAC only after we twisted their arm and embarrassed them to provide dollars to have plant operators trained so they could run their water system. It took a year. They did very heavy training. The community of Attawapiskat now—you can go there, turn on the tap and drink the water and not fear for your life. If you go to Kashechewan, it's not the same. So the federal government sees one community's needs in Attawapiskat, but it's not prepared to see the needs of another community farther south. Kashechewan is not the only community under a boil-water advisory.

My point is, as it relates to this debate, that the federal government just doesn't get it. One of the things we have to decide here in this Legislature is, are those reserves within the province of Ontario? I think we all answer yes. If they are residents of the province of Ontario, then certainly we have some sort of responsibility. I am more and more of the mind that we should be negotiating with our First Nations, and we should be negotiating with the federal government to transfer many of the responsibilities that the federal government has now to the province, with adequate funding and a non-derogation clause that makes sure there is no negative effect on treaty rights, and a fiduciary responsibility of the federal government.

I say that for this simple reason: Can you imagine anywhere in Ontario, a non-aboriginal community, where there's been a boil-water advisory for eight years? Anybody know of one? Not one. If there's a boil-water advisory for a short period of time, there's a process within the Ministry of the Environment provincially, and the municipality, to work toward trying to fix the problem.

I know we've been challenged as of late because of the new water regs and some of our water plants, which are safe but need to be made safer—we're having some problems trying to fund those—but my point is that we as a province take our responsibility. We have the bureaucracy to back it up. We have the ability to make sure that the people who work in the water plants are tested, that the plants are certified, that they follow provincial regulations that are quite stringent so that people don't die when they drink their water. But because they happen to live in an aboriginal community—and in most cases, 99.9% are aboriginal residents—they're put in a position

where they're treated differently. They're treated as second-class citizens.

I'm really, really upset with our federal government at the way that they deal with aboriginal communities in this province and across this country. They do an awful job, and I really implore the government to take a look at the issue of trying to look at ways of negotiating with the federal government and aboriginal communities to take responsibility for things like water, education, and we're already working on health care—health care is being transferred over, by and large, to the province—because we are much better able to deal with those things, and the federal government's track record, quite frankly, is unbelievable.

Now, second issue: farming. I want to raise—because I've done this with my good friend Mrs. Van Bommel, and her office is looking into this—the situation in Opatatika when it comes to the mushroom farm. There's an organization, a business, that was created with some dollars from the federal government about five or six years ago. It was a mushroom farm that was built in Opatatika. Unfortunately, the mushroom farm went under. There were some issues around hydro. They had some hydro problems. As a result, they lost a couple of crops. They were not a very cash-rich operation, and at one point, they shut down.

There is a local parish priest, père Noël—Father Christmas, translated to English—who, out of his own money, because he came into the priesthood after he had been—I think he became a priest in his 30s or 40s. So the man was a contractor and has a little bit of money from his time before he went into the priesthood. He really, as everybody else, feels for his community and is trying to do what he can as an individual to give the community some hope, as far as employment. So he has taken all of his life savings, personal money, and he's basically bought the mushroom farm. He's paying out of his pocket all of the construction that needs to be done in order to put this mushroom farm in place so that the community has some form of employment.

Now, I don't have to convince you. Priests don't normally do this kind of thing. This is a pretty special individual. I'm not saying that other priests are not as caring, but this is a little bit of an odd situation. So here he is. He's putting in all of his money in order to be able to get the mushroom farm back up and running. Unfortunately, what happened was, the people who are working with him to put the project in place—and I've got to say, there's a lot of volunteerism going on in the community, where people are volunteering their time to reconstruct, fix and do what has to be done to put the farm back into operation—applied under the RED program for some dollars in order to buy the computers that are needed to run the farm so that they can do that efficiently.

Unfortunately, the application through the RED program was somewhat delayed. I'm not going to point fingers at the government, because these things are always a little bit of this and a little bit of that. The point

is, it took a little bit longer than it had to. They had their backs against the wall. They had to say, "We can't go any further, because if we, at this point, wait for the RED application, we cannot do any more development on the farm because the computers are the bottleneck." They had to get the computers up and running. So they went out and spent, I think, about \$50,000 or \$55,000 to buy the technology to install it in the mushroom plant so that they can get to the next step of getting this operation up and running.

As a result, they are basically disqualified from the RED program. I've asked Mrs. Van Bommel and her office to try to intervene with the ministry in order to say OK. Normally, we don't fund things after—I understand that; I've been around government long enough—but this is a pretty exceptional case, and I would ask that the government take a look at, through Mrs. Van Bommel's office, an opportunity to do something to assist them. It may have to be under another form. We may have to say, "Well, maybe not the computers," but that you've got something else. "Let's see if we can help you that way."

#### 1050

I just want to stress that there are not a lot of mushroom farms in northern Ontario, so this is a really good opportunity for us in northern Ontario to venture into this type of business. It's a community business, as I see it. Even though it's owned by Father Christmas, le père Noël, it's still, in my view, very much a community project and something we should be trying to solve.

I want to thank Mrs. Van Bommel on the record for helping us on that file and I look forward to some sort of resolution to that particular issue.

The other thing I want to put on the record is the issue of trade with the United States. Listen, we're all on the same book when it comes to this one. We thought we had negotiated free trade and NAFTA so that we'd have access to the American market. In exchange for doing that, we lost certain things in Canada in terms of some of our sovereignty, I would argue. Here we have yet again another example, in the agricultural industry this time, where the federal American government is doing everything they can to block goods going into the United States from the Canadian or Ontario agricultural industry.

We have seen what has happened with BSE. Certainly the border should have been opened a long time ago, but state and federal legislators do everything they can to protect their own people, and as a result, everything from beef to lamb to sheep to deer etc. is blocked at the border so we can't get them in. I just want to urge the government, on the record, to do whatever is in its power to try to get a resolution to this particular issue, because it's hurting everybody, as you well know.

From northern Ontario, I raise the case of Cedar Meadows, where they grow deer. As you know, there is a market for deer that's pretty specialized, but a big part of the market has been taken away by virtue of the border being closed. I just urge the government to do what it can to work toward a speedy resolution.

Again, I point the finger at the federal government. I wonder what's going on over there sometimes, because this issue has been dragging on long enough. I don't understand why we haven't found a resolution as of this date.

I want to congratulate the member on her motion.

**Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek):** I'm pleased to join in this discussion. I'm going to try to refrain from using the term "sexy." It has been used a few times, and every time it happens, I see our young pages start blushing. I don't want to make that happen again, so we'll refrain from that, but I might have to use it once or twice.

I have to say that earlier I heard some remarks, and I take exception a little bit to what I think is really rigid dinosaur thinking: "The minister's got to look after it. We've got to legislate it and regulate it and throw money at it." Well, part of what we have to do in this initiative, which is Buy Ontario—this is a promotion. We're talking about promoting and marketing something here, and the way you do that is that you talk about it, you educate it. We're also talking about consumer power.

What we have going on right now—I kind of feel like the member from Trinity–Spadina; this is something he would talk about—is a one-hour commercial. We're doing a one-hour television commercial on Buy Ontario and all the reasons why we should be buying Ontario. And, yes, because it's a commercial, I have to say it's sexy. You always have to mention sex if you're doing a television commercial. So there you go: it is a sexy thing to go out and buy Ontario.

Let me tell you some of the reasons you should be buying Ontario. It is something that governments and consumers should be doing—not "should be"; that they have to do. This is a consumer project we're talking about here. This is where consumers have all the power: Get out there and buy Ontario food. When you do, first of all, you will get the freshest, best-tasting, most nutritious, safest food that you can get, period, bar none. That's number one. But you will also contribute to your local economy, to the provincial economy, by buying Ontario. We can talk a lot about buying Ontario in terms of cars, if they're manufactured here and all rest, but largely that can be an export market. But when you buy Ontario food, you are supporting something that we cannot, as a society, live without. We're talking about the sustainability of our society when you buy Ontario food. We have to have the ability to feed ourselves. We have to support those people who produce our food so that we can support ourselves and feed ourselves. That's absolutely basic. It comes down to something as simple as that. As a society, if we're going to be a success in any way, shape or form, we need to be able to feed ourselves.

You can add to that that the other things we need are clean air and clean water. Three basic things: We need clean air, we need clean water and we need to be able to feed ourselves. In the area of clean water, this government is bringing in the source water protection, and in the area of clean air, we are closing down coal-generating plants.

Now, in the area of feeding ourselves, what we're doing is promoting Buy Ontario, because this will be what we need to do. I like to go a little bit further than just Buy Ontario. I say celebrate Ontario in every way, shape and form. Celebrate Ontario food because it's the best-tasting. Celebrate Ontario music because it's the best in the world, in many cases: Celine Dion—no, she's from Quebec. Shania Twain, Alanis Morissette—there we go—and some of the best in the world. Or in art, literature, all these areas, celebrate Ontario.

In fact, in my riding of Stoney Creek I have the only Canadian-owned producer of whisky left in the world. I can't tell you if it's good whisky because I don't drink whisky, but I hear it's fabulous whisky. It's the only Canadian-owned whisky producer left, and that's a tremendous shame. It's Kittling Ridge. John Hall produces a great product called Forty Creek. Buy Ontario: Buy Forty Creek, if you happen to be a whisky drinker. If you're not, there is our wine. We have some of the best wines in the world. The industry was very brave a number of years ago and ripped out all sorts of their vineyards because they were challenged to make better wine. They put in better vines, and now we're producing some of the best wine in the world.

We've talked about the safety and nutrition.

I just want to leave you with one thought: When my uncle came home from the war, my grandmother said to him, "What would you like to eat?" He said, "I want a fresh Ontario beefsteak tomato and a glass of milk." It was the taste of home. It's the soil, it's the air, it's the water. It's the taste of home. It's the taste of Ontario. It's the best in the world.

**Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation):** I want to compliment my colleague from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, Maria Van Bommel, for this particular initiative. She's been a strong supporter of the rural community.

You know, the interesting thing is that since we moved from 130 seats to 103 seats in the Ontario Legislature, the rural voice has diminished. I know there were those who thought, "Isn't this great? Let's get rid of politicians." There was a mentality that it was all evil. I'd like to remind some of my rural friends that what happened from that was that the rural voice was diminished in number, and that's most unfortunate.

We're lucky in Ontario that we have fresh food. The Foodland Ontario program promotes our fresh food. That's what people have when they visit, if I can be parochial again, the Niagara Peninsula. They have available to them all kinds of fresh fruit and vegetables. We have other products, animal products, in Ontario. We have a lot to be proud of here, and we have to promote those products in the best possible way and as often as possible. The fact is that they're fresh. The second is that they're of high quality. The third is that they're safe. It seems to me that all of us have to work with our retailers in this regard to promote these products as well. I think some of them want to be very co-operative about that.

I heard two members of the Conservative caucus say today that they want to spend more money promoting

Foodland Ontario, yet yesterday and the day before in the House, I heard John Tory, the leader of the Conservative Party, and Jim Flaherty, the finance critic, both condemning the government for spending too much money. They'll have to have a debate in their caucus about whether they want more money spent or less money spent. You can't have it both ways.

I compliment my colleague for this particular initiative, which I think all of us will support.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Mrs. Van Bommel, you have two minutes to reply.

**Mrs. Van Bommel:** First of all, I want to take a moment just to thank all the members who spoke: the members for Oxford, Niagara Falls, Timmins-James Bay, Stoney Creek and St. Catharines.

One of the things that happened to me this week was that on Tuesday night, I got a phone call from my daughter. It was 7 o'clock at night and she said, "Mom, come quick." I knew what it was. It was my next grandchild, my eighth grandchild, and I went racing down there. I missed the birth of Anthony Michael Van Meurs by 15 minutes. It was wonderful just to be there. One of the nice things about it was that Anthony, or Tony, as we're starting to call him already, was born at a rural hospital. He was born at Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital. One of the things that happened at Strathroy hospital in its early years—and it happened at all rural hospitals—was that they had a farm and they supplied food for the patients from that farm.

I think that in a lot of ways we've gone back into that again. We're starting to recognize the important role that food plays in our day-to-day health. We are starting to talk more about high fibre and having vegetables and fruit in our diets, and we understand that we can keep ourselves healthy by eating good, safe food. One of the things, in setting up a framework, is that I want to stress, and I want people to be able to understand, that buying Ontario first, buying Ontario food, whether it is produce, meats, grains—all of those things help us to stay healthy, and at the same time we create a strong agricultural economy in doing that. I hope that everyone will support this, and I thank everyone.

1100

## HEALTHY LIVING

**Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale):** I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should designate the first week in October of every year as Walk to School Week, as part of the international Walk to School program, to encourage physical exercise and a healthy lifestyle among our youth.

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

**Mr. Kular:** Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this private member's resolution, motion number 45. It's my pleasure to rise in the House and ask today for the

support of my colleagues on this resolution, which, if passed, would designate the first week in October every year as Walk to School Week in Ontario. This week would be a part of the international Walk to School program, which gives children, parents, schoolteachers and community leaders an opportunity to be a part of a global event as they celebrate the many benefits of walking.

Walk to School Week was first initiated in Great Britain in 1994, and Canada joined the international program in 1998, with 16,000 students from 100 schools across five provinces participating. Of those 16,000, I'm proud to say that 14,500 of these students were from our own province of Ontario. By 2004, over 2,000 Canadian schools participated, and over 850 of those schools were in Ontario alone, promoting physical activity, safer streets and a cleaner environment.

The goal of International Walk to School Week is to make people think about the many positive benefits that can be gained from regular walking to and from school. The international school week is more than just getting together with children and walking to school one week a year. The event's greater goal is to bring about permanent change in communities and lifestyles throughout the world.

Walk to School Week in Ontario would encourage physical fitness through the easiest-to-do form of exercise, and safety by teaching children the skills to walk safely and to identify safe routes to school; increase awareness of the importance of physical exercise and its role in preventing future health and medical problems; and show concern for the environment and raise awareness of our role in protecting the environment.

It would reduce traffic congestion and would reduce pollution. It would create awareness of how walkable and safe a community is, and where improvements can be made. It would promote social interaction by allowing the people of Ontario to share valuable quality time with local community leaders, parents and children.

For many parents around the world, the car has become the main means of transporting children to and from school. Work and family commitments, convenience, safety concerns, and general changes in lifestyle are just some of the reasons that parents are using their cars for this activity. The proportion of trips to school made by car has increased considerably in the last several years, leading to a gradual decline in the number of children walking to and from school on a regular basis.

As a family physician turned politician, I have seen first-hand how physical inactivity and lack of exercise contributes to health and medical problems. This is particularly of great concern when it comes to our children. Children who are overweight as youngsters tend to be overweight as adults. According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, levels of obesity among children aged seven to 13 have nearly tripled over the past 20 years. The increase that we are continuing to see in childhood obesity is alarming. It's crucial that we stop this trend. As we all know, health problems can result from obesity; for example, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart

disease, arthritis and other joint problems, to name just a few. This is costly not just in terms of health but also in terms of dollars.

These alarming trends need to be addressed. One important strategy is to help our young people be more physically active by walking, cycling or in-line skating to and from school, and not just during International Walk to School Week, but year-round.

Children are inactive for reasons ranging from watching too much television and spending too much time on computers to the lack of daily physical activity such as walking and cycling to school. The Canadian 2004 national survey on active transportation found that only 22% of children walk to school most of the time or always. Here in our province, the Active and Safe Routes to School organization determined that only 36% of children who live within a 30-minute walk of their school actually do walk to school, yet Ontario walkability studies found that nearly 75% of Ontario elementary children surveyed would prefer to walk or cycle to school rather than travel by motor vehicle. This is a remarkable finding. The study also found a significant gap between the number of students who are currently cycling to school and those who would prefer to cycle. Three and a half per cent of the Ontario students surveyed ride their bicycle to school regularly; however, a striking 26% would prefer this method of transportation.

Part of the International Walk to School Week is the walking school bus, an innovative tool where parents and neighbours supervise a group of students on their way to and from school. This approach reduces congestion and teaches traffic safety. The walking school bus provides a great social atmosphere for both adults and students. For example, if just nine families participate in a walking school bus, they can collectively prevent almost 1,000 kilograms of carbon dioxide from being released into the atmosphere.

I'm proud to say that a school in my town of Brampton, Morton Way Public School, was the first runner-up for the first-ever International Walk to School Award. This award recognizes the outstanding achievements made to encourage children to walk to and from school and create healthier, safer and caring communities. Every week for the past few years, Morton Way Public School has celebrated Walking Wednesdays, encouraging students to walk to school with their friends, families or caregivers. Parent volunteers lead walking school buses. This encourages family members to walk to school and helps develop a sense of community. On Wednesdays, between 88% and 98% of students reportedly walk to school.

#### **1110**

I ask you to please seriously consider this resolution and I ask all members to vote in favour of it. This is a resolution that will help reduce childhood obesity, encourage community spirit, help protect the environment and reduce reliance on energy-consuming vehicles.

Healthy people make healthy communities. By making people healthy, we can create strong and caring

communities. I would again request all members of this Legislature to support my private member's resolution. I would say, let Walk to School Week be a part of the history of this province and help create healthy Ontarians and a healthier environment.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges):** I'm pleased to participate in this debate on the resolution brought forward by the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale. How could anyone in the House not support this? Probably all of us remember the days when we did indeed walk to school. Speaker, I know that you were one of those who walked to school, uphill both ways, and what good exercise that was.

Certainly I, and I know all members of my caucus, will support this bill. Anything we can do to encourage physical fitness, especially among our young people—because that is where it all starts. As we survey this Legislature, we know that some of us should probably be walking to the Legislature every day, because it would be good for us. I won't point out any honourable members. I do note this, though: I look at our pages and they're all in great physical shape. So obviously they're doing their sports on a regular basis. They're either walking or running to school or running to the subway, doing whatever they need to do to be physically active and physically fit.

I'm sure the signal the member wants to send, by putting this into the form of a resolution and having it debated by the Legislature, is that it indicates his priority and how important he believes physical fitness is for young people and for our society in general. He must indeed consider it important, because it's not often—in fact, each member of the Legislature only has the opportunity to bring a matter before the House for debate about once a session. So to take one hour of debate in the House and invite all members of the Legislature to speak to this issue, it obviously is very important to the member, and we therefore participate gladly in this debate.

As a former Minister of Tourism and Recreation, I have a particular interest in physical fitness and amateur sports. I see the current Minister of Tourism and Recreation is here and listening to this debate intently. I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the wisdom of this minister in bringing forward an issue that I had the opportunity to put on the table when I was minister. I refer to that as my open doors policy. I want to commend the ministry staff who worked with me on that issue, for the support that I had from them. I also want to thank them for not shredding those documents following the last election, and for the fact that this minister, the member from St. Catharines, in his wisdom, has chosen to bring this forward, if not in totality, certainly the essence and the spirit of it. That open-doors policy was that I felt that we should be viewing every school in every neighbourhood of this province as a recreation centre. Rather than have those doors closed after school and on weekends, those doors should be open. They

should be open to the community, and those doors should remain open, not only to our young people, but the facilities there, that are paid for by their parents—whether it's the gymnasiums that are there, whether it's the sports facilities in and around the school—should be available to the community.

There is no reason why our young people should be forced to congregate in malls or on street corners when we have these incredible facilities, paid for by taxpayers, paid for by the parents of those young people, who often say they have nowhere else to go. Those doors should be open, and the fees should either be non-existent or certainly subsidized by the provincial government to make it possible for everyone, regardless of their ability to pay, to have access to those recreational facilities.

Again, I want to give credit to many people across the province, because we did consultations with coaches, with individuals involved in recreation across the province. We did consultation with teachers who were involved in teaching physical activity, and with various organizations, from the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts to others, to talk about what it would take to ensure that these facilities were available for our young people. Again, thanks to the ministry staff who took this on as a very important project, who helped work out some of the details. Again, I want to acknowledge, and gladly so, the current Minister of Tourism and Recreation for making a subsequent announcement when he took over that portfolio. I know that what he's doing now is just the beginning, because it's the right thing to do. It's a place where we should be investing, because by making those facilities available, we're investing in our young people. As important as the academics, I believe, is the physical well-being of our youth. This is one effective way of doing it.

I also want to go on record as saying that I am an advocate of mandatory physical education in our school system. I remember well, when I attended elementary and secondary school, there was no question—in fact, you needed special permission not to participate in the physical education class. I want those days back in Ontario. I believe one of the best things we can do for our young people is to encourage them to be actively and physically engaged in sporting activities, to understand the importance of what it does to our own mental well-being when we're physically in shape. So whether that's the team sports aspect of the exercise, there's nothing like learning how important it is to be a member of a team, to be working as a team, and to have the competition, the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat. You learn that when you're involved in organized sports. What better place to learn that than within the school setting with your school colleagues.

**1120**

With regard to the resolution that's before us today, this issue of ensuring that there is recognition, as the member wants us to do, of one particular week within the year—I believe he's referring to the first week of October that the member wants designated as Walk to School

Week. I certainly support that. I do believe it's important that somehow we as legislators do what we can to encourage that kind of activity.

I will leave the rest of the time for debate to my colleagues, who I know also want to comment. I thank the member for bringing this forward and look forward to this playing a role, although perhaps minor. I look forward to the government assuming its responsibilities to do much more in this area of encouraging physical activity and encouraging amateur sports.

We have a budget coming within the next few days. I'm hoping that the Minister of Tourism and Recreation has been able to convince his finance minister and his cabinet colleagues to designate a certain amount of financial resource so that he can in fact further this important policy of encouraging our young people to be engaged in sports, to ensure that the resources and the supports are there, whether that be coaches or teachers, with regard to physical activity within the school system, whenever it may be. I wish the minister well in achieving that.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins—James Bay):** I want to point out that I'm a product of a policy like this, as you well see. On the positive side, I support the member opposite for bringing forward this motion. As we say in the language that most people understand, this is a bit of a no-brainer. The motion basically says two things. The first part of the motion talks about designating the first week in October as Walk to School Week. Well, maybe we should have a Walk to Queen's Park Week. That would probably be good for many of us who are here today. Because you know that you have to follow my example and my physical physique, as good as it is. I want people to come to my level. I won't stand sideways as I say that.

The other thing that the particular motion talks about is doing something in order to encourage physical exercise and a healthy lifestyle amongst our youth. I would say that a lot of that is being done already. As you well know, health units and school boards across this province, along with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation, are doing a pretty phenomenal job, are doing a pretty good job of educating the public, both young and old, about the need to live healthier lifestyles, with everything from what we eat to physical exercise. We all recognize, at the end of the day, that a healthier lifestyle, as far as physical exercise and a better diet, will give a better lifestyle and will hopefully lead to less disease and a longer life.

There's an interesting conundrum in that, because one of the things that happens is—just one moment. I was eating a peppermint. You should never do that before you get up. I just saved myself on this one. I would just say one of the ironies of all of this is that we go out and promote these types of activities in order to make people healthier and to save money on the health care side, which clearly we do. But do we? I guess that's the point I'm raising. I'm not arguing against the member's motion, but what we end up having is that, as people live longer, the diseases get much more complicated and

much more expensive to deal with. I know the good doctor understands what I'm talking about because it's one of the discussions I have on a fairly regular basis with a number of friends of mine within the medical community, as we talk about how to contain the cost of health care—with hospital administrators, nurse practitioners, doctors and others. How do we contain the cost of health care as it escalates?

There are those in our society who would argue that we need to move to a more private system, as they've done in the provinces of Quebec and Alberta. There are even those on the farther right who would say that we have to go to a system where you can completely opt out. If you're on the list for knee surgery, you should have the ability to say, "To heck with the public system. I'm jumping the queue and I'm going to pay extra money and go get my knee surgery done at a faster pace." I'd just say that people should be careful what they ask for, because they might just get it. At the end of the day, if we allow that type of slip to happen to the private system, eventually our public system will be so underfunded, because there will be a larger reliance on the private system, that the governments of the day will have less pressure to make sure that our public system is properly funded and well organized, to the point that the public system will deteriorate. Over a period of time, you will have what you have in the United States, where there is a public system—and most people should understand this. We talk about private health care in the United States. Yes, the health care system in the United States by and large is much more private, but there is a public system run at the state and local levels, where you have state or county hospitals that are funded by the states themselves and through some funding from the federal government. But the point is, you'd better not go in there with something really serious because the reality is, there's very little coverage in the state programs as compared to what there is here in Canada. People can basically go bankrupt with one illness.

I will also point out that the cost of health care in the United States under the private system is much more expensive. You would know the name Leo Gerard, Speaker. Most people would know that I was at an event last night. It was the annual Cesar Chavez awards, given every year in his honour to workers across this province with regard to their activities within the labour movement and human rights overall. Leo was one of the recipients of the award. He talked about a very interesting experience that he is living today. He is a Canadian from Sudbury who understands very well the Canadian experience of public health care, who is living in the United States as the international president of the United Steelworkers of America—or the United Steelworkers, as they're called under their new title. Last night, he talked about the whole difference of our health care systems vis-à-vis the United States. One of the things he pointed out that I think some people may or may not be aware of is that if you're working for an employer, most employers, if they're unionized, negotiate health care programs in



I have had that happen: I've gone to see my family doctor in Timmins, Dr. Steve Cohen, because of an issue. I come down to Toronto and I'm still not feeling well, so I drop into the health clinic, Centre de santé communautaire on College Street, and they send me off to do the same test. I say, "Why don't you just call the lab in Timmins or my doctor's office, and you can get the results? I just had it done." "No, we've got to do it again."

It seems to me that we should be able to digitize this information somehow and share the information across all health care providers, so that if a doctor says, "I wouldn't mind seeing what your PSA count is"—or your blood count or your white cell count, whatever it is—and there has been a test done within a reasonable amount of time, he or she, as a nurse practitioner or doctor or whatever, could look up your file electronically and say, "There was the same test that I'm trying to prescribe to you now done but a week ago. Maybe I could rely on that as the indication of where I go next in my treatment of whatever disease you've come in to see me about."

So one of the things I think we need to do—it would be a fairly significant investment up front—is figure out how we can share medical information, when it comes to tests, across all of the various people and health care providers, so that we don't have a duplication of testing. It's a huge cost, as we well know.

I think one of the other things that we should do, and we've started down this road—the NDP, the Conservatives—I give them some credit—and the Liberals are continuing in that way—is look at how we have a multidisciplinary approach to health care. We don't always have to go to the doctor's office. It's not always a doctor who's got to treat you. There are nurses out there. There are nurse practitioners and other people in the health care field who are just as qualified.

You know, a nurse today entering the system goes to school for—what?—five years now. The BScN program is five years? My daughter is a BScN nurse. She originally did three years of college and two years of university. Now she's doing her nurse practitioner's degree. My point is, she is very well qualified, after five years of school, to treat or deal with somebody when it comes to some of the health ailments they may have as they walk into a health clinic, a doctor's office or whatever. So I think a more multidisciplinary approach to health care is where we've got to go. We've got to figure out better ways of being able to get doctors' offices in on this.

I was just at my flight surgeon Larry Mallo's office the other day, and this is where they're going. They're one of these group health care teams or networks or whatever.

**Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe):** Community care access centre.

**Mr. Bisson:** No, no, not a CCAC. They're one of those health teams or networks, depending on when they were created.

The point is, that's where they're going, but they're having a hard time trying to attract a nurse practitioner. He was just telling me the other day that they've got

one—they've got room for two—but they can't recruit the nurse practitioners because there are not enough of them being put out of our colleges in order to qualify them to work in northern Ontario. So I'm working with Northern College right now, with president Hill, to look at whether we can partner with Laurentian University in order to offer a post-BScN program part-time for nurses in our area so that they can qualify as nurse practitioners.

I think one of the ways that we can save money is to invest upfront and say, let's look at ways of dispensing health care by way of not just doing it with doctors, and allowing doctors to do the more complex things.

It also deals with the shortage issue. One of the reasons we have a doctor shortage is that it's a very doctor-driven system. We need to find ways to make sure that doctors who are practising deal with the more complex cases and reduce some of the burden on them. That burden can be transferred over to other health care practitioners to deal with.

So I support the member's motion. I just want to say again, I'm a good physical—how would I say?—example of that particular policy by which you preach. Hopefully, I'll live to be 90 years old, too.

**Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre):** I'm happy today to have the opportunity to speak in support of the resolution that was brought forward by my colleague from Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale.

My colleague alluded to the health aspects of Walk to School Week and his attempts to promote this resolution. I'd just like to reiterate the importance of encouraging a healthy lifestyle for our young people. Walking is an important activity for our children and can counter the effects of obesity and inactivity that are prevalent among many young people in Ontario.

Brampton has the distinction of being one of the safest cities in Canada. This gives parents the peace of mind that their children are able to walk to school on a route that will be safe. This is an important additional benefit of living in Brampton.

Every morning, when possible, I make an effort to walk my dog, Bailey, before I come to Queen's Park. Bailey is a golden retriever, and our walks give me the opportunity to clear my mind and survey my domain. Bailey and I have seen many wonderful creatures. On our walk the other day, we saw a rabbit. We have seen a coyote. We walked the other way when we saw the coyote. We've seen deer. We've seen foxes. We've seen beavers, egrets, snakes and gophers, and we did see a large turtle one time that was about as big as a soup plate—really big.

In fact, walking to school is something I believe most people, young people particularly, enjoy. For example, when Dr. Kular spoke about Morton Way Public School, they are a shining example, and one of the students made this comment about International Walk to School Day: "Everyone in our school tries to walk for a healthy body and safer streets. I like walking to school with my friends because we can talk. Walking is way better than riding in a car because walking is more fun than getting a ride."

That was a student at Morton Way Public School in Brampton, Ontario.

Brampton has worked really hard to create some of the most beautiful and abundant park systems in any city in Canada and to protect our natural environment. Brampton offers an enviable community setting and enhanced lifestyle that is attracting thousands of new families every year.

**1140**

In fact, Brampton has many trails throughout the city. The three main ones are the Chinguacousy Trail, the Professor's Lake Trail and—the longest one—Etobicoke Creek Trail, which I walk most mornings. All three run north and south. The trail runs from the southern end of Kennedy Road near Highway 407 to Mayfield Road in the north.

Unfortunately, even though most people have lived or grown up in the city of Brampton, many have not explored the full length of the trails. They haven't discovered the flora and fauna that are right beside some of our major thoroughfares. In fact, one that I walk quite regularly has some of our wild trilliums, both the white ones that people traditionally know and the very dark ones that are almost black or purple in colour.

The Etobicoke Creek Trail begins just north of Highway 407 on the west side of Kennedy Road across from the north tip of our sports park. The entrance is at the north edge of Brampton golf course, just north of the Etobicoke Creek bridge, and runs through Loafer's Lake.

Towns in Ontario are often named after their first postmaster or are named after the city of the same name where the founder originated. Brampton was named by John Elliott of Brampton, England, but the area was also known as Buffy's Corners after Mr. Buffy's tavern opened on Queen and Main in 1822. In days gone by, Brampton had many flower nurseries and in particular was known for raising beautiful orchids and roses. Even today, should you visit or walk along the trails and paths in Brampton, you'll notice that the city remains "The Flower City" by the many beautiful park displays that we've been honoured for quite recently in Communities in Bloom.

The healthy and safe lifestyle that this resolution is trying to promote is exemplified by a well-known Bramptonian named Leo O'Brien. Leo was the winner of the Brampton Community Safety Hero of the Year Award in 2004. Leo can be seen several times a week on his unicycle walking his dogs Purdy and Tippy or with dogs from the local animal shelter. On these walks Leo carries a bag to collect broken glass. He has been doing this for more than five years. His efforts have saved countless dogs from serious injuries and make the trails in Brampton safer places for young people to walk. Walkers Against Glass is made up of an army of volunteers who are dedicated to making Brampton a safe place to walk.

In closing, thank you for the opportunity to speak on this resolution. I am in full support of the promotion of International Walk to School Week, the first week of October, and I would be happy to support this resolution.

**Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock):** I'm pleased to rise today on the motion brought forward by the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale: "That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should designate the first week in October of every year as Walk to School Week, as part of the International Walk to School program, to encourage physical exercise and a healthy lifestyle among our youth."

I know that the member's intent is good; it's just sometimes a little difficult with our rural communities, and it seems to have more of an urban focus, which we see a lot from this government—a more urban focus without consideration for a lot of the rural areas.

There's widespread support. We all support more exercise among our young people and more of a healthy lifestyle, and we need to be better at that.

Just to take a few moments to share some of the statistics from one of the school boards in my riding, Trillium Lakelands District School Board: There are 41 elementary schools, seven secondary schools and six adult education centres that serve the needs of approximately 20,000 students. Eighty-eight per cent of those students in that school board travel to school by bus. I know it's not uncommon in some of the GTA areas for buses to pick up students, but students in my board walk to bus stops to be picked up, and on some days it's quite treacherous. I know that in the early mornings, when it's still dark, there is the threat of bears coming out and bothering students, and parents are rightfully concerned.

The Trillium Lakelands District School Board requires students to walk up to 1.6 kilometres if they are in junior kindergarten to grade 8. If they're in grades 7 or 8, they can walk up to 2.4 kilometres to catch their bus. If they're in high school, they can walk up to 3.2 kilometres, which is quite a bit of exercise. There are some children who have to walk that distance, and safety is certainly a concern.

I think we need to emphasize that this has very much an urban focus and needs to be more focused on rural ridings and the walking that the children in my area have to do every day.

I want to leave some time for the member from Waterloo–Wellington to speak. I just want to say that the theory is correct; just take into focus that rural areas have different needs and demands than the urban.

**Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre):** I am pleased to be able to stand in support of Dr. Kular's motion. I would like to restate what the Canadian Institute for Health stated: that obesity among our children has increased. It has actually tripled in the last 20 years, between ages of seven and 11, and 36% of our children between the ages of two and 11 are overweight; 10% are actually considered obese. When you take those facts into consideration, regardless of whether it's urban or rural, it's a staggering statistic that we need to deal with.

It's interesting—in today's *Globe and Mail*, André Picard has an excellent article. In essence he said that 20 years ago, politicians didn't really go out of their way to triple the number of obese children or overweight chil-

dren, but in fact our policies, regulations and our pieces of legislation have done that: When you look at the school curriculum, it doesn't have physical activity in it any more, except as an elective that you can take for one course in the secondary level—and I know we're changing that; and we do not have an ability to teach the children around health initiatives. There are just so many reasons why it's such good thing to do, but there's an additional reason that I think sometimes people forget: Not only does walking allow some socialization for the children, but it also makes them very cognizant of their environment. The fact is that when you take a car off the road, you take emissions that would be going into the air out of the air.

**Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough):** The One-Tonne Challenge.

**Mrs. Cansfield:** That's right, it's the One-Tonne Challenge. The fact is that when we drive our cars, there are SO<sub>x</sub> and NO<sub>x</sub> and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Interestingly enough, we have Drive Clean processes for our cars, but we don't seem to have any Drive Clean processes for our children. We pick them up and take them to the school; they don't have a physical activity where they spend five or six hours every day; and then we pick them up from school and take them home or we take them to a course. Children need more than that. They need to understand their bodies and appreciate that they have to care for those bodies. They also need to know and understand that they have to care for that environment in which their body lives. Their body requires clean air. I can remember, as a trustee, going to schools where the parents were so lined up with cars that they were double- and triple-parked. We have policies where we bus our children, knowingly, from their school to their community, yet they could still walk. We don't even encourage them to walk to the local school to get picked up by bus. We permit the other to occur. What are we teaching our children if we don't teach them to care about the air?

Part of the way we can do that is through the walking tour and the walking bus. Actually, it was initiated by Environment Canada some years ago as well, when they were looking at roles around climate change. They were trying to figure out what they could do to enable—because it's through the children that ultimately we're going to make this world a better place. We know that if we educate the children at a very early age and they continue with their habits, they take them into adulthood, which makes that statistic around obesity even more frightening, if you consider the health implications and ramifications of obesity in children, and as they move forward as adults, on our health care system.

So really what Dr. Kular is talking about is prevention—prevention of more emissions in the air, which in turn helps us in terms of our environment and a sustainable economy, a sustainable environment, a sustainable society. On the other hand, it helps our health care system, because we won't be overloaded with the effects of obesity in children, and in particular with diabetes, which is horrific disease.

So what Dr. Kular is doing really is, as my kids would say, a no-brainer. This is what we should be doing, but what we must do as legislators is look at those practices, policies and procedure that inhibit this from happening. Why are we encouraging our children to be bused when they can walk? Why are we not looking at those rural situations to encourage greater participation in the outdoors, in physical activity? I think if you really want to do something, you can do it. If you really want to put up the barriers, you'll do that as well.

**1150**

I believes, as this gentleman said at the end, "We have a fiscal and moral imperative to give them a fighting chance to grow up healthy." I don't think you could say it any better than that. I believe that that's our responsibility here in the Legislature. I don't think kids want to be fat. Do you? Absolutely not, yet they have no voice in all the things that we do to enable that to happen. So I'm pleased to support Dr. Kular's motion.

**Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington):** I am very pleased to have a chance to speak briefly this morning to the motion that has been brought forward by the member opposite: "That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should designate the first week in October of every year as Walk to School Week, as part of the International Walk to School program, to encourage physical exercise and a healthy lifestyle among our youth."

Over the years, I've noticed that the issues that are brought forward on Thursday mornings in private members' time tend to fall into three categories. One category would be motherhood issues that would enjoy the support of the full House, most likely, and I would expect that this motion will in fact receive the support of most of the members, if not unanimous support. Another category are issues that need to be raised but are controversial, and the member who is bringing it forward is trying to make a point. I would categorize my Bill 52, the act to support double-hatter firefighters, as one of those issues. The third category tends to be government backbenchers bringing forward initiatives that the government is not prepared to introduce but wants to have raised somehow, and they give the idea to a private member.

Again, I think that Dr. Kular has brought forward this issue in a sincere way to try and draw attention to the need to ensure that children receive the exercise they need. I expect he will receive the support of the House for this particular motion. Certainly, I'm going to support it. If indeed it comes to a recorded vote, he can count on my support.

**Mr. Ramal:** I am honoured and privileged to stand up this morning to speak in support of the private member's resolution brought by Dr. Kular, the MPP from Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale, which seeks to "designate the first week in October of every year as Walk to School Week, as part of the International Walk to School program, to encourage physical exercise and a healthy lifestyle among our youth."

I think it's a very important resolution. I've heard that all the speakers from both sides of the House are going to support it, because who's not going to support such an initiative to protect our youth and to create awareness among our youth and our parents about walking to eliminate a lot of problems?

The first important problem is obesity. When I was checking the e-mail about obesity around the world, I read that almost 22 million kids suffer from obesity. I think that initiative will help them to reduce their weight and create some kind of health, instead of diseases like cardiac problems, diabetes and so many different things we create from being overweight. I think Dr. Kular, as a doctor, knows the value of youth being healthy in order to create a healthy future for our province, for our country, for our world. As you know, those youth are our future, so protecting youth means protecting the future.

I was listening to the member from Timmins–James Bay when he was talking about our health care, which costs us a lot of money. This initiative will save us a lot of money if we encourage it and we help our youth and their parents, help our youth to walk and exercise.

I had the privilege yesterday to meet a doctor who came from France. Everybody thought that France had a great health care system. I was amazed when he was telling me about their health system in comparison with what we have in Ontario. We have a great system. We have great health coverage. We should protect it by such initiatives as Walk to School Week, and also, since we have with us today the Minister of Tourism, a program such as Active 2010 to create some kind of activities among our adults across the province.

Today, since we're speaking about the resolution brought by Dr. Kular, I think it is very important to send a great message to all people across the province about the importance of walking to school. It's not just about health but also about reducing the emissions created by cars, by buses, when we bus students to school, and also eliminating traffic, which all of us suffer every day when we travel from point one to point two. Even when I come from my apartment to this place, I always face a lot of traffic in the morning. That week will create such a good environment and all of us will notice. We will also protect our environment. We will eliminate many injuries among our youth, among our students. I think it's a very good initiative. Hopefully, by our speaking about it today—all the members of the House—I think we send a great message to all the people across the province to acknowledge it, and not just know about it, but use it as a tool in order to create a good, healthy environment, in order to create such an initiative to carry on for the future, and maybe also create a habit, especially in good weather like today, that from now on until the schools end, we create a habit of walking every day to school.

Also, I listened to many speakers who spoke before me. I want to try to walk every day to Queen's Park, and not just ask the students to walk. I think all of us should use it—not just for the students—for ourselves, because

it's very important to walk, to exercise, to maintain our health. By maintaining our health, we're preventing many diseases and also protecting our health care.

Thank you very much for allowing me to speak. I think it's a very good resolution. I'm honoured and pleased to support this resolution.

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

**Mr. Kular:** I would like to encourage each one of the members to visit the official Web site of the International Walk to School program—their Web site is [www.iwalktoschool.org](http://www.iwalktoschool.org)—and consider participating in Walk to School Week in your riding.

In Ontario, Go for Green is one of the organizing groups. To find out more about how schools in your riding can participate in Walk to School Week, go to their Web site, which is: [www.goforgreen.ca](http://www.goforgreen.ca). The Web site for Active and Safe Routes to School, a Go for Green initiative, also has information on Walk to School Week activities. Their Web site is: [www.saferoutestoschool.ca](http://www.saferoutestoschool.ca) for information and resources.

I also want to thank all the members who are supporting my resolution: the member from Etobicoke Centre, the member from Brampton Centre, the member from London–Fanshawe, the member from Oak Ridges, the member from Timmins–James Bay, the member from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock and the member from Waterloo–Wellington.

I would say Walk to School Week is about sharing quality time with parents and children, creating healthier, safer and caring communities. It's about promoting physical activity. It's about reducing traffic congestion and pollution. I would ask all the members to fully support it, bring it into practice and start walking. I would say that those who talk the talk should walk the walk.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The time allowed for private members' public business has expired.

#### ONTARIO PRODUCE

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** We will first deal with ballot item number 65. Mrs. Van Bommel has moved private member's resolution number 43.

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

#### HEALTHY LIVING

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** We shall now deal with ballot item number 66. Mr. Kular has moved private member's resolution number 45.

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

All matters relating to private members' public business having been dealt with, I do now leave the chair. The House resumes at 1:30 of the clock.

*The House recessed from 1159 to 1330.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### AGNES JAMIESON GALLERY

**Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock):** I'm pleased to rise today to share with members of the Legislature about an event I attended this past weekend.

The Agnes Jamieson Gallery in Minden was celebrating their official opening after their recent expansion. The gallery was named after Agnes Jamieson, a local doctor who was also an accomplished artist. She had a dream of establishing a gallery in Minden and, along with a number of other dedicated individuals, worked to establish the present Agnes Jamieson Gallery at the Minden Hills Cultural Centre.

The gallery received funding for this expansion from the previous provincial government through the Super-Build program. They also received federal and municipal funding, and the Minden Hills Cultural Centre Foundation worked to raise additional funds.

I want to thank the gallery curator, Laurie Carmount, whose tenacity kept the project moving forward.

When Frank Welch, a local undertaker, willed André Lapine oils and watercolours to his community in 1973, he did so on the condition that they be cared for and displayed.

They needed this expansion and renovation in order to properly house the André Lapine permanent collection at the gallery and to allow the gallery to showcase travelling exhibitions. The Lapine collection draws tourists to the gallery and to the Minden area. André Lapine was a renowned Canadian artist who painted predominantly farm landscapes and wilderness areas and is widely regarded as Canada's finest painter of horses.

Haliburton is fast becoming an artists' community and is thought of by many people as the Banff of the east. Being able to showcase other artists as well will help further this transformation. I encourage everyone to visit Minden and the Agnes Jamieson Gallery this summer.

### COMMUNITY COLLEGES

**Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** With the budget close at hand, I remind the McGuinty Liberals that Ontario colleges are ranked 10th of the 10 provinces in per student revenue. At a time when we need skilled trades and technology graduates to support our industries, our health care and social services system, and the hospitality and tourism sectors, Ontario colleges are at a breaking point. The Rae review said colleges need an additional \$400 million by 2007-08. How much money will the Liberal government actually commit in this budget to narrow that gap?

At the beginning of March, the president of Cambrian College in Sudbury wrote to me, outlining the situation facing the college. She said, "We are still not able to afford to hire full-time faculty and many of our programs are running with one full-time faculty member and a

squadron of part-time folks to serve up to 200 students.... We can't afford a librarian and our technicians do not have the expertise to manage and renew our collection. Academic equipment continues to fall behind industry standards. We continue to only do the minimum when it comes to maintenance. Annually, our costs increase between \$2 million and \$3 million just due to salary and benefit increases. As Cambrian plans its 2005-06 budget, assuming we will have the same amount as 2004-05, excluding the one-time funding, the college faces a \$4-million shortfall. This means potential program closures, hiring freezes, and greater impact on services to students."

It's a disgrace for Ontario to be dead last in Canada when it comes to per student revenue to the colleges. We need a significant investment in our colleges, and our universities, in this budget. How much will the government deliver?

### COMMUNITY-BASED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

**Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph–Wellington):** My riding of Guelph–Wellington has an unusually large number of Ontario disability support clients with mental health issues.

According to a 2001 census, 2,700 residents of Guelph and South Wellington required mental health support, and approximately 670 of these individuals required intensive management to cope. Providing appropriate community support to prevent psychiatric crises is a major challenge for Guelph agencies. For example, the Guelph Police Service spent \$57,000 from January to October last year, providing security for psychiatric patients at the local emergency room.

My constituency office has worked with the family of a man who suffers from schizophrenia to identify the cost of caring for him in psychiatric hospitals and jails. It appears the cost to the province for institutional intervention for this one individual approaches \$1 million.

The McGuinty government has provided \$950,000 to support community mental health services in Guelph–Wellington and an additional \$1.2 million to help people with mental illness stay out of jail. This support is very welcome, but Guelph still needs an assertive community treatment team. An ACT team increases the stabilization rate of individuals suffering from mental illness and reduces the requirement for institutionalization. I agree with my constituents. Guelph needs an ACT team, and it needs it now.

### DAVID WELDON

**Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges):** I rise today to pay tribute to an outstanding public servant. C. David Weldon, the chief administrative officer for the town of Richmond Hill, is retiring after 30 years of distinguished service.

The town of Richmond Hill was indeed fortunate when, in 1975, Dave Weldon ventured south from his previous post in municipal government in North Bay and Kenora to join the staff of the town of Richmond Hill. In 1982, Dave assumed responsibility as the town's very first chief administrative officer.

In the last 30 years, Dave has been instrumental in overseeing Richmond Hill's unparalleled growth. He has played an integral role in directing the town and its residents, both fiscally and physically, through uncharted municipal development and change. He has overseen the building of four arenas, three libraries, nine major recreation centres and four fire stations. Dave has influenced the town's direction in policy, setting its course in preserving green space for recreation, sport and the integrity of its heritage. Throughout his tenure, he has insisted upon fiscal responsibility and, to his credit, taxes were not raised at the town of Richmond Hill for 10 years.

Dave Weldon has not only worked for the town, he has consistently been an integral part of the community as a volunteer. He serves on the board of York Central Hospital and the board of the Richmond Hill community credit union. He has chaired his parish council, the St. Mary Immaculate school council and the town's Canada Day committee.

To Dave and his wife, Carol, and their children, Shawn, Lisa and Meaghan, we thank you for your unselfish service in the public interest and we wish you all of life's blessings in the years ahead.

#### MIDWIFERY

**Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale):** I'd like to take this opportunity to highlight some of the progress the McGuinty government has made toward increasing access to birthing services for women. Throughout the province we have invested \$37 million for midwifery services in 2004-05. This amounts to \$7 million more than the previous year. We have the opportunity to strengthen a noble profession that has provided assistance to families in time of great need for generations. The additional \$7 million will support 55 new midwives to provide services to 1,200 more Ontario women in community clinics, community-based agencies, hospitals and, more importantly, in the home. In the GTA, we are providing \$1.7 million at York Community Services and another \$237,000 at Markham Stouffville Hospital. This investment will give women both better access and more options for birthing services.

There are many advantages to greater investment in the profession of midwifery. A ministry study of women under the care of midwives and family physicians indicated three things: Women under the care of midwives had fewer C-sections and forceps deliveries and higher rates of breastfeeding than those under the care of physicians; consumer satisfaction for midwives is extremely high, at 98.7%; and about 25% of midwifery clients give birth at home, with no hospital stay and no additional cost to the health care system.

To repeat the words of our minister, "This government has made the largest one-year expansion of midwifery services ever in Ontario so that more women and newborns can benefit from their services." We are making sure new midwives are supported in practice in communities where they are needed.

#### FERGUS BRASS BAND

**Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington):** I rise today to congratulate the members and friends of the Fergus Brass Band on their 150th anniversary and for entertaining people in Wellington county and around Ontario since 1855.

I also want to thank Pat Mestern for the story that she wrote recently in the Fergus-Elora News Express about the Fergus Brass Band. Pat shares an extraordinary interest in our heritage in Centre Wellington through her story about the people in the band, supporters of the band, its relationship with our community and dedicated perseverance over 150 years of performances.

#### 1340

The Fergus brass band is without a doubt one of the oldest continuous public performance bands in the province. The band began as a fife and drum corps to celebrate patriotic occasions. In the years between 1861 and 1920, they practised in the fire hall and then in the drill shed/town hall, and after 1955 they were headquartered at the bowling green club house. Their newly renovated building on Blair Street suits their needs very well today.

The band received plenty of support from its community and from its local government, and it has always given back. Main street businesses pitched in to construct a bandstand in Webster Park in 1919, right after World War I, and during the summer months in those days, hundreds and hundreds of people came to Fergus to attend the weekly free concerts.

The band continues to boost our spirits and culture in Centre Wellington. In my 15 years as an MPP, and lately as a resident of Fergus, I have attended many events where they have been front and centre, if not the main attraction, often supporting fundraising to meet our needs in our community. I agree with Pat Mestern, who says, "Fergusites should be proud of the band's accomplishments and lend them the support necessary to continue the tradition for another century."

#### EDUCATION WEEK

**Ms. Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore):** I rise today to recognize Education Week 2005 and also to encourage and persuade the more than 30 schools in Etobicoke-Lakeshore to Read to Succeed. As a government we are celebrating 18 months of progress in Ontario's publicly funded education system. Our efforts for education include supporting improved student achievement, new respect for teachers and education

workers and more peace and stability in Ontario's schools.

Etobicoke–Lakeshore understands the importance of education in our children's lives. There are so many residents who are consistently active on this front, and it has been a pleasure to be involved with them. Last week, I visited Islington Junior and Middle School, and tomorrow I will be at George R. Gauld Junior School as part of MPP back-to-school week. Getting back into the classroom is helpful in learning from students, teachers and parents in my community.

I also wanted to say thank you to the teachers in my riding who last month took part in an advisory to discuss local initiatives to benefit education and a future education forum in Etobicoke–Lakeshore. But it is just as crucial that parents are part of the equation, and I'm happy to say that in my community they are. I recently had the opportunity to speak with the parent council of Our Lady of Peace as well as visiting John English's open house. In a few weeks, I will be speaking at Norseman Junior and Middle School in an effort to engage, listen and communicate with parents' councils who are participating in this forum from all across my community.

This week we celebrate education in Ontario, in all of its forms and with all the people who make it work. Etobicoke–Lakeshore knows its significance and worth to our most valuable asset: our children and young people in our province.

**Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans):** Education Week is a great opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments of educators and students in our local schools. Yesterday I went back to school in Orléans. In fact, I had the opportunity to meet with students at five schools in my riding, and what a great experience it was.

I started my day with a visit to Cairine Wilson Secondary School. They told me about their participation in the Nelson Mandela children's fund and their partnership with a rural school in South Africa. I then attended a career fair at St. Matthew Catholic high school. Grades 11 and 12 students made displays of their co-op work experiences to inspire younger students to take advantage of the experience co-op offers in preparing kids of a great future. At Convent Glen Catholic School, I discussed provincial governance with a grade 5 class, and the questions were not always easy. I next had the privilege of attending an assembly celebrating the 35th anniversary of Queenswood Public School. I was honoured to present the school with an official scroll from our Minister of Education to mark the special occasion.

My final stop was truly inspirational. At Orléans Woods Elementary School, I met with student Miranda Tofflemire, who recently donated her pony tail so that it could be made into wigs for children with cancer. I have to say that the funniest moment was when I learned that Miranda's social science class had made political trading cards for a project, and two students made cards of me on them: a picture on the front and statistics on the back. Next thing I knew, I was handing out autographs.

So what did I learn in school today? I learned that the programs and partnerships these schools have developed along with the excellent school and community spirit they foster are a tremendous asset to Ottawa–Orléans and to this province.

## STUDENT LITERACY

**Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex):** Ask any student—well, maybe any parent—what is the most important skill for children to learn in school, and I suspect they would say reading. That is why I rise to share the good news that the province-wide results of grade 10 testing released yesterday by the Education Quality and Accountability Office show that pass rates continue to improve and are up to 82%, from just 77% in 2003.

Students, parents, teachers and school boards deserve to be congratulated for the work they've done to improve these results. In particular, I want to draw attention to the improvements made by English-as-a-second-language students. Fifty per cent of ESL and ELD students passed this year, compared with a low of 34% in 2002-03.

As the EQAO board of directors chair, Charles Pascal, said, "Literacy is an essential foundation required by every student to participate and thrive in a knowledge-based economy."

Among other accomplishments, this government has invested over \$1.1 billion in education. More than 7,500 elementary teachers are beginning the year with specialized training in reading instruction, and more than 1,300 schools have smaller classes in the primary grades to boost student literacy.

Today, we celebrate the contributions exceptional educators, administrators and communities make in our classrooms, and the promise that we will continue to invest so that each and every student can read and write with confidence.

## REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

### STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

**Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre):** I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on general government and move its adoption.

**The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman):** Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 3, An Act to protect anaphylactic students / *Projet de loi 3, Loi visant à protéger les élèves anaphylactiques*, is amended to read An Act to protect anaphylactic pupils / *Loi visant à protéger les élèves anaphylactiques*.

**The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling):** Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

## SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling):** On May 4, 2005, the member for Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford, Mr. Tascona, rose on a question of privilege concerning a list of intended appointments to yet-to-be-created government bodies known as local health integration networks. This list was recently submitted to the standing committee on government agencies. According to the member, the government was in contempt of the House for presupposing the passage of enabling legislation when it advertised publicly for persons to be appointed to the networks, and when it then went ahead and hired people as if the networks were a fait accompli. The member for Niagara Centre, Mr. Kormos, the government House leader, Mr. Duncan, and the member for Erie–Lincoln, Mr. Hudak, also spoke to this matter.

Having had an opportunity to review the relevant precedents and authorities, I will now address the points that were raised by the member for Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford. The member indicated that government advertisements presupposed that enabling legislation would pass. Additionally, the member indicated that the government's submission of the list of intended appointments to the standing committee on government agencies presupposes the existence of enabling legislation, because the outcome of the hiring process was based on the incorrect premise that the legislative or regulatory framework existed.

Let me say at the outset that I do not interpret the referenced statements, seen in context, as undermining the authority of the House or its legislative function. The statements are rather innocuous, they make no connection to a bill before the House, they do not presume the existence of a specific legislative or regulatory regime, and they must be balanced with the other statements on the government's Web site that make specific mention of the government's intention to introduce enabling legislation. For example, the May 2, 2005, bulletin 11 document mentioned by the member indicates that the government "intends to introduce legislation" to effect the requisite changes, and that "legislation will be needed to enable [the networks] to perform certain functions that are envisioned for [them]...."

The use of the words "intends," "legislation will be needed," and "envisioned" suggests that the government was aware of and showing consideration for the legislative function of the assembly.

## 1350

As to the issue of the appointments themselves, it must be noted that Speakers of this assembly have not found fault with broadly similar intended appointments to bodies that have yet to be created. In this regard, I refer to the following precedents:

In 1997, Speaker Stockwell ruled that it was not a matter of privilege or contempt that the government had sent to the standing committee on government agencies a notice of an intended appointment to the Education Improvement Commission in circumstances where the bill

creating the commission was still before the House. That ruling can be found at page 6577 of the Hansard for January 29, 1997.

In 2000, Speaker Carr ruled that a prima facie case of privilege was not established in circumstances where the government's Public Appointments Secretariat was recruiting appointments for the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board, despite the fact that the bill creating that body was still before the House. Speaker Carr stated that "various Speakers have made it clear that the public service has a responsibility to prepare itself and stand in readiness for the possible passage of legislation." He found the circumstances to be an exercise of "due diligence on the part of the public service in preparation for pending legislation." That ruling can be found at pages 5799 and 5800 of the Hansard for November 27, 2000.

In 2002, Speaker Carr had to deal with a situation where a proposed university or the government had created a Web site and hired university staff in circumstances where the legal existence of the university was contingent on the passage of a bill that was currently before the House. In ruling that a prima facie case of contempt was not established, Speaker Carr found that it had not been shown that the impugned actions were something other than planning for the proposed university. According to Speaker Carr, the hiring of staff and the creation of a Web site did not suggest contempt. That ruling can be found at page 549 of the Hansard for June 3, 2002.

For these reasons, I find that a prima facie case of contempt has not been established.

This leaves one final matter for consideration. According to the member for Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford, the standing committee on government agencies has no jurisdiction to consider the appointments to the networks because of the absence of enabling legislation. I have given careful thought to this jurisdictional issue, and although it is really a matter of order on a potential item of business before a forthcoming meeting of the standing committee, in view of the fact that today is the deadline to select intended appointments for review, I will rule on the matter. In this regard, I note that at page 6577 of the above-mentioned January 29, 1997, ruling dealing with intended appointments to the Education Improvement Commission, Speaker Stockwell stated the following:

"I find nothing in the referral of a certificate of intent to appoint these two candidates which would in any way limit or compromise the ability or rights of a committee to conduct a review under the terms of the standing orders.

"The fact that the appointments are contingent on the passage of legislation does not impact on the committee's review. I want to note here that this is not the first time the committee has reviewed an intended appointee prior to passage of legislation which establishes the agency, board or commission.

"In 1991, the committee reviewed and concurred in the intended appointment of the Employment Equity

Commissioner. Some members who were here during that period of time may recall that the legislation that provided for the Employment Equity Commissioner was not passed in this Legislature until 1994, but the appointment took place in 1991.”

In closing, I would like to thank the member from Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford for raising these matters, and the member for Niagara Centre, the government House leader and the member for Erie–Lincoln for their helpful submissions.

## STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

### MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

**Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** I rise in my place today to bring to your attention and to the attention of all of my colleagues in this House the fact that this is Mental Health Week in Canada. This is a week for us to reflect as a society on a problem that, to be perfectly frank, we spend too much of the rest of the year ignoring. Hopefully, this is a week for us to reflect collectively on the fact that we do not do as well on mental health as we should, and hopefully this is a week for all of us to decide to do better, because mental illness has been stigmatized for too long. It affects too many of us, it hurts too many people, destroys too many families and costs us all too much in too many ways. One in five Canadians—roughly six million people; two million of them here in Ontario—will be affected by mental illness in their lifetime. Consider that number. Consider the fact that these people all have friends, families and loved ones, and reflect on just how many of us will be affected by mental health.

It is estimated that mental illness costs us as a society almost \$15 billion per year. This is a huge problem. Yet it is one that we still have trouble acknowledging, talking about and dealing with. The Canadian Mental Health Association estimates that 49%, essentially half, of all the people who have suffered from depression or anxiety have never talked to a doctor about their problem, such is the stigma of mental illness. So, while there is much that we can do and are doing as a government to fight mental illness—and I’ll be talking about that in just a moment—there is something just as important that we must all do as members of our society: fight the stigma. Talk about mental illness. Get others talking. Make it an acceptable topic of conversation, like the fight against cancer or heart disease. It is only by acknowledging that it is a problem that we can properly tackle it as an issue.

I’m proud of the steps our government has taken to help fight mental illness and to reverse what has almost amounted to a tradition of neglect in this province. Last year we increased base funding for community mental health by \$65 million—the first such increase in 12 years. That funding has enabled the hiring of some 156

mental health professionals. As a result, 13,000 additional people have been helped. By 2008 we will have expanded community mental health services to the point where they are helping an additional 78,000 patients annually.

Part of last year’s investment was \$27.5 million in an initiative to help keep people suffering from mental illness out of jail. Since 1995 there has been a 27% increase in the number of mentally ill patients admitted to correctional facilities in Ontario. In too many of these cases, they would not have wound up there had they been receiving the help and support that they need in the community. This initiative will provide services to an additional 12,000 non-violent offenders with mental illnesses, including crisis response and outreach, court support and supportive housing—badly needed alternatives to incarceration, in other words.

We also announced an increase of more than \$4 million for substance abuse and withdrawal management services and an extra \$25 million in children’s community mental health programs. That will help an additional 7,000 children per year. In addition to these investments, we also struck a deal with the Ontario Medical Association that contains several provisions to improve mental health care in this province: incentives to support physicians in providing comprehensive primary mental health care; provisions to recruit, retain and better reward psychiatrists; and financial recognition of GP psychotherapists.

Finally, of course, we announced the first 55 of our 150 family health teams, which will deliver the very best kind of comprehensive primary care, including mental health care, to many patients across this province, when they need it, where they need it, and as close to home as possible in their communities.

We’ve done a lot in this past year in taking up the battle against mental illness. We have, as they say, made a pretty good start. We have a long way to go, and that’s a challenge that we are happy to take up. But as I said earlier, just as important as the investments we make as a government are the efforts we make as a society to erase the stigma around mental illness. I would urge all of my colleagues to help in this regard this week and going forward, working toward a time when we don’t need to have Mental Health Week in this province or country.

1400

### DRINKING AND DRIVING

**Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation):** It’s a great privilege for me to rise in the House today to talk about an important issue facing all Ontarians: drunk driving. The good news is that the number of fatal drinking and driving crashes has fallen by 35% in the last 10 years. However, drinking and driving is still a factor in about one quarter of all fatal collisions in Ontario.

Every year about 16,000 people are convicted of drinking and driving in Ontario. That is a rate of about

two every hour. In 2003, more than 200 people died in drunk driving collisions. More than 500 were seriously hurt. In nine out of 10 drinking and driving deaths, the drinking driver was a male. Most impaired drivers involved in collisions are between 19 and 24 years old. The summertime is the deadliest for drinking and driving collisions; nearly twice as many people are killed in the summer months as in the winter.

We need to get the message out now. Earlier today, I helped officially launch the Arrive Alive-DRIVE SOBER campaign. It is held each year by one of our biggest safety partners on this issue, the Ontario Community Council on Impaired Driving, in short known as OCCID. I want to thank them very sincerely on behalf of our government for providing outstanding leadership in this very serious and important manner.

Our government is also working with police, and a number of other road safety groups like MADD and Ontario Students Against Impaired Driving. I have been working on this issue, along with our safety partners, to raise public awareness. I strongly support and take part in the holiday RIDE program, MADD's red ribbon campaign, conferences on impaired driving, public service announcements and especially this recent Arrive Alive-DRIVE SOBER campaign.

Our government also launched the iDRIVE campaign last year. It includes a video by and for young people to raise awareness about dangerous driving, including impaired driving. Twenty-two hundred copies have been distributed to schools, community groups, public health offices and police. I am pleased to report today that another 2,200 copies have been ordered this year.

Ontario has the safest roads in North America. But road safety doesn't just happen; it takes an ongoing commitment year after year. The theme of this year's OCCID campaign is Choose Your Ride. We want to convince people to make responsible choices this summer. When you choose your ride, you will avoid ending up in the back of a police cruiser, an ambulance or a hearse. This is what can happen when people choose to drink and drive. Instead, we urge people, if they drink, to make responsible choices. You could take a taxi or use a designated driver.

Ontario has some of the toughest anti-drinking and driving laws in this country. A drunk driving conviction costs about \$20,000, but it could cost you more: It could cost you your job, your plans, your family and your life. I want to urge all members to join with me in urging everyone to make responsible choices this summer. Choose not to drink and drive. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak.

**The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling):** Responses?

#### MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo):** I am pleased to rise today on behalf our party to recognize Mental Health Week. The Canadian Mental Health Association launched the 54th annual Mental Health Week on

May 2. This year's theme is mind and body fitness, which focuses on the connection between physical and mental health.

According to the Canadian Mental Health Association, one in five Ontarians will experience a mental illness in their lifetime and one in eight will be hospitalized for mental illness at least once in their life, more than are hospitalized for cancer and heart disease.

Left undiagnosed and/or untreated, mental health and addiction problems cause large productivity losses. They have been estimated as amongst the most costly of all our health problems for service providers, taxpayers, employers and insurers, and that doesn't take into consideration the human cost. Mental health claims, especially depression, have overtaken cardiovascular disease as the fastest-growing category of disability costs in Canada.

This week, the Centre for Mental Health and Addiction also launched their Transforming Lives awareness campaign to challenge stigma. The campaign focuses on the personal stories of Ontarians' experiences with mental illness, including stories from the Honourable James Bartleman and former federal finance minister the Honourable Michael Wilson.

Because mental illness is such an invisible disability, it is often forgotten in the development of policies and practices, both in legislation and within individual organizations. As legislators and lawmakers, we must commit to including mental health in the health care fold and help to do what we can to eradicate the stigma associated with mental illness.

During the committee hearings on Bill 8, I was pleased to introduce amendments recognizing that the promotion and treatment of illness must include not just physical illness but also mental health. I would encourage all members of this House to recognize the stigma that is associated with mental health and do what they can to eliminate it.

#### DRINKING AND DRIVING

**Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey):** In response to the Minister of Transportation's announcement today, I want to congratulate the minister. I think it's proper for him to urge all members to help get the message out to Ontarians that we will not tolerate drinking and driving in the province. I congratulate the minister for participating in the 16th annual OCCID—which is the Ontario Community Council on Impaired Driving—campaign.

But, Minister, in addition to encouraging Ontarians not to drink and drive, you should have been responding today to what MADD Canada has said to you and what I raised in the House just before Christmas.

As of today you still haven't hired the 1,000 police officers to make our roads safer and to get impaired drivers off the road. MADD Canada's report indicated that between 50% and 90% of convicted drunk drivers don't sign up for a course on the dangers of drinking and driving, which they're required to do by law. They don't complete the Back on Track program.

MADD Canada's report also said that of up to 16,500 people convicted of impaired driving each year, only 2,000, or 12%, actually complete the necessary steps to get their drivers' licences back. That means there is a soaring number of convicted impaired drivers driving on our roads without insurance or a driver's licence right now as we speak.

Minister, you have to address this problem. Only 12% of 16,500 convicted impaired drivers each year bother to take the steps required under the law to get back their driver's licence and their insurance. It's a serious problem. That is a lot of people on the road without proper documentation and, more importantly, without the proper training so that they won't repeat their mistakes of the past and once again drive impaired and perhaps kill someone on our highways.

I need you to address that. You've never gotten back to me. MADD Canada tells me today that, yes, the staff of Mothers Against Drunk Driving and your ministry staff are talking. They need to meet with you, and you need to address the report. Yes, it's good that you joined with OCCID today and encouraged people not to drink and drive this summer and, I would add, any summer or at any time. I appreciate that, but would you sit down with MADD Canada and address a very serious problem: the report they put together based on your own ministry's statistics.

The last time I raised it, you said their statistics were wrong. At least now you admit their statistics are right. Do something about the problem.

1410

#### MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

**Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** It's a pleasure for me to make some comments on behalf of the NDP on Mental Health Week in Canada. I want to begin by acknowledging the need for society to recognize a couple of things:

First, mental illness and addictions are serious health issues for many Ontarians, their families and friends. Twenty per cent of the general population will suffer from a mental illness or addiction in their lifetime.

Secondly, if untreated, mental health and addictions cause very serious productivity losses in the economy, not to mention the loss of control, the loss of hope and the feeling of helplessness suffered by both those who are affected and their families and friends as they watch someone spiral into a downward depression.

Thirdly, mental health and addiction funding cannot continue to be marginalized among the broad range of health care services and health care programs we deliver that are funded by government.

Fourthly, even though a lot of work and effort have gone into ending the stigma attached to mental illness and addictions, we must be ever vigilant in stamping out those old-fashioned, outdated and really irresponsible views that would still have mental illness viewed as something negative or something fearful.

The Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario division, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and the Ontario Federation of Community Mental Health and Addiction Programs made a presentation to the pre-budget consultations in Whitby on January 20, 2005. I was on the committee that day and heard their presentation, and I'd like to spend the rest of my time repeating what they said in that pre-budget submission.

"Although, as we have noted, the government has made the first investment in community mental health in many years, it has served only as a first step. The needs of people with mental illness and addiction in Ontario are still extremely urgent. There has been much ground lost over the past decade that must ... be recovered. We would like to encourage the government to proceed with their committed investments in consultation with providers at a rapid pace. It is vitally important that the government continue its commitment to increased annualized base ... funding for the mental health sector, and this funding should be extended to addictions services as well. It is also key that the existing funding in the mental health and addictions sector is protected, so that agencies serving various constituencies are not reallocating their existing mental health and addictions funding to other priorities. Ensuring a net gain of investment is the basic requirement for the sector."

They went on to make five recommendations to the committee, and essentially to the government, with respect to what should be in the budget.

One, "Consumers of mental health and addiction services and their families must be at the centre of reform and the government's health transformation agenda...."

"Investment into consumer and family initiatives is a key component of putting the consumer at the centre of the system and providing a much-needed continuum of care for people with mental illness. The success of peer support services and consumer-run initiatives indicates the importance of their role within the mental health and addictions sector...."

"Unfortunately these organizations are not able to play the key role they should in the support of people living with mental health and addictions. None of the investments the government has made thus far, while they have been greatly appreciated, are supporting consumer and family initiatives...."

Two, "The needs of diverse, rural and remote communities must be recognized...."

"Issues such as transportation to services, adequate human resources, access to technology and availability of primary care pose unique challenges for rural and remote areas of the province, and the specific needs of these communities are often overlooked."

Three, "A continuum of services and supports from community-based to hospital care must be available...."

Four, "Programs which prevent and reduce homelessness must be supported."

"People with addictions and mental illness ... are at greater risk of homelessness because their housing, employment and income options are often limited."

The group recommended a number of things the government could do:

“Create more supportive and affordable housing including housing with an emphasis on harm reduction....

“Create safe houses and crisis beds so that people experiencing episodes of acute mental illness can be stabilized before they need hospitalization and a loss of housing occurs;

“Improve access to case-management services....

“Expand shared care teams in emergency shelters and drop-ins....

“Ensure emergency shelters have adequate funding to provide higher levels of support and care for people with mental illness and addictions....”

Five, “The focus on concurrent disorders must be enhanced....

“Research has shown in some clinical populations that 40% to 50% of people with any current substance use disorder showed a concurrent mental health problem....

“Given the prevalence of concurrent disorders, it is clear that both mental health and addiction services must receive significant investment to truly address the needs of Ontarians.”

Finally, number six: “The mental health and addiction sector’s participation in e-health strategies must be supported,” and the government must pay for that technology.

As we acknowledge this week as Mental Health Week across Canada, I urge the government in its budget to implement some of the recommendations that were made by these groups.

## VE DAY

### JOUR DE LA VICTOIRE EN EUROPE

**Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I ask unanimous consent for each party to speak for up to five minutes in recognition of VE Day.

**The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling):** Agreed? Agreed.

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** This month has special significance for people here in Ontario, across Canada and our friends in Europe. Today, I will ask members to pause to remember two very different days in May: One was a moment of heartbreak, the other a cause for celebration.

On May 10, 1940, the people of the Netherlands hid themselves in their basements and bomb shelters as enemies marched across their border. For years they lived in fear—fear of the soldiers in the streets; fear of being dragged from their homes late at night; fear of the occupiers that at first humiliated them, then enslaved them and finally starved them. Five years later, in the early days of May 1945, the Dutch poured out of their homes and into the streets. They danced with the young Canadian soldiers who had come to free them from oppression, to free them from fear.

Today is a national holiday in the Netherlands, the 60th anniversary of the bevrijding—the liberation. Millions of people, young and old, will attend ceremonies held across the country. Minister Gerretsen, who is one of the thousands of Dutch people who immigrated to Canada after the war, is there to represent our province. On this day, and it seems every day, in the Netherlands every Canadian is a hero and every Dutch citizen is a friend.

In the city of Groningen, there is a forest of 30,000 maple trees commemorating the bravery of Canadian soldiers. It’s called the Liberation Forest, and when it was planted, a poem was written. Its closing lines read, “To commemorate them we dedicate a forest yet / Maple leaves fell for us, lest we forget.”

The Dutch have never forgotten the sacrifices Canada’s young people made so long ago, and neither should we. We should not forget the struggle they endured, the long months of fighting through the towns and cities of France, the forests of Belgium and the flat, open fields of Holland. We should not forget the more than 45,000 lives that were sacrificed in the air over Britain, in the cold seas of the North Atlantic, at Dieppe, Juno Beach, Italy and Hong Kong. We should not forget either the ones they left behind: their mothers, their fathers, their families, their sweethearts. Although we can never imagine the sacrifices our veterans made, we must never, ever forget.

And we must never forget as well those they liberated 60 years ago from an unspeakable evil: the men, women and children who were saved from places like Kamp Westerbork, and the six million who died. In overcoming the horrors of the Holocaust and embracing life again, the survivors inspire all of us to believe in the power of the human spirit. Their stories too must never be forgotten.

Last night, I did a bit of research and learned that Kamp Westerbork was a Nazi concentration camp located in northern Holland that was liberated by the Canadians. But before our soldiers arrived, and over the course of the previous two years, 93 trains had stopped at Westerbork to pick up over 100,000 men, women and children. These Jewish families were taken to places like Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen, where they were murdered in gas chambers. The very last train to leave Westerbork before the soldiers arrived, the last train to leave for the death camps, had as one of its passengers a beautiful young woman, 15 years of age, by the name of Anne Frank.

#### 1420

Robert Engel was a young man in prison in Westerbork, and he told of his experience when the camp was liberated by Canadians. He tells us that when the Canadian convoy stopped at the headquarters of the camp’s SS guards, someone hoisted a huge Dutch flag and the crowd began singing every national anthem they could think of: the Wilhelmus for Holland, God Save the King for Britain, the Marseillaise for France and Hatikvah for Israel.

Then, he writes, "All of a sudden these soldiers, our liberators, started singing. We didn't know the song, had never heard it, but we knew instinctively that it was an important song. They sang it with such pride, standing there with their dirty faces beaming.

"Their eyes were proud and smiling; by golly, they were beautiful. That song became, for me," he writes, "the most beautiful song in the world. They sang ... O Canada."

Mr. Engel writes: "And we were free."

By the way, Mr. Engel went on to become one of the founding members of the Jewish Holocaust Survivors of Canada.

Today, there are approximately 100,000 veterans of the Second World War in Ontario. Even though the average age is 82—long past retirement—many remain active and involved in their communities, sharing their memories with students and young people; working in churches and community organizations. To paraphrase Winston Churchill, they have given so much for so long to so many.

This week we have an opportunity to give something back. This Sunday, I encourage Ontarians to join me as we cheer on more than 1,000 veterans who are coming here to Toronto to march in a victory parade. The parade will start at Fort York and pass under the winged statue of Victory at the Princes' Gates. It's a chance to show our appreciation. It's an occasion to celebrate the contribution of our veterans. It's an opportunity to tell them that we've listened, that we will remember and that we will never forget.

Il y a 60 ans, ces braves hommes et femmes ont libéré un pays qui vivait dans la peur et la famine pour qu'aujourd'hui, notre pays puisse vivre dans la liberté et la prospérité. Ils et elles sont venus à la rescousse d'un pays déchiré par la guerre pour que nous puissions vivre dans la paix.

I'm pleased to report that all parties in the Legislature are working together to construct a veterans' memorial right here on the grounds of Queen's Park. This memorial will be a fitting, lasting tribute to the heroism, dedication and loyalty of our armed forces members, past and present, in times of war and in times of peace. The memorial will be built on the front lawn of Queen's Park, visible and accessible to everyone who comes to visit. In fact, this is the first time in 60 years that approval has been given by the Legislature to erect a structure on its lawns. It's our goal that the memorial will be constructed before the end of this year.

Sixty years ago, brave Canadian men and women liberated a country that had known fear and hunger so that today our country may know freedom and prosperity. They rescued a country torn apart by war so that we may know peace. They sacrificed their youth so that our young people could be safe. They gave their lives so that we could live ours in freedom.

So let us always remember, honour and thank all those who served, those who helped here at home and those who continue to serve.

*Applause.*

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo):** I am honoured to rise on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus to recognize Victory in Europe Day, to be celebrated this Sunday, May 8. I have been asked by our leader, John Tory, to deliver these remarks in light of my personal family ties to this special day.

I speak today as a native of Holland and as a proud Canadian. On May 8, we will celebrate the 60th anniversary of the end of war in Europe. In celebration of this 60th anniversary, Canadians will join Europeans, Americans and British to honour and acknowledge the efforts of the men and women from every walk of life whose service and dedication helped to liberate Europe. There will be a huge veterans' parade in Apeldoorn, the Netherlands, this Sunday.

This victory for freedom did not come without sacrifice, and we remember the thousands who gave their lives so that we might have freedom today. Although May 8 will be the focal point of the VE celebrations, the official memorial services and liberation celebrations have been taking place all week in the Netherlands, and many of our veterans are there. Yesterday was Dutch Remembrance Day and today is Dutch Liberation Day, a day of celebration. These two days mark the anniversary of the Canadian liberation of Holland 60 years ago.

I have followed the activities of this week with a very keen interest and a very strong desire at times that I wish I was there. This 60th anniversary allows the Dutch, including my relatives, to honour the Canadians who gave their lives for our freedom and to thank those veterans who survived. Indeed, nowhere are our Canadian veterans more honoured and revered than by the Dutch of all ages. For any of you who saw the TV coverage of the ceremony yesterday at Holton, at the Canadian War Cemetery, we saw the Dutch children deliver the flowers and read the poems at the Canadian graves.

It was out of the anguish and horror of this war that there developed a warm and powerful bond of friendship between the Dutch and the Canadians, which continues to this day. The foundations of that special relationship were established during those dark days and years of World War II. When Holland was overrun by the Nazis, Crown Princess Juliana made her wartime home in Canada and gave birth to her third daughter, Margriet, in Ottawa. As a thank you gesture for providing a place of sanctuary for her and her family, as well as in recognition of the role that Canadian soldiers played in the liberation of the Netherlands, Queen Juliana presented Ottawa with 100,000 tulips in 1945, and that tradition and the Tulip Festival continue to this day.

What have I learned from my parents about those days of German occupation? Although I was not born at that time, I have learned about the fear, the hunger, the destruction, but also about the courage, the hope and the freedom.

My mother was one of 13 children who had very little to eat, like so many others in Holland during this time. Each day she eagerly awaited the return of her father

from his work on a farm so that she could share the single orange or other item of food that he brought home for her and her 12 siblings.

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I heard about fear—extreme fear. On one occasion as my parents were preparing for their marriage and shopping for dishes, the Nazis started to shoot indiscriminately into the crowd of shoppers and they were forced to flee, with others, for their lives.

I learned about destruction as the Nazis bombed the heart of Rotterdam, including my aunt and uncle's store. In fact, if you've been to Rotterdam and seen the statue, you see the statue with the heart torn out and the uplifted arms. During that bombing, my father and his sister, who had been orphaned during World War I, lost all their photos and documentation related to their parents and their ancestry, and I learned about courage: the courage of the Dutch Underground, where my father served with pride and, of course, the tremendous courage of the Canadian liberators.

It was this courage, this hope and this optimism displayed by the Canadian troops in liberating the citizens of the Netherlands that led to the ties of friendship and respect between Canada and the Dutch. In fact, it was these ties which influenced many Dutch citizens, such as my own parents, to immigrate to Canada after the war. To this day, they, like all those other immigrants, are grateful for the opportunities that have been given to them and to their children and grandchildren.

In this, the Year of the Veteran, and on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of VE Day, let us salute, let us honour and let us say thank you to all those Canadian men and women who participated in the liberation of Europe, and in so doing gave those citizens back not only their freedom but also their dignity.

As a native of one of these European countries, I say a grateful thank you, and I want the veterans to know that you and what you did will live on in our hearts forever.

**Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River):** On behalf of New Democrats, I'm honoured to be able to say a few words on what is a very important day for Canadians, and obviously a very important day of remembrance for many people in Europe.

I think it's good that Canadians reflect at times like this on what was a catastrophic event for the world and an incredible challenge for Canadians. Many Canadians probably don't know, but at the beginning of the Second World War, Canada had virtually a non-existent armed force. The Royal Canadian Navy in 1939 had only 2,000 sailors, four destroyers, two old destroyers and four minesweepers—not much to go to war with. The Royal Canadian Air Force in 1939 had 298 officers and 2,750 other ranks. They had only 270 aircraft, and only 37 of them were remotely combat-worthy. The army was in even worse shape. In 1939, it had four anti-aircraft guns, five mortars, 82 machine guns, five Bren guns and two out-of-date tanks. That's what Canadians went to war with.

What is astounding is that when victory was declared in the spring of 1945, there were over one million Canadians in the armed forces: 45,000 of them gave their lives; 55,000 were wounded. What's even more astounding is that at that time Canada's population was only 11 million people. It meant that virtually one in 10 women and men served in the navy, the air force, the army or the merchant marine, and one in 20 did not come home.

I think many people need to know that in fact Canadians were often handed the dirtiest jobs in the Second World War. When Britain was alone and Britain didn't have enough food to feed itself, didn't have enough oil or coal for heat, it was Canadians who made the provision and it was the Canadian navy—a very ill-equipped navy—that did the dirty job of escorting ships across the Atlantic Ocean to Europe. The best sonar and the best radar and the best equipment went to the destroyers, the aircraft carriers, the cruisers and the battleships. Canadians didn't have any of those. Canadians fought the dirtiest job in the north Atlantic with something called a corvette. People need to know that before the war, the corvette was a whaler. It was a whaling ship. They simply took a whaling ship, put a couple of guns on it, some depth charges and said, "This is what Canadians will fight with." Churchill described the corvette as "cheap and nasty."

By the end of the war, Canada had 123 corvettes, and most of them were produced in places like Thunder Bay, St. Catharines, Owen Sound, Kingston and along the St. Lawrence River—produced by Canadian men and women who went to work like never before.

The Canadian Air Force also, in many ways, had the dirtiest job. When the bomber campaign was put together as a strategic plan to try to bomb Germany into suing for peace, the British and the Americans got the best bases. The Canadian bombers flew from Yorkshire, the furthest distance, and the air bases that were most often cut off by clouds, sleet or snow. The toughest job.

When we invaded Sicily, the British got the plains along the east coast where tanks would work. The Americans got the west coast, on the plains where tanks would work. The Canadians fought their way through the mountains, where the terrain always favoured the defender and it was always to the disadvantage of the Canadians who were trying to attack. Over 500 Canadians lie buried in Sicily today.

Similarly, when the invasion of mainland Italy happened, Canadians often got the dirtiest jobs. Holland, Belgium: the Americans, the British were able to use their tanks on the plains; the Canadians got to fight through the canals, the rivers, the ditches—the toughest fighting, the nastiest fighting. I didn't understand, as a 19-year-old when I was pedalling my bicycle through the Netherlands, why so many people, when they saw the maple leaf, would come out and, gee, they'd want to buy you a beer or a glass of wine. "Come home, have supper with us." I didn't understand what it was about. I was 19 years old.

I soon understood what it was about. People in Belgium and the Netherlands recognize the incredible price that was paid by Canadians, many of them 18, 19, 20 years old. We deserve to remember them; they deserve our recognition of them.

**The Speaker:** I want to thank the respective members for their moving words at a very historic time.

**Mr. Dave Levac (Brant):** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would seek unanimous consent to have a moment's silence.

**The Speaker:** We have unanimous consent for that, I presume.

*The House observed a moment's silence.*

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### FISCAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY

**Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition):** My question is for the Premier. Premier, some time ago you said very clearly here in his House that there would be no tax increases in this year's budget. Two days ago you said, "There will be no new taxes in the budget."

I think we've come to know that, in your case, we have to know how to take a close look at the fine print on these things. My question is this: Can you guarantee today that there will be no increases of any existing taxes and no new taxes in next week's budget?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** The answer to that is yes.

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**Mr. Tory:** I don't know if this is an occasion for massive celebration; I'm not sure what it is. But you've actually answered a question in a straightforward manner. I can only tell you that I'm delighted. The people of Ontario—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling):** Order. I think you'd be interested to hear the supplementary.

**Mr. Tory:** The people of Ontario are delighted at this news, too, and let's see if we can get on a roll, because we have now received one straightforward answer to a question—my first since I've been here. Let's try one we've tried before: Have you, Premier, given the Minister of Finance instructions to balance the budget by 2007, yes or no?

**Hon. Mr. McGuinty:** I don't blame the member at all for his keen interest in the budget. We are very much looking forward to presenting that to the people of Ontario in this Legislature. I'm not going to delve into details, but I can tell you that it is a budget of which we are very proud. I can tell you that it speaks to the basic values of the people of Ontario and it gives effect to their priorities: their health care, their education and their desire to build a more prosperous economy. This budget will do that.

**Mr. Tory:** I'm sorry the Premier didn't go for the double play. You have committed now, and it's good that no new taxes will be levied and no existing taxes will be raised, notwithstanding, I should point out, that people across Ontario will pay double the health tax they paid last year with your McGuinty health tax.

You can't tell us that you've given instructions to your finance minister to balance the budget by 2007, so I would ask you, Premier, have you given him any date, ever, by which time he should balance the budget?

**Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation):** History lesson.

**Hon. Mr. McGuinty:** Maybe it's time for a little bit of a history lesson. In the not-too-recent past we earned the privilege of serving Ontarians as their government. When we got here we discovered, to our great dismay and the dismay of the people of Ontario, that the people of Ontario had been saddled with close to a \$6-billion deficit which had been hidden from their view. So it is, to say the least, a little odd to receive expressions of concern on the part of the leader of the official opposition, a member of that very government that saddled the people of Ontario with close to a \$6-billion hidden deficit.

I can assure you that, in keeping with our desire to build a strong and prosperous economy, we will bring sound financial management to the people's money.

**The Speaker:** New question? The leader of the official opposition.

**Mr. Tory:** My new question is for the Premier. Premier, in last year's budget your government raised user fees and service charges on just about everything: the cost of renewing a driver's licence, filing a defence in smalls claims court, fishing and hunting licences; you even raised the cost of running occupational health and safety programs in the workplace. Given that you've been very helpful, Premier, to answer so definitively about existing and new taxes—to the delight, I'm sure, of people across the province—I'm sure you'll want to confirm that there will be no increases to any existing user fees and no new user fees or charges in the budget. Can you confirm that?

**Hon. Mr. McGuinty:** The Minister of Finance would like to speak to this.

**Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance):** I am delighted that the Leader of the Opposition is anticipating, with such excitement and enthusiasm, the budget that we're going to present next Wednesday.

I can simply reiterate that we inherited, a year and a half ago, a financial mess that was almost unprecedented in the history of the province. I can tell him clearly that, over 19 months, we have worked diligently to get on the right track.

I reiterate what the Premier just said: that the budget that we're going to present will be consistent with the values and the aspirations of the 12 and a half million people who call this province home: their desire for a better education system, a better health care system and a much stronger economy. I invite the Leader of the

Opposition to be as enthusiastic on Wednesday next as he was earlier on this afternoon.

**Mr. Tory:** My enthusiasm is waning by the moment because, while the Premier was straightforward and able to confirm that there will be no increases to existing taxes and no new taxes, you have deliberately not answered the question with respect to user fees and various other charges.

Last year we had fishing licences up, hunting licences up, fees for provincial parks up, drivers' licences up, civil court fees up, small claims court fees up, liquor taxes up and health taxes up, and people will pay twice as much this year.

These are a few of the charges that people paid more for last year, the largest one-year tax hike since the days of Bob Rae. I wonder if you can give us a guarantee that none of those charges that went up last year will go up this year. Can you guarantee us that none of those charges that went up year will go up in this year's budget? Can you just deal with that?

**Hon. Mr. Sorbara:** Here's the guarantee I'll give the Leader of the Opposition: When he starts bringing concrete proposals to this Legislature, he's going to get a heck of a lot more coverage than he has so far. He's been leader of the party now for eight months. We know he's against our health care system; he wants to cut two-and-a-half billion dollars of it. We know he's against the greenbelt. We know that some of his members want to privatize just about everything government does. What we don't know, sir, is what in the world the Leader of the Opposition and his party want to do in a positive sense for this province. I invite him now and again to use this opportunity to put something, anything, on the record.

**Mr. Tory:** The Minister of Finance may have an opportunity to ask me questions in due course, if he's here. Still on the subject of the budget, my final supplementary to the Premier: We've heard now and before that you're considering selling off, in whole or in part, some of the government shares in Teranet. You've refused to rule out selling off the LCBO, and similarly, you've refused to rule out income-trusting the LCBO. Now the prospect of turning the casinos into an income trust has also been raised. Given the worsening financial state, given the hundreds of millions of dollars of spending that is not in your plans that you've done, will you guarantee today that every penny of any asset sale or income trust you do will go to paying down debt, as opposed to dealing with the current operating expense problems?

**Hon. Mr. Sorbara:** My good friend the Leader of the Opposition didn't have the opportunity of being in this House when we presented last year's budget. We laid out a careful plan dealing with our asset review. We said at that time that we would not make the mistake the previous government made with the 407, which cost the people of Ontario, conservatively estimated, about \$10 billion. One mistake, and we're going to be paying for it for decades. But I will tell him: He may not have been here, but in the budget last year we said clearly that if we realize a value from any assets, we will not use that value

to pay for the operating expenditures in government. We will use that value to make further investments to strengthen this province's economy, its health care system and its education system. I'm sure the Leader of the Opposition would want to support that.

## CHILD CARE

**Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River):** My question is for the Premier. Yesterday your Minister of Children and Youth Services said that any daycare agreement with the federal government would be open to big-box, for-profit daycare chains like the American Knowledge Learning Corp. She called it "flexibility in the system." But last year you said, "We believe as a matter of principle that if there is money available, it should go into our public schools, not our private schools." So you believe that education, once it's formalized in school, should be public, but before school, it can be private.

Premier, your budget is coming up in a few days and what Ontarians want to know is this: Will it go toward community-based, non-profit child care, or will it be chain corporations like Knowledge Learning Corp.?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs):** I know the Minister of Children and Youth Services would like to speak to this.

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**Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration):** I'd like a page to come over so that I can send over a page from yesterday's Hansard. I'd like to find where in my statement I said anything about big-box day cares. That's a misinterpretation of what I said.

What I did say is that we are well on our way on our Best Start plan. Very soon, we will be signing an agreement with the federal government that will enhance our Best Start plan. The majority of the spaces in phase 1 will be in schools. At present, the great majority of child care centres that are in schools are not-for-profit. We don't anticipate this trend to change.

The other aspects of our Best Start plan will be screening, early identification of difficulties, hearing screening, as well as speech and language assessments, so that children, by the time they're in grade 1, are ready to learn. It is an excellent plan, and I dismiss the comments from the honourable member opposite.

**Mr. Hampton:** Well, I will be happy to quote the minister from yesterday: "We do need to have flexibility in the system ... if we close the for-profit spaces." Minister, you referred to public, not-for-profit child care as "blind ideology." But the reality is that there are a number of studies, some of them done here in Ontario, which show that public, regulated, not-for-profit child care is the best way to go. So why do you refuse to say at this point that you're going to close the door on child care corporations? Why do you refuse to say the words, "It will be publicly provided, not-for-profit child care in Ontario"?

**Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni:** I would just repeat what I said earlier. Our Best Start plan has been heralded as an excellent and a visionary plan for Ontario. It's a made-in Ontario plan. It will have hubs in the schools. Phase 1 will be for junior- and kindergarten-aged students. Phase 2 will be a universal preschool plan, as well as screening for difficulties. Children, by the time they are age six, will be ready to learn, and that's what parents want to hear, not the blind ideology of the member opposite.

**Mr. Hampton:** The McGuinty government refers to blind ideology. The federal government has signed agreements with Saskatchewan and Manitoba. And what have Saskatchewan and Manitoba done? They have, in effect, grandfathered the small, private child care operations, but they have made it clear that any expansion of child care in those provinces going forward will rule out corporate child care. That's what I'm asking the McGuinty government to do.

I refer to a study. University of Toronto economists have shown in repeated studies that non-profit, community-based child care is cheaper and higher quality. Gee, if Manitoba and Saskatchewan can do it, I wonder what the problem is with the McGuinty government. Tell us, Minister, what is it about corporate, profit-driven child care that is so attractive to the McGuinty government?

**Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni:** I can assure the honourable member and this House that we are for quality, regulated child care, and that is what we're pursuing with the agreement with the federal government. The flexibility that I referred to yesterday—not the big-box comments that someone else referred to yesterday—has to do with some of the rural areas that have asked me to keep an open mind on this as we move forward. But make no mistake about it: Our Best Start plan will include regulated child care spaces for the kids of Ontario, hubs to make it seamless for the parents of Ontario and children ready to learn by the time they're age six.

#### HEALTH CARE FUNDING

**Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River):** To the Premier: Isn't it interesting to note that the McGuinty government will not rule out profit-driven corporate child care. You seem to want to skip over those words. In fact, you even voted down a resolution last week calling for not-for-profit, public child care.

But I want to ask the Premier about long-term care, which has some real challenges. The recommendations from the Casa Verde inquest provide a blueprint for the improvements that need to be made. Premier, will the budget next week reflect the investments necessary to improve long-term care? Will the budget reflect the implementation of the recommendations of the Casa Verde coroner's inquest?

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

**Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** I appreciate the opportunity yet

again to address the same question the honourable member has raised quite a few times over the course of the last several weeks. First off, we want to lend words of appreciation to those Ontarians who sat on that jury. The ministry is carefully reviewing the recommendations that came forward, in part measure to take full advantage to inform a piece of legislation that will be forthcoming to the Legislature for consideration, and this, in addition to the fact that we've made very significant financial increases in the long-term-care file over the course of last year and a series of other things on the compliance side, lends us to feel strongly that significant change is under way in the long-term-care sector, improving the quality of lives for Ontario's most vulnerable.

**Mr. Hampton:** Let me ask the Premier this question, then: Yesterday when I asked the Minister of Health about this, about where was the \$420 million in annualized funding for long-term care that you promised before the election, he tried to fudge the numbers by including money for bricks and mortar—construction money—and tried to count that as if it were somehow operating money. Let me be very specific: Will we see in the budget the \$420 million in new operating funding that you talked about and you promised before the election, Premier?

**Hon. Mr. Smitherman:** It is disappointing that the honourable member can't acknowledge that investing some \$42 million in ceiling-mounted bed lifts in our long-term-care homes, as part of our commitment to long-term care, is important both to enhance the quality of life for residents and to take some of the pain and pressure off the backs of those workers who are providing such a valuable service on the front lines of health care, this in addition to the fact, evidence as was presented yesterday in response to the misinformation brought forward by the honourable member, that the estimates printed and available to all members of this House showed a \$395-million increase for long-term-care homes in 2004-05 in Ontario.

**Mr. Hampton:** When you talk to the long-term care and nursing home operators, they've received only \$116 million. I wonder where that other money you talk about went to? That seems to be a question Liberals are asking in many places these days across the country.

Premier, you promised a higher standard of care. You said there would be more nurses to support our seniors. Yesterday the Minister of Health tried to say that there are in fact more nurses. He said, "Name a nurse who has been laid off." There happens to have been a nurse here yesterday. Her name is Pat Tarsay. She worked at Shepherd Village, a long-term-care facility in Scarborough. She has been laid off. And in fact Sunnybrook and Women's College is laying off full-time RNs; Joseph Brant is laying off full-time RNs; St. Joseph Health Centre in Windsor is laying off RNs. There are a lot of nurses being laid off. This brings me to the other promise you made: You promised 8,000 new additional nurses would be hired. Will you be hiring 8,000 new additional nurses—

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

**Hon. Mr. Smitherman:** I'm very pleased to confirm for the honourable member yet one more time that, as a result of a variety of financial investments our government has made in a variety of different parts of the health care system in Ontario to date toward our very important commitment, we have funded 3,052 new full-time positions. I note from the honourable member's very clever use of language that he likes to talk about notices that may have been issued, but there is a long history in the Ontario health care system where notices issued often do not follow through. I will remind the honourable member that there is only one party with members current in the Ontario Legislature today that does not have a record of cutting funding for long-term care, that does not have a record of cutting funding for hospitals, and that, sir, is the Liberal Party.

#### CHILDREN'S TREATMENT CENTRES

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo):** I'm pleased to put a question forward to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Although children's treatment centres across Ontario serve 40,000 children with disabilities, there are over 8,000 additional children on the wait list for therapy. We know that research shows that early intervention in the lives of these children will enable them to achieve their full potential, and it will make a tremendous difference. Minister, a 6% funding increase in the base budgets for children's treatment centres for 2005-06 would reduce the wait list by almost 2,000 children. Will you commit to providing additional funding for children's treatment centres in your upcoming budget?

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**Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration):** I know the honourable member knows that I can't comment on the specifics of the upcoming budget, but I can remind her we did increase in our last year's budget the base funding for treatment centres by 3%. We also put \$24 million in for capital. There was one area of the province that didn't have a treatment centre to service their children, and that was York region and Simcoe county, and we announced that funding earlier this year as well. So we understand, and I agree with the honourable member, that early intervention is very important. We actually put significant monies in our first budget and we'll continue to do so in the future.

**Mrs. Witmer:** In my riding of Kitchener–Waterloo, we have a treatment centre, KidsAbility, with a wait list of about 1,000 children. Minister, are you prepared to invest additional money and provide this children's treatment centre, KidsAbility, and all of the other children's treatment centres with multiyear funding? At the present time, as you know, there is no commitment for funding. Are you prepared to commit to this and ensure that these children with disabilities get the same opportunity as

other children in this province to achieve their full potential?

**Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni:** As the honourable member knows, we did fund that particular treatment centre in her riding last year. She brought it to my attention; other members from all sides of the House brought it to my attention.

What I would like to ask the honourable member is to turn around and ask her leader what he would do if he cut \$2.4 billion out of the health care system. Which treatment centres would he close down? We've put increases in that sector for the first time in many years. We're very proud of our record and we'll put it up against her leader's any time.

#### SCHOOL CLOSURES

**Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina):** My question is to the Premier. A new report released today by People for Education reveals that small schools are being closed at nearly double the rate of 10 years ago. Over 14,000 students will lose their schools in the next two years, and despite your repeated promises and those of your minister, schools keep closing. Ontario will lose 36 schools at the end of June.

The problem is funding. You have not changed the former Conservative funding formula to protect small schools, and now boards are caught between a rock and a hard place. Premier, when will we see the changes to the funding formula that you promised?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** It's always good to hear from my thespian friend, who brings a certain grandeur to this Legislature which is often missing.

Here are some basic facts: The NDP, on their watch, closed 155 public schools; the Conservatives, on their watch, closed 503 public schools. At the same time, sadly, 266 private schools opened. We have, thus far, invested \$1.1 billion more into public education, and we have established a new \$280-million fund to leverage over \$4 billion in capital investments to repair, expand and replace schools across Ontario. I'll put our record against those records any day.

**Mr. Marchese:** Premier, 44 schools closed last June under your watch; 36 schools were closed in June of this year—this in spite of the promises you made that small schools wouldn't close.

Yesterday, I visited parents and students at the Fourway school in Thunder Bay. Fourway and six other schools are slated to close. You've appointed a facilitator to review the closure, but you know that won't make a difference. The school is being forced to close because the money just isn't there.

During the last campaign, you and your minister promised to fix the funding formula. You're still using the same Conservative funding formula to protect small, rural and northern schools. You haven't kept that promise and schools are still closing. Premier, when will we see

changes to the Conservative funding formula that you promised, that you are still using. When?

**Hon. Mr. McGuinty:** I beg to differ with my friend. The fact is, we have made changes. For example, we've provided a \$31-million fund to keep good schools open, specifically targeting rural and remote communities. We understand that one size does not fit all, and the change that we make speaks to the fact that we believe that, while schools may open and close in the natural order of things—and we never, ever said that was not going to continue—we've always said that the decision driving a school closure should depend entirely on meeting the interests of students. So we have changed the formula, we provided more funding, and we're working with our boards.

### SMALL BUSINESS

**Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre):** My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Minister, in 1998, the city of Brampton opened a small business enterprise centre. We recognize that small business is the heart of Ontario's thriving economy. In the city of Brampton, small business is the major economic driving force and the primary creator of jobs. In fact, more than 76% of businesses in Brampton have fewer than 10 employees. The small business enterprise centre was established so that ingenuity could turn into strategy, and then success.

Since it opened, the enterprise centre has fielded more than 100,000 inquiries, conducted over 3,000 free consultations and has assisted with over 8,000 business registrations. Minister, what is our government doing to support entrepreneurs and small business in Ontario?

**Hon. Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade):** I want to thank the member from Brampton Centre for the great work that she's doing, being a champion for small business. She's doing an outstanding job.

You know, our government understands how important small business is to Ontario's economy. In fact, 99% of businesses are small- and medium-sized businesses, and they account for over 50% of all the new jobs that are created in Ontario.

Recently, I'm very proud of the fact that we announced our new small business agency, which will find ways to cut down on the paper burden that businesses have to deal with. This small business agency will also work with ministries to review regulations, to streamline the entire process. It will also be a champion to advocate on behalf of small business. These are some of the initiatives that it will undertake, and we're doing a lot more when it comes to helping small business, like increasing the small-business threshold eligible for tax exemption.

**Mrs. Jeffrey:** The Brampton Small Business Enterprise Centre is an agency that assists entrepreneurs or small business leaders with resources, information and consultation with trained business consultants. Today,

there are 44 small business enterprise centres in Ontario that are currently funded by all three levels of government. While I applaud the initiative that your ministry is taking to support small business, I am concerned that this new initiative may mean less support for the small business enterprise centres. Minister, can I assure the residents of Brampton that our government will continue to financially support the small business enterprise centre?

**Hon. Mr. Cordiano:** The small business enterprise centres do a great job in our communities. I want to reassure the member that we will continue to do all we can to support their work.

Small business enterprise centres help small enterprises during the first five years of operation by providing them with information on management, marketing, technology and financing. They also deliver MEDT's successful youth programs such as Summer Company. Over the last fiscal year, the enterprises handled over 240,000 general inquiries, delivered 25,000 in-depth consultations, over 3.5 million client interactions occurred on the Web site, and there are a number of other initiatives undertaken by small business enterprise centres. They are an integral part of our communities, and they will continue to operate.

### EDUCATION FUNDING

**Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges):** My question is to the Premier. Last week, I asked a question in the House of the Minister of Education and also of the Chair of Management Board with regard to all of these announcements relating to a framework for teachers' settlements. The question that I specifically put at the time was, will you guarantee that the funding for teachers' salaries will not come out of other envelopes within the education budget?

**1510**

I didn't get an answer then, but what I did find out yesterday was that one board, the York region board, is now in negotiations with those who provide transportation to the students to claw back 5% of their budget, this at a time when they're already calling for additional funding just to secure the safety of those children who are being transported.

Premier, can you confirm today that that is part of your strategy, that other envelopes are going to be robbed—

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

Premier.

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** The member opposite is just really, really stretching on this one. It takes a lot of creativity to turn what is an absolutely wonderful news story for Ontario students into something negative.

If things work out—there's still some work left to be done and, finally, it's up to the teachers—we're about to bring to bear something that's never happened before in the province of Ontario: four-year contracts that will allow peace and stability to reign supreme in our schools.

We're proud of the investment we're making in public education: \$1.1 billion. I'd ask the member opposite, how is he bringing comfort to parents who may be watching this today, when he and his leader are committed to investing in private schools? How does that lend comfort to parents who are committed to public education?

**Mr. Klees:** Premier, I don't believe that any parent watching your answer today is getting any level of comfort from what you believe is important about the safety of their children who are being transported in buses. Some 200 companies, transporting over 800,000 students every day, are at your doorstep, appealing funding.

I have a letter here addressed to the Minister of Education: "Despite my personal note of January 14, 2005, and three unanswered telephone calls to your office, we have heard nothing." This is from the Ontario School Bus Association, which wants to talk to you about a lack of funding to ensure the safe transportation of children.

You have avoided my question. Parents watching are wondering about your credibility. What is it that you're going to do about this incredible conflict you're facing: doling out billions on one hand and—

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Premier.

**Hon. Mr. McGuinty:** Just so we have the facts straight here, this past year we increased funding for buses and school transportation by \$685 million. That's a 5.1% increase. Every single school board in Ontario received more transportation funding this year, at least 2% and as much as 12%.

The member may be interested in learning that the York school board transit funding went up by \$570,000 this past year. So I'd ask him, I would encourage him, to take a close look at the facts and to understand that our commitment on behalf of Ontario public schools is to invest, not only in better-quality education, but at the same time continue to invest in good-quality transportation for our kids.

## GAMBLING

**Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East):** My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Ontario casinos make it very, very difficult for problem gamblers to quit their habit; in fact, they pull out all the stops to bring troubled people who have hard-core gambling problems back to the tables. They provide perks, like dinners, limousines, free hotel rooms, free concert tickets—all kinds of incentives.

According to the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., offering these perks is good business. Minister, do you agree, or will you move to stop the perks?

**Hon. Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade):** We believe that gaming in this province needs to be delivered in a socially responsible fashion. To that end, I announced back in January that we would be stationing counsellors on the floor of

the commercial casinos to assist those people who have problem gambling and the associated risks. We've taken that initiative. In addition to that, we've also designated that \$4 million would be invested in problem gambling public awareness campaigns over the next two years. This is all designed to assist people who are facing problem gambling, and it's particularly targeted at our youth, who are the most vulnerable. So it is important that we deliver gaming in this province in a socially responsible way, and that's what we've done.

**Ms. Horwath:** Minister, your gambling agency spokesperson said that inducing gambling addicts is good business.

The nurse who stole \$1 million out of a Hamilton health sciences program for cleft lips and palates said that those perks helped her to get back to the tables. Now an important health program for children in Hamilton is out a million bucks because you continue to allow gamblers to be targeted and hurt financially by unseemly casino marketing ploys that feed their addictions. If a McGuinty government won't stop the perks, won't stop that unseemly program, at least arrange to repay the million bucks that the cleft lip and palate program is out in Hamilton.

**Hon. Mr. Cordiano:** I find it a little disconcerting that—I know this is a new member of that caucus, but she has been here for quite a while and she should be familiar with the history of her own party. In fact, it was her party, under Bob Rae, that brought in legalized gambling in this province.

And do you know what? I remind her that it is this government that has taken action to ensure that those who are having problems with respect to gambling are being dealt with in as sensitive a fashion as we can. We are doing the right thing, as I pointed out. We've taken steps to try and reach those people who are having problems. We are doing that with a number of—

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

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** I notice that the member from St. Catharines was an irritant down here, and he's out of his seat. I hope you don't provoke any mischief in others so we can have question period proceed.

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge):** My question is for the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. Last Friday, Minister, you signed an historic \$602-million agreement with the federal government on affordable housing. For eight years, the previous government didn't build one unit of affordable housing, despite repeated calls that there was a desperate need in Ontario. I wonder if they thought the units would simply build themselves.

Whatever the reason, now Ontario faces affordable housing waiting lists a mile long. And this isn't a big-city issue only; there's an affordable housing crisis across the

province because of the lack of investment for more than eight years.

Minister, can you tell the House more about why our government is making this particular commitment to affordable housing?

**Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal):** I want to thank the member for the question. Premier McGuinty and our government believe that shelter is a basic human right, a basic human need critical to our survival, to our dignity, to our sense of self-worth and to our economic well-being. By investing in affordable housing, we are investing in Ontarians. We are in fact strengthening our province. We are making this commitment to affordable housing because it's the right thing to do for vulnerable Ontarians and for communities right across our province.

I want to contrast that with the comments of John Tory, the leader of the official opposition, on the Goldhawk show on March 29, when he said, in response to one of the callers, "I'll be very honest with you, I'm not a big believer in the government being in the housing business, because I just don't think that governments are good in the housing business."

That's the difference between John Tory and Dalton McGuinty. We have a sense of compassion, we have a sense of responsibility, and John Tory certainly does not.

1520

**Mr. Arthurs:** My constituents in Pickering, Ajax and Uxbridge are, like many Ontarians across the province, very excited about this announcement. I can tell you that the regional councillor from Durham, Maurice Brenner, who's the president of Durham Region Non-Profit Housing Corp., is very much looking forward to working with the ministry in that regard.

Last week's announcement affects people in my riding and across Ontario who are on affordable housing waiting lists, currently living in homes either that they can't afford or that are substandard. Either way, Minister, their quality of life suffers. Their priorities are different from those of other Ontarians who have good fortune. They don't have the luxury of deciding whether to go to British Columbia or Prince Edward Island for luxury holidays. Instead, they decide whether to go without food or heating or visit a local food bank. Even worse, access to affordable housing could mean the difference between an abused spouse leaving an abusive partner or staying. Can you tell us what results this \$602-million investment, the largest investment in affordable housing in a decade, will deliver to Ontarians?

**Hon. Mr. Caplan:** It does get better. On June 11, just before the Tory leadership, Mr. Tory said, "I believe the lack of affordable housing contributes as a root cause of crime." Last night, Mr. Tory goes up to Lake Couchiching and talks to the Salvation Army homelessness conference about the need for more affordable housing.

No more talk; it's time for action. The McGuinty government will deliver assistance to 20,000 families here in the province, creating over 15,000 units of affordable housing for persons suffering from mental illness,

victims of domestic violence, the working poor, and low- to moderate-income Ontarians; housing allowances to provide immediate assistance to some 5,000 Ontario families; and the best part: an innovative, creative Ontario Mortgage and Housing Partnership and the Home Ownership Market Entry program to give Ontarians the chance for affordable ownership, the Canadian dream.

## FIREFIGHTERS

**Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington):** My question is for the Minister of Community Safety, and it concerns double-hatter firefighters, which, as members know, is an issue I've been raising in this House now for three years.

Earlier this week, on Monday, the minister addressed the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs at their convention. During his remarks, he made absolutely no reference to the double-hatter problem: the professional, full-time firefighters who want to serve as volunteers in their home communities in their free time, but who are threatened with the loss of their livelihoods by their union if they do so. The minister took no questions from the floor, even though he knows very well the fire chiefs of Ontario need his help on this issue. Would the minister inform the House why the government continues to ignore this important public safety issue?

**Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services):** I thank the member for his question. I should tell you that the reason I didn't mention it is that, as I'm sure the member and all firefighters in Ontario are aware, for the first time since 1982, this government provided \$30 million to 385 fire services. Every single fire service that qualified got a minimum of \$50,000, to a maximum of \$1 million. That money is earmarked for training.

The member may also know that I spent three days at the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs convention, and I got nothing but praise for what we have done. Not only that, but they've all indicated to me that I've taken a lot of the pressure off the two-hatter issue. At the banquet last night, there was a steady stream of fire chiefs who kept coming up to me and saying, "For the first time in 15 years, we have a government that recognizes the importance of firefighters." I can tell you this: Not only did they say that; we announced it one week and delivered the money the next week. That's the first time that that has ever happened.

**Mr. Arnott:** In his response, the minister alluded to the fire service grant that he announced a few weeks ago as a one-time grant for municipalities for fire service training and equipment. I say again: a one-time grant, for one year only. Surely he wouldn't have the audacity to argue that this solves the problem the firefighters'—

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling):** Order. The Minister of Community and Social Services has behaved so well until now, interrupting.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** Now the Minister of Finance has joined the chorus.

**Mr. Arnott:** Surely this minister wouldn't have the audacity to argue that this solves the problem the fire-fighters' union has precipitated with their aggressive campaign to phase out double-hatters.

My second question is, if the minister is unwilling or unable to legislate protection for double-hatters or endorse my Bill 52, will he at least commit to this House that he will work to ensure that the fire service grant becomes a permanent annual funding program to support the public safety needs of the communities of the province of Ontario?

**Hon. Monte Kwinter:** Let me tell you the genesis of this grant. This grant was to allow fire service units to get training. One of the big issues of two-hatters is that small services are saying, "We don't have the expertise to fight a fire, so we need two-hatters. We need these people who have the expertise." This money is going to be used for training, which means they will have expertise within their fire service and will not be as dependent on two-hatters. That is a huge advantage to them. I should also suggest to the member that when they were in government, they promised \$40 million but they never delivered. I can tell you that we made the commitment and we delivered the money—the money is in place. I can also tell you that the fire services of Ontario are absolutely ecstatic about what we've done for them.

#### HYDRO RATES

**Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River):** My question is to the Minister of Energy. You say your so-called smart electricity meter is only going to cost \$1 billion. Others who have looked at it say it may well cost over \$3 billion. Low- and moderate-income Ontarians were here today to tell you that it will only drive up their electricity bill with no benefit for them. Can you tell people who were already struggling to pay their electricity bill across Ontario why the McGuinty government wants to go so hard on people who are already struggling on low and modest incomes?

**Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** We reject the notion that smart meters won't benefit all aspects of the income spectrum in this province. Let me be unequivocal: We reject that notion, unlike you. We disagree fundamentally—number one.

Number two, we are addressing the question of the challenges that people of more modest means and modest incomes have with respect to electricity pricing through a variety of means. We have set up special programs, we have established a special fund—my colleague the Minister of Community and Social Services. We acknowledge that the challenge of providing affordable electricity to folks of modest means is a difficult and vexing one that is not easily solved. But this government, unlike previous governments, has made a concerted effort to do

just that by ensuring an adequate and reliable supply of electricity for all Ontarians.

**Mr. Hampton:** The special program the minister talks about was turned down, for example, by First Nations, because they saw it as a cruel joke. But it's worse than that. The local electrical distribution companies are concerned that the McGuinty government is going to hand over the installation and implementation of these so-called smart meters to another costly bureaucracy, which will add even more to the hydro bill. Minister, come clean with people. They don't see any benefit for them, especially low- and modest-income people. Now, when the electricity distribution corporations like Toronto Hydro or Hamilton Hydro have similar concerns, what do you have to offer people? They only see their hydro bill going through the roof at a time when they don't have the money to afford to pay it.

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** The member opposite is disingenuous in what he's suggesting. The local distribution companies support smart meter initiatives. To suggest they don't is simply not accurate. There are challenges around implementation that this government will face, but let me be unequivocal with the member opposite. We believe smart meters are the way to go. We believe they will save consumers money. We believe, and the facts justify the argument, that they will save money across the income spectrum. We support conservation, unlike that member, whose government cancelled all conservation programs. We believe in hydroelectric and renewable power, unlike that member, who wants more coal plants and whose government shut down the Conawapa deal that had been previously negotiated. And, unlike that member, we will not raise electricity prices 43%, as he did in the first three years of the government that he was a member of.

1530

#### YOUTH EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest):** My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. As you are aware, your ministry funds the Ontario basic skills program, which provides hands-on experience for employment and improves communications, math and computer skills in a supportive environment to at-risk youth.

In my riding of Scarborough Southwest, Centennial College runs this program with funds from your ministry. Concerns have arisen in my riding as to whether this program will continue to be funded, as it caters to a significant youth population in my riding. In fact—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling):** I'm just trying to get some order in here, please.

**Mr. Berardinetti:** Thank you.

Minister, I just wanted to ask you directly if this program will continue to be funded by your ministry. I know that many people in my riding have asked that question of me, so I'd like that answered for the record.

**Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities):** I'm happy to have the opportunity to put their concerns to rest.

The Ontario basic skills program is a very valuable program for young people that has been delivered by and will continue to be delivered by colleges around the province. Centennial College has been delivering this program in Scarborough for 15 years, and I am happy to tell my colleague, the member from Scarborough Southwest, to let his constituents know that Centennial College will continue to deliver this program. We're very pleased with what they're doing. In fact, over the past year we have provided them with additional funding to help upgrade the skills of young people who have left school early and are returning to pursue apprenticeships or other levels of post-secondary education.

**Mr. Berardinetti:** Thank you, Minister. My constituents will be glad to hear about the government's commitment to providing youth skills and training, especially at Centennial College.

As I mentioned, the Ontario basic skills program does cater to many youth in my riding and, I'm sure, to many across the province. However, there are those youth who wish to access career opportunities in various trades. A number of young constituents I have met with are interested in pursuing careers in bricklaying, carpentry, drywall, painting, welding, auto mechanics and hair-styling, to name a few. However, they need access to gain valuable workplace experience. What has your ministry recently done to ensure that our youth will have the ability to access opportunities for apprenticeships in some of the various trades?

**Hon. Mrs. Chambers:** I should have mentioned this in responding to the first question, but I guess I ran out of time. There is actually more good news in terms of the additional funding we've provided to Centennial College over the last year, because that funding has allowed Centennial to offer Job Connect-type services in helping young people prepare for employment. The majority of the young people in the program we funded over the past year are going to be involved in summer employment this year and then will return to Centennial in September.

In addition to that, we have announced programs for young people who have dropped out of school early. If they go back to school to upgrade their academic skills so that they can pursue an apprenticeship, we are giving them each \$1,000 in scholarships and giving the employers who are giving these young people a second chance a \$2,000 bonus to support that work. We're also expanding our co-op diploma program.

#### CANADA-ONTARIO MUNICIPAL RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

**Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka):** I have a question for the Premier. The town of Kearney made a Canada-Ontario municipal rural infrastructure fund application for road work on a road identified in Kearney's roads needs study. The application was for \$795,000 to

upgrade and apply a hard top on an 11.1-kilometre stretch of road. Kearney provided all of the supporting materials and engineering reports required under the COMRIF application process. Kearney was rejected. They received one of your "Dear John" letters, with no explanation and no guidance as to how they might improve on their next round of applications.

Premier, tell me why you won't help municipalities to improve their chances in the next round of applications by providing them some guidance.

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs):** The Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

**Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal):** I must say, I'm very proud of the work of COMRIF and of the secretariat that we jointly administer with the federal government. When the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka and his party were in government, they played political games—silly partisan political games—with municipalities caught in the middle, with programs like OSTAR, millennium and SCTP. We have removed that entirely. I want the member to know that northern Ontario received almost 40% of the funding in COMRIF, and that municipalities of 10,000 and less received 51% of the applications.

I acknowledge that the previous government left an infrastructure deficit that one program simply cannot clear and that there is nothing wrong with the applications, but the needs are enormous. Now, we have made a substantial movement forward in addressing the infrastructure needs and challenges of Ontario's municipalities. I know that in rounds two and three we will get on to those—

**The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling):** Supplementary.

**Mr. Miller:** The minister talks about political games. That's funny. The mayor of Smooth Rock Falls said that when we were in power we were at least fair. The mayor of Thunder Bay shares the concerns of the mayor of Kearney, and this is a quote: "I need to know what, if anything, we didn't do, as well as what we could have done in terms of the application form (and) in terms of matching up" to have a better chance next time.

A spokesperson for the ministry said that health and safety was the number one focus. Well, Minister, if health and safety was the number one focus, why didn't you approve Smooth Rock Falls's application? Smooth Rock Falls is under a Ministry of the Environment Safe Drinking Water Act work order, and they have until December 31 to comply. What about Rainy River, where they just had a garage burn down when the fire department showed up and the water system didn't work? It got plugged up with rust. What about Blind River, which needed \$400,000 for their water and sewer system because the pipes freeze because they're not down deep enough, and they needed to build a sidewalk in front of the school—

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Minister?

**Hon. Mr. Caplan:** I think the member is incredibly unfair in his comments. I would rather quote Garfield

Dunlop: "I am pleased that Municipal Affairs Minister John Gerretsen recognized the importance of this project in the local area."

I would like to quote Sault Ste. Marie Mayor John Rowswell: "This is the last issue necessary for our east-end sewage treatment plant. It's absolutely critical."

I'd like to quote Mayor Ruth Lovell of Owen Sound, in Bill Murdoch's riding: "We are delighted to receive this funding. The project will improve the waste water system and will protect the area's natural environment."

I want to quote Ron Oswald, the mayor of Arran-Elderslie: "This is a tremendous benefit for both Grey and Bruce counties."

I want to quote Clint Martin, Guelph/Eramosa mayor: "We're very pleased we got this funding."

I would like to quote Gary McNamara, mayor of Tecumseh: "We should have a shovel in the ground by the end of May."

I'd like to quote Tim Rigby, mayor of—

**The Speaker:** You can do that next time. New question.

1540

#### FUEL DISTRIBUTION SECURITY DEPOSIT

**Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River):** I have a question to the Minister of Finance. In April, I wrote to you regarding Wasaya Petroleum, a First Nations corporation that distributes fuel to remote First Nations in northern Ontario. You are demanding that Wasaya Petroleum pay a \$1-million security deposit to your ministry, when they only collected \$300,000 worth of taxes from the sale of petroleum in the year 2004. You want three times what they take in in taxes, in a security deposit. This is a First Nations corporation. They provide fuel to remote First Nations, where the cost of fuel is already through the roof. What are you trying to do, tax the poorest people in Ontario, drive a First Nations corporation out of business? This is totally unreasonable. Will you reverse it?

**Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance):** Let us not have the leader of the third party create the impression that somehow we are taxing a native band or any other distributor of fuel out of existence. Because what he's talking about—

**Mr. Hampton:** Who do you think buys the gas?

**Hon. Mr. Sorbara:** I think my friend wants, really, to be quiet so that I can answer, or maybe he doesn't. What he needs to make clear is that a security deposit is not a tax.

Now, what I want to tell him is, I am not aware of his letters, so I am not aware of the particulars of the situation. He said he sent me a letter in April. I am going to investigate the contents of that letter and respond to him in due course, but let him not create the impression here that we are levying an inappropriate tax on that band, any band, or other entities selling fuel.

#### BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

**Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal):** Pursuant to standing order 55, I rise to give the Legislature the business of the House for next week.

On Monday, May 9, in the afternoon, Bill 176, and in the evening, Bill 118.

On Tuesday, May 10, in the afternoon, Bill 194.

On Wednesday, May 11, I encourage all members to be here for the budget motion.

On Thursday, May 12, the opposition response to the budget motion.

#### PETITIONS

##### SENIORS' TRANSIT PASS

**Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport):** I'm delighted to present this petition to you, to the Parliament of Ontario, and to the minister responsible for seniors.

"Whereas most seniors live on fixed incomes which are eroding every year due to inflation costs and other necessary expenses;

"Whereas most seniors have their freedom severely restricted when unable to go about their daily business, which includes public transit;

"Whereas most seniors should be encouraged to live active, healthy lives—visiting friends, relatives, going shopping etc.;

"Whereas other jurisdictions already provide free local transit passes to seniors, namely, many cities in the USA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, strongly urge the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and responsible for seniors to ensure that seniors be granted a free TTC pass, and/or introduce legislation that will force the local Toronto Transit Commission to issue free TTC passes."

Since I am totally in agreement with this petition, I will sign my name to it.

##### ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

**Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East):** This petition has been signed by a number of people from the Hamilton area, and I promised them I would bring it in.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Bill 164 takes away civil liberties and freedom of choice;

"Whereas Bill 164 is an attempt to remove freedom for smokers to exercise their choice in a way that does not bother others;

"Whereas Ontario smokers are paying close to \$1.5 billion to the Ontario Liberal government and more than \$1 billion more to the federal government in tobacco taxes alone;

"Whereas Bill 164 is aimed at punishing smokers and forcing them to make the choices that the government feels they should make;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend Bill 164, respect smokers and provide fair and balanced legislation."

I'm sending it down by way of Elizabeth.

#### TENANT PROTECTION

**Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport):** I appreciate your recognizing me today to read this petition, which is addressed to the Parliament of Ontario. It's been signed by a number of residents from the Doversquare Apartments in Toronto, and it reads as follows

"Whereas the so-called Tenant Protection Act of the defeated Harris-Eves Tories has allowed landlords to increase rents well above the rate of inflation for new and old tenants alike;

"Whereas the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal"—ORHT—"created by this act regularly awards major and permanent additional rent increases to landlords to pay for required one-time improvements and temporary increases in utility costs;

"Whereas the same act has given landlords wide-ranging powers to evict tenants;

"Whereas our landlord, Sterling Karamar Property Management, has applied to the Ontario Municipal Board ... to add a fourth high-rise unit to our compound in order to circumvent the city of Toronto restrictions on density and the city's opposition to its project;

"Whereas this project would lead to overcrowding in our densely populated community, reduce our precious green space, further drive up rents and do nothing to solve the crisis in affordable rental housing;

"Whereas this project will drive away longer-term tenants partially shielded from the post-1998 Harris-Eves rent increases, thereby further reducing the number of relatively affordable units in the city core; and

"Whereas before the October 2003 elections Premier McGuinty promised 'real protection for tenants at all times' and a radical overhaul of the pro-developer OMB; and

"Whereas our own MPP ... called for a rent rollback (reduction) at a public event in June 2003 and spoke out against the proposed fourth high-rise at a community meeting in November 2004;

"We, the undersigned, residents of Doversquare Apartments in Toronto, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"To institute a rent freeze until the exorbitant Tory guideline and above-guideline rent increases are wiped out by inflation;

"To abrogate the Harris-Eves 'Tenant Protection Act' and draw up new landlord-tenant legislation which shuts down the notoriously pro-landlord ORHT and reinstates real rent control, including an elimination of the Tory policy of 'vacancy decontrol';

"To keep the McGuinty government to its promise of real changes at the OMB, eliminating its bias toward wealthy developers and enhancing the power of groups

promoting affordable housing, sustainable neighbourhoods and tenant rights."

I will—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Ruprecht:** Excuse me, I am finishing this petition. You can be next. Thank you very much.

#### CREDIT VALLEY HOSPITAL

**Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly regarding the Credit Valley Hospital capital improvements.

"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'll affix my signature to this petition.

#### ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

**Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East):** I have another petition from residents of the Hamilton area.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 20% of the adult population, or 1.8 million adults in Ontario, continue to smoke; and

"Whereas hospitality concepts like bars, pubs, taverns, nightclubs, Legions, bingo halls, racetracks and casinos are businesses with a high percentage of patrons who smoke; and

"Whereas more than 700 businesses in Ontario have invested tens of thousands of dollars each to construct a designated smoking room to comply with municipal bylaws;

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

“Permit properly ventilated and separate designated smoking rooms in hospitality establishments that regulate and control employee and customer exposure to second-hand smoke.”

I'm sending it down by way of Cassandra.

1550

#### CREDIT VALLEY HOSPITAL

**Mr. Dave Levac (Brant):** On behalf of the member from Mississauga West, I offer a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly regarding the Credit Valley Hospital capital improvements.

“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 affix my signature to this petition, and hand it to Lindsay, our page.

**Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale):** This petition is to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

“Credit Valley Hospital Capital Improvements:

“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 put my signature on this petition as well.

#### GO TRANSIT TUNNEL

**Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport):** I have a petition signed by a number of people who are very happy with the minister of infrastructure services, but are very unhappy with the TTC right-of-way. It reads as follows:

“To the Parliament of Ontario, the minister of infrastructure services and the Minister of Transportation:

“Whereas GO Transit is presently planning to tunnel an area just south of St. Clair Avenue West and west of Old Weston Road, making it easier for GO trains to pass a major rail crossing;

“Whereas the TTC is presently planning a TTC right-of-way along all of St. Clair Avenue West, including the bottleneck caused by the dilapidated St. Clair-Old Weston Road bridge; and

“Whereas this bridge (underpass) will be: (1) too narrow for the planned TTC right-of-way, since it will leave only one lane for traffic; (2) it is not safe for pedestrians (it's about 50 metres long), it's dark and slopes on both east and west sides creating high banks for 300 metres, and (3) it creates a divide, a no man's land, between Old Weston Road and Keele Street (this was acceptable when the area consisted entirely of slaughterhouses, but now the area has 900 new homes);

“Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that GO Transit extend the tunnel beyond St. Clair Avenue West so that trains will pass under St. Clair Avenue West thus eliminating this eyesore of a bridge with its high banks and blank walls. Instead it will create a dynamic, revitalized community enhanced by a beautiful continuous cityscape with easy traffic flow.”

Since I agree with this petition 100%, I'm delighted to put my name to it, and I hope you don't mind when I do that.

### CREDIT VALLEY HOSPITAL

**Mr. Tim Peterson (Mississauga South):** Although Mr. Levac and I are sharing a petition this evening, we've never had a better presentation on behalf of Mississauga and the Credit Valley Hospital than has been done by Mr. Levac.

"Whereas some 20,000 people each year choose to make their home in Mississauga, and a Halton-Peel District Health Council capacity study showed 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."

This petition is signed by 10 other people, and I am very pleased to affix my signature here, and present it to Alexandra.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### ELECTION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

#### LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES ÉLECTIONS

Mr. Bryant moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 176, An Act to amend the Election Act, the Election Finances Act and the Legislative Assembly Act, to repeal the Representation Act, 1996 and to enact the Representation Act, 2005 / Projet de loi 176, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale, la Loi sur le financement des élections et la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative, abrogeant la Loi de 1996 sur la représentation électorale et édictant la Loi de 2005 sur la représentation électorale.

**The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling):** Minister?

**Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal):** I'm going to be sharing my time with my fabulous colleague Dr. Kuldip Kular, the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale and the remarkable parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for democratic renewal.

I'm very pleased to open debate for second reading of Bill 176, the Election Statute Law Amendment Act, 2005, which, if passed, will improve Ontario's democracy by moving ahead in four key areas.

First, this bill will give Ontarians a more direct say on important government decisions, a more direct say than they've ever had before, by allowing the government to establish a citizens' assembly on electoral reform, and a citizens' jury on political finance reform.

The issue of electoral reform is being debated in Legislatures across the country. Here in Ontario, we want to bring that debate directly to the people. Ontarians can, and should, decide for themselves how MPPs are elected to represent them in this House. This bill will give the people of Ontario both the opportunity to have their say and the power to make a choice on electoral reform. The citizens' assembly will look at whether or not Ontario should keep its first-past-the-post electoral system, or change the way in which Ontarians elect their MPPs to this great Legislature. If the assembly recommends change, the government will offer Ontarians the chance to decide the issue in a provincial referendum to be held within our current mandate. The citizens' jury will look at how provincial political parties and election campaigns are funded and make recommendations for improvements. This bill gives shape to both the citizens' assembly and the citizens' jury by allowing Elections Ontario to do something they currently cannot do under the laws of Ontario; namely, to randomly select a diverse and representative pool of candidates from the permanent register of electors.

#### 1600

Participation in the citizens' assembly or the citizens' jury will be voluntary. People whose names are selected from the register will first be contacted by Elections Ontario. Those who agree to become candidates may then be selected to sit as members on either the assembly or the jury. This process is similar to the one established in the province of British Columbia to set up its citizens' assembly on electoral reform.

Second, this bill will preserve the 11 ridings in northern Ontario.

**Interjection:** Hear, hear.

**Hon. Mr. Bryant:** Hear, hear.

Over the years, northern Ontarians have seen their representation in the Legislature decline. This government recognizes that all regions of Ontario have an important role to play in building a strong and prosperous province. To do this, all regions must have strong representation in the Legislature. Maintaining 11 ridings in northern Ontario will guarantee an effective voice for the north. This

bill will also add four ridings in southern Ontario, in accordance with federal redistribution undertaken by Elections Canada. This was done, and was necessary, to reflect the population growth in southern Ontario.

Ultimately, this bill, if passed, will make sure that the different perspectives from all of Ontario's regions will be listened to, considered and debated in this House. As a result, all Ontarians will have a voice in shaping the future of our province.

Third, this bill will set fixed election dates. Elections will be held on the first Thursday in October every four years starting on Thursday, October 4, 2007. The right of Premiers to call elections based on partisan and political considerations will be a thing of the past. Furthermore, this bill will set fixed campaign periods at 28 days. All parties and candidates will know when future campaign periods start and end, and everyone will be on a level playing field.

I know that some people have speculated that fixed election dates will in fact mean longer campaign periods, even as the writ periods are set in law. I'm not so sure. I would say that in the last provincial election, for example, where the mandate was more than four years—four and a half years—and where there was significant speculation for many, many months during many, many periods in both 2002 and 2003 that an election might be called—and who knows how close we got to an election being called in the past; I don't know if the co-dean of Legislature, who I think might be speaking to this bill, will be willing to share with us that particular chapter in Ontario's history. Because of that, because we didn't know when the election was going to be called, it meant we had even longer campaign periods than we might have had.

I think the experience in British Columbia is instructive, if you consider how long the campaign has been in place there. Of course, when it begins and ends is a subjective determination, but it will provide a level of certainty that will not only be of assistance and give people confidence, will not only be of assistance to those who are participating in elections—both voters and candidates—but will also mean that we do not have overly extended election campaign periods, which the public have a certain lack of appetite for.

Fourth and finally, this bill will make donations to political parties more transparent to Ontarians by requiring real-time public disclosure on the Internet of political donations. This means that all contributions of over \$100 to a political party or a leadership campaign will have to be reported to Elections Ontario within five business days—not up to a year, as is the case right now. Elections Ontario will then have to post this information, including the contributor's name and the donation amount, on its Web site within five business days. That would be the fastest disclosure time in the nation and one of the fastest disclosure times in the world. This reporting provision would also be retroactive to January 1, 2004. Of course, prior to that, political donations have already been disclosed, pursuant to the annual disclosure. This

will mean real-time disclosure of the whole works since January 1, 2004. As a result of this measure, Ontarians will have a political finance system, if this bill passes, that is more open and transparent than ever before.

In summary, this bill charts the course for meaningful and fundamental improvements to how Ontarians govern themselves. It will involve Ontarians directly in an open and honest debate on how MPPs are elected and how election campaigns are funded. It will secure strong and effective representation for all Ontarians in the Legislature. It will set aside the guessing game of when elections will be held, put all parties and citizens on a level playing field and give Ontarians fairer elections. The bill, if passed, will provide Ontarians with the real-time public disclosure of political donations that they deserve and will significantly advance political finance reform in Ontario.

This bill is about working together—working with the people of Ontario, for Ontario, to build a stronger democracy. That means working together to renew and revitalize the role of citizens in our province's democracy. It means working together to retain the best of our parliamentary traditions while reflecting 21st-century realities and values and to boldly recast the relationship between Ontarians, their provincial government and their Legislature in a more positive and productive light than ever before.

As the minister responsible for democratic renewal, I am very proud to stand in support of this bill, and I urge all members of this House to join me in doing the same.

**Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale):** It's an absolute pleasure and honour to take part in the debate on second reading of Bill 176, An Act to amend the Election Act, the Election Finances Act and the Legislative Assembly Act, to repeal the Representation Act, 1996 and to enact the Representation Act, 2005.

First of all, I want to thank the minister responsible for democratic renewal, who happens to be the Attorney General of this province as well, for bringing this bill forward.

As the parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for democratic renewal, it's my pleasure to rise today in support of Bill 176. This bill is an important step forward toward renewing public faith in government and democracy. If passed, Bill 176 will allow us to use the permanent register of electors to convene a citizens' assembly on electoral reform and a citizens' jury on political finance reform.

**1610**

The citizens' assembly would look at how Ontarians elect their provincial Parliament representatives, recommend the best electoral system for Ontario, and, if a change is recommended, put that change to the people of Ontario in a referendum.

The citizens' jury would review political finance and campaign finance issues, such as contribution and expense limits during election and non-election periods.

These changes, if passed, will aim to reduce the influence of money in politics.

This bill also addresses an issue that has received support from members of all parties on both sides of this House; namely, preserving 11 northern ridings to ensure a strong voice for northern Ontarians. This bill, if passed, would de-link Ontario's northern ridings from the recent federal redistribution and maintain the existing boundaries, therefore maintaining 11 northern representatives in this Legislature.

We have also included fixed election dates in this bill, an issue that has already been discussed in this chamber.

Finally, this bill takes action on the issue of publicly disclosing political donations. If passed, it would make real-time reporting on the Internet a reality. This will allow the public to track contributions on the Internet.

Bill 176 builds on the government's ambitious democratic renewal agenda, an agenda on which we have already made significant progress: We have extended the powers of the Auditor General to conduct value-for-money audits of public sector institutions; we have banned partisan advertising; we have required that cabinet ministers must attend question period at least two thirds of the time; and we have mandated the Auditor General to independently review the state of Ontario's finances before provincial elections. Now, through these measures, we are inviting Ontarians to actively participate in making important choices on fundamental issues of governance.

The McGuinty government is strengthening Ontario's democracy by improving the quality of our democracy and modernizing our political institutions. With this bill, our government is aiming to give the people of Ontario a stronger voice on issues that matter to them and stronger representation in this Legislature.

I'm honoured to stand in support of this legislation, and I request members on both sides of the House to fully support this bill.

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

**Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton):** This bill shouldn't be talking about democratic reform or called democratic reform. What it should be entitled is: the gerrymandering of electoral districts for the province of Ontario. I will explain that later.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East):** I'm going to have an opportunity to speak more fully to this bill a little later on, but I have to say that there are some details that were not discussed by the members of the government who have opened the debate this afternoon. I look forward to spending some time wading through some of those details to bring to light what some of the problems are that we see with this particular bill. Whether that's to do with fixed election dates, with fundraising, or with who has the power to control, appoint or, indeed, receive information from the citizens' assembly, all of those issues are things that we need to get into and to discuss, because while the government likes to throw out these comments about how helpful, how democratic and how

wonderful all of these initiatives are, we need to spend some time not only reviewing what's occurred in other jurisdictions that we can, and should, actually be learning from—instead of recreating the wheel—but also bringing to light some of the problems that are still apparent and that need to be addressed.

Of course, after this second reading debate, I'm sure we'll be dealing with some of these things in more detail in committee, but I do want to start raising some of them this afternoon, and maybe a couple of my colleagues will have the opportunity to do so as well, just depending on the length of time that the opposition takes in its leadoff speech.

So thank you for that opportunity. I look forward to debating this bill in a little bit more detail later on this afternoon.

**Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough):** Indeed, I'm delighted to hear the opening comments of both the Attorney General and the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale with regard to Bill 176.

I see this as a real opportunity for empowerment for the citizens of Ontario. I think this is a major step. You know, you talk to many people. You talk to them about why the participation rate has declined in elections, not only provincially, but federally and municipally, and they're looking for an opportunity to explore new ideas.

There are examples such as Australia and New Zealand where they have perhaps the best of the first-past-the-post system and a modified proportional representation system to elect their members. Indeed, the citizens' jury will have an opportunity to look at many of these ideas that for far too long have been debated in academic circles throughout Canada. There have been a number of reports written on changing the electoral system in this nation, and they've collected dust for many, many years. This will be an opportunity for citizens to review a lot of those documents and have a real, thorough discussion.

I've read a couple of articles with regard to the British Columbia experience. As a matter of fact, they're having an election right now. They are the first province, I believe, in Canada to have a fixed election date, and also on the ballot, I believe, they will be looking at the recommendations that came from the citizens' jury in British Columbia.

Anything we can do—and this goes for members on all sides—for the opportunity to re-engage the citizens of Ontario in the political process will be a helpful vehicle. I'm also pleased that we're going to take the time to have a better reporting procedure for donations, politically. I think, again, that'll strengthen the democratic system in Ontario.

**Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge):** I'm pleased to take a couple of moments to comment on Bill 176.

I was pleased a number of months ago, under private members' public business, to be able to bring forward a resolution on democratic renewal. We had an hour of some very interesting debate. Certainly the opposition expressed its views on the matter. I was pleased to have

the support of the Legislature on that particular resolution.

Having come from a municipal background of a number of years, fixed election dates sure make a lot of sense to the public. They know exactly what to expect. Having gone through some six or eight months of hide-and-peek, peekaboo election times last spring, I was tiring, as were the campaign volunteers and the constituents: "When are we going to have this provincial election?" Quite frankly, they couldn't wait to see the back side of the former Premier and much of his caucus, although some members of the caucus returned and they even added one or two new members, as the case might be.

It took a long time to get there during last spring, but certainly on a go-forward basis, when this legislation gets passed, the public will know exactly when it is that elections are going to happen. When we start knocking on their doors, they will know we're serious about an election, rather than knocking on their doors trying to get their attention. They will ask, "Oh, gee, is there an election?" We had to tell them, "We're not sure. We're waiting for the Premier to figure out when he thinks it might be to his advantage to call an election." By the time we were there the third time, which wasn't necessarily a bad thing, visiting that often, and we still weren't sure about an election, they even began to question our credibility in being there suggesting that there might be an election some day.

There are a number of matters in this legislation, whether it's fixed election dates, some transparency on election financing and/or the boundary adjustments to secure the northern Ontario representation. We heard discussion today about ensuring rural communities are well represented, and this is going to help achieve that.

1620

**The Acting Speaker:** In response, the Chair recognizes the Attorney General.

**Hon. Mr. Bryant:** I want to thank the members from Peterborough, Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge, Hamilton East, and Lanark–Carleton for their comments.

I was surprised to hear the member from Lanark–Carleton say what he did in this sense: Number one, he introduced a private member's bill calling for fixed election dates on the very date we have here, so I would have thought he would have supported that. I know his party had no commitment to campaign finance reform, certainly not during the last election or otherwise. We do. Maybe he does. We'll hear about that.

On the 11 ridings in the north, and the changes to the southern ridings, what people need to understand is that all the ridings in southern Ontario were determined by an independent commission, for which Elections Canada was responsible. There is no question that this was an independent process, and it wasn't either the federal or the provincial government determining that.

As for the 11 ridings in the north, I have two things to say. First, it was the same 11 ridings as were contested in the last election, with the same boundaries as in the last

election. We're not touching them. Who were those boundaries determined by? This government? No, they were determined under the previous government by Elections Ontario. They had an independent commission to set the riding boundaries for those. Maybe what the member is getting at is that he's opposed to having appropriate representation for the people of northern Ontario, and if you want to know why they don't have a single Conservative MPP in northern Ontario, it's because of that attitude. If you want to know why they couldn't even hold on to Mike Harris's old seat, it's because of that attitude.

I say this is good for democracy, this is good for the electoral system, and I'm sure I'm going to eventually convince the member to support this bill.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr. Sterling:** I agree with the government and with the public that we need democratic reform in this province. I think we need it in this country. I think our institution, the Legislature, the Parliament of Ontario, has degenerated over the last 10 or 15 years, where debate in this place—I am not even sure that whether I stand up and debate on this bill matters very much any more. I am pretty pessimistic about the fact that the government hasn't listened with regard to any of the opposition's arguments over the last year and a half, enough to amend any bill in any kind of significant way. I don't even know if they've done it even in a minor way. We have a government that promised during the election that they would have free votes. We saw the first free vote yesterday, a year and a half after they've been in power, and it was on a very narrow issue, where three local members were forced to vote against their own government because of the mistreatment of the city of Brampton in a bill.

There can be no doubt in my mind that it is time to look at democratic renewal for the Legislature of Ontario, but I want to compare this government's approach to the approach of their cousins in Ottawa. It may be the fact that the Liberals in Ottawa are in a minority situation that they had to be more sensitive to the House of Commons than this piece of legislation is to the Legislature of Ontario.

Quite frankly, I'm a little chagrined that there are not more members in the Legislature interested in this topic or in this area, because it can affect our province very dramatically as we go forward. Be that as it may, I think it's important to look at what the federal government did with regard to this. They essentially followed the kind of path I would have followed had I been in the position of the Attorney General or in the position of trying to change this place to be more positive and to come out at the end with something the people would support to a greater degree.

At the federal level, the minister responsible for democratic reform is a fellow from Ottawa as well, Mauril Bélanger, a Liberal from the eastern part of the Ottawa–Vanier area with whom I have worked on many co-operative fronts, particularly the Ottawa Congress Centre, to

enhance our city of Ottawa. Mr. Bélanger and the federal Liberals set up a select committee way back in November and asked members of Parliament to participate in going forward with their democratic renewal proposals. I think it's really important that the federal members of Parliament, the people who have the experience with the process, are engaged in what happens.

I have no objection to setting up a citizens' committee and having that kind of input into what kind of changes we might want to make to this institution of Parliament, but I believe that the sitting members, and quite frankly some of the former members, should have the opportunity to put forward their experiences to try to make this a better place as we go into the future. While these reforms, I would say, go around the edge of real reform, they are important. Some of the proposals or possible changes are important to where we go forward.

One of my federal members, Scott Reid, of the Conservative Party, has visited other jurisdictions that have proportional representation models. The committee of the federal Parliament went to New Zealand. They were able to talk with the parliamentarians there. In some ways, in talking with Mr. Reid a week ago in my constituency office about his particular visit, he convinced me to some degree that we should look very seriously at the model New Zealand has.

When we are talking about changing the direction, the history of a body like this that has been in place now for 140 or 150 years, then I really believe the approach to this should be measured, should be as careful as it possibly can be, before we come to a solution that may or may not work in the end. I really believe that the creation of a standing committee should be done even at this stage of the game. It doesn't require a piece of legislation to do that, and I invite the government and the government members to encourage the Attorney General to take that step.

1630

The other part of this government saying they are in favour of democratic reform may be taken, or some people may take it, with a grain of salt. I hope that members here have read the *Globe and Mail's* editorials for the previous three days—yesterday, going back three days—where they discuss some of the notions of democratic reform mostly in the federal context, but they do relate very, very strongly to our institution as well. They believe very much that the federal Liberal Party does not have, really, a great drive to change, for instance, the first-past-the-post system. That's what the *Globe* believes in their editorial and what they state in their editorial.

I must admit some skepticism with regard to this government's drive toward democratic reform, because their record really has been abysmal to date in terms of them working within the present rule and the present institution and showing that they are inviting the opposition members to play a constructive role here. It has been very, very difficult to sit in opposition when you know that what you say in debate doesn't really matter,

that what you propose in committee doesn't really matter, and when they close down their own members with regard to a free vote, when in fact they promised to do that in the election.

**Mr. Dave Levac (Brant):** Déjà vu all over again.

**Mr. Sterling:** It may be déjà vu all over again, but hopefully—and I say this to the whip, whom I've got a lot of time for—you can't go forward, you can't convince the public that we're going to change unless we have leaders and leaders' offices who are strong enough to say, "We will face the press. We will say, 'We are going to allow a free vote here.'" We may take some criticism from the press that we're not all together and that there's a lack of discipline—that's what the media sometimes do to us in terms of exercising free votes—but you have to have that kind of leadership. The public are waiting for something to happen in our institution of Parliament, and it's not happening yet.

So in terms of the reforms that they've brought forward so far, some of them, quite frankly, are kind of phoney: the one about the cabinet ministers having to be here two thirds of the time. The Premier supposedly keeps an attendance record and he's going to charge them \$500. We all know that nobody is ever going to get charged the 500 bucks unless the Premier says you can be away—I don't know whether it requires a note from their parents or whatever it is—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Sterling:** Oh, you've got to get a note from the whip. But anyway, these kinds of shenanigans with regard to these things are quite—now, the fixed election date: I don't have a problem with fixing the election date. The only problem I have is that under our British parliamentary system and our Constitution, you can't do it. So effectively, that October 4 date doesn't put any real onus on the Premier to have the election on that date. I think it is a pretty strong promise, and I think the Premier would be in a pretty difficult situation if he didn't have the election on October 4, 2007, and I expect the election to be then. But the fact of the matter is that the Premier could walk down the hall today, because we already passed this particular law. This is déjà vu all over again. We did away with the old act and we're doing it over again. I think we are adding one little kink to it, that the election writ period will be 28 days on a constant basis.

But there are instances in our system where we might want to have an election more than once every four years. If, for instance, God forbid, after an election in a majority government, or in any kind of government, the Premier died or was incapacitated, I think the public might expect that, in our politics in particular, where a whole lot of people make the decision on who's the leader, the public might not want to support another party member being the Premier of the province for three years after such an occasion would occur. That is a pretty extreme example, but it does point to the fact that there are instances where, in fact, there might be an argument that you would want an election.

This bill covers several areas. One of the areas that it covers is election finances, and I'm going to defer part of my remarks to my friend Mr. Arnott, who has brought forward a private member's bill on financial disclosure, because I think he's got a much better idea than is contained in this bill.

One of the things that I wanted to talk about—and I don't think people realize what this bill does. It takes away a certain process in our election process. It takes away the right of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission to set our borders, and that's kind of interesting.

I want to read to you from some remarks of Mauril Bélanger, who is, as I mentioned before, the minister responsible for democratic reform for the federal Liberals. He spoke at my alma mater, the University of Ottawa, on February 16, and was talking about some of our history. I want to refer to page 3 of 8. You can get this particular speech, I say to all members, off the Web site that the government of Canada has, under democratic renewal. He's talking about the history of the change in our democratic institutions and that there have been changes over a period of time. He says, "I don't have time to review all this history in detail, but let me cite a few key examples of how our democratic institutions have evolved over the past 40 years."

His first example of how our system has become better is an independent, non-partisan process established for drawing electoral boundaries. This act does away with that process. What this act does is set the electoral boundaries for the benefit of the provincial Liberal Party in an upcoming provincial election. It gerrymanders the boundaries in the north.

There was quite a bit of concern over the federal boundaries commission with regard to northern boundaries. In fact, there were many MPs who sat in that area who complained about the fact that they were taking the federal northern ridings from 11 to nine. That was the first recommendation of the federal boundaries commission, and the reason that happened was that the population of the north has stayed stagnant or has in fact decreased. There are about 850,000 people who live in the north. Meanwhile, areas like the greater Toronto area, Brampton, Vaughan and Ottawa have exploded in their population. The average riding size now at the federal level, the 106 ridings, is about 107,000 in population in each of those ridings. So when you divide 107 into the 850, you have trouble coming within the range of 25%, plus or minus, in creating more than nine ridings. After the hearings they had, the final report of the commission came up with 10 ridings in the north. They somewhat agreed that they should not have nine, but they would go for 10.

**1640**

If you read their report, which again is on the Web, it's pretty hard to argue against the conclusions they stated, after considering that the people from the north wanted more ridings. They wanted 11 ridings. I understand why any area doesn't want to lose representation. One of the new ridings that I have in the area that I represent, at the Lanark end, goes all the way from

Carleton Place to Napanee, which is a huge, huge area to cover for an MP or an MPP. That area is much larger than some of the northern ridings that have much less population.

Anyway, some of the remarks that were made by the electoral commission completely refute the notion that these larger ridings are needed in northern Ontario, because some of them are quite small in geographic area. It's very difficult for a politician here standing and saying, "Look, we want to win ridings in the north, so we're going to promise them 11 ridings." Well, let's promise them 12, let's promise them 15. What's the difference, if you want to buy their votes, with all that? But we have a problem here. We have an act at the federal level which says, plus or minus 25%, they allow the electoral boundaries commission to operate within that. In certain cases, they will allow an individual riding to even go outside of the 25%, as they have in the riding in the very far area of Rainy River, where the riding goes down by, I think, 45% from the average—just for that one riding in northern Ontario. That brings all of the rest within 25%, for the remaining nine ridings.

The other part that the provincial Liberals have a problem with here is this: They own seven of these ridings up north at the present time. The NDP owns three, but they're not the proponents of this bill, so I can't say to them that they're gerrymandering in the north.

**Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot):** What do you guys own?

**Mr. Sterling:** We have one in the north.

I don't think any politician in this Legislature would deny or back away from—if given the choice, who would you rather represent? I'd rather represent the people I represented in the last four years, because they know me, they know the work I've done, and my chances of getting re-elected by the people who know me against a stranger are greater than if I'm given a new riding.

Guess what? In the north, we're going to have seven Liberal incumbents who are running in exactly the same boundaries as they did last year. With deference to the Attorney General, who says that these ridings were set by the electoral boundaries commission, they were, on the basis of the 1991 census, some 15 or 16 years ago. That particular electoral boundaries commission was not dealing with the huge populations that we now have and the huge growth we've had in southern Ontario.

There's another problem that they actually have as well, and that is that it's not only the laws of Ontario that guide our election process. Our Constitution, under section 3, has been interpreted by the Supreme Court of Canada to say that you can't give more electoral power to one segment of our population than others. Therefore, I believe that this particular bill, with regard to northern Ontario, could be attacked in court.

I think that when you look at the numbers, as I have, with regard to northern Ontario, you have areas—Timiskaming–Cochrane is 34.45% below the average. The average across Ontario is 107,000. If you look at Algoma–Manitoulin, it's 31% below the average. If you

look at Sudbury, it's 25.6%—close. If you look at Sault Ste. Marie, it's 30% below the average. But the trouble with Sault Ste. Marie is that it only covers 247 square kilometres. There are about 30 or 40 ridings in southern Ontario that have 30,000 or 40,000 more electors in a larger geographical area.

Having read some of the law with regard to the amount of latitude the Ontario Electoral Boundaries Commission has, I'm very, very suspicious that if this bill passes, a citizen from southern Ontario or a class action from southern Ontario could go to the courts and say, "I am not being given my fair voting power because of what the government has done with regard to gerrymandering the boundaries in the north."

I will refer to a case from a provincial electoral district distribution in Saskatchewan, where the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that one of the conditions for effective representation was relative parity of voting power: "A system which dilutes one citizen's vote unduly as compared with another citizen's vote runs the risk of providing inadequate representation to the citizen whose vote is diluted. The legislative power of the citizen whose vote is diluted will be reduced, as may be access to and assistance from his or her representative. The result will be uneven and unfair representation."

Justice McLachlin did note that factors like geography, community history, community interest and minority representation may need to be taken into account to ensure that our Legislative Assemblies effectively represent the diversity of our social mosaic. But we have in place, up until this particular act came forward, that we were in accordance with the federal Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act, where the province is divided into the number of ridings to establish the election quotient, which I said was 107,000 people, and riding population is to fall within 25% of that quotient, except in extreme circumstances. I said that in the Rainy River area they have that one extreme circumstance. All the other federal ridings, the other 105 of them, fall within the 25% quotient.

The problem with this proposal is that only one riding in the north falls within the 25% quotient. For instance, in the north you're going to have an average of 76,000 electors for each of their ridings, while in the south, it would be 110,000 for each of the ridings. There is quite a difference in the amount of impact that an individual's vote has in both of the areas.

I understand the dilemma that the Liberals are in, because basically they went up north in an election and said, "We're going to keep 11 ridings here, come hell or high water." Well, I guess they have two choices here. They could strike an electoral boundaries commission and change all of the south, create more ridings, and then they could bring those figures down to be within 25%. I say to them that I'm not necessarily against 11 ridings in the north. I'm just saying that if you're going to have 11 ridings in the north, you're probably going to have to have, not 96, but 105, or maybe even 110, in the south.

You can't have it both ways in this. You've got to come within section 3 of our charter. You've got to be fair with the people of the province of Ontario. I would also say that you are going a step backwards by setting electoral boundaries not as the result of the commission but as the result of a political promise. You are setting the boundaries in the north on the basis of your wishes and not as the result of an electoral boundaries commission. You're going back a step in democratic renewal, democratic reform. You're in reverse on that particular matter.

**1650**

I don't think most people realize that this bill does away with an automatic readjustment after every 10 years, which is what we had when we latched on to the federal legislation.

I can point out many of the inequities that are there. Let me take, for instance, the riding of Nipissing, which is around North Bay. This riding is 8,383 square kilometres. This riding is about 1,300 square kilometres smaller than the Lanark–Renfrew–Lennox and Addington riding, which will include some of the area that I represent. This is a riding that goes all the way from Carleton Place, which is just west of Ottawa, down to Napanee. This riding is about 9,600 square kilometres. The people in Lanark–Renfrew–Lennox and Addington are going to have 38,000 more people in that area than in the smaller area. How can you say to the people of southern Ontario in that riding, "Even though you are from a very, very large geographical area, you don't have the same political punch as the people in the north"? Well, I know why: because the Liberals are gerrymandering that riding. They have a Liberal there, and they want to keep exactly the same boundaries so that Liberal will have an advantage in the next election over whomever the candidates are who challenge the incumbent.

**Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West):** What would it take to get an advantage in Lanark–Carleton?

**Mr. Sterling:** Well, you'd have to be a very sterling character. It's worked eight times.

Now, let me talk about another riding. Sault Ste. Marie is 247 square kilometres. It's roughly comparable to the size of the new riding of Vaughan, which is about 230 square kilometres, and the Whitby–Oshawa riding, which is about 234 square kilometres. The representative in Sault Ste. Marie will be representing 74,500 people, whereas the people who are representing Vaughan and Whitby–Oshawa will be representing more than 112,000 people, and both of those ridings are growing very rapidly.

So you have a situation which is impossible to defend. My view is that should a resident of southern Ontario take this piece of legislation to the courts, there may be a very valid constitutional challenge with regard to his or her right for equality under our charter, section 3, in terms of the equal voting impact they are guaranteed in that particular section.

“Gerrymandering,” according to the Oxford dictionary, is “to manipulate the boundaries of a constituency so as to give undue influence to some party or class.” This is giving undue influence to the Liberal Party of Ontario, as they own seven seats in the north at the present time and want their incumbents to run in the same boundaries they did before, while everybody in southern Ontario is going to have to readjust to new boundaries. They’re going to have to take in new constituents, people who don’t know them, so they will not have the advantage of incumbency, as they will in the north.

I think they’ve got a real problem with regard to that. I think this bill creates a real problem in that there’s no automatic review of riding boundaries, as there was in the Representation Act, 1996, which this repeals. So this is a step back in terms of democratic reform or renewal.

These arguments are hard to put, because I know the people in the north would love to have 11 representatives. They’d probably love to have 21 representatives, or whatever, because the more representatives you have, the more access you have; the more opportunity for them to represent the people in the Legislature of Ontario. But you’ve got to follow our Constitution and our charter in terms of what you do.

I mentioned before the citizens’ jury, which I don’t have a big problem with. The only problem I have with the citizens’ jury is that they may come up with a result like they did in British Columbia. The big problem you have with citizens’ juries is that sometimes they are captured by one or two individuals, which I believe was the case in British Columbia, where an academic, or a number of academics, captured the citizens’ jury and put forward an unbelievably complicated system of electing MPPs. I believe they’re going to have a referendum on that in the next election. I suspect that no one in British Columbia, save the people who were sitting on the citizens’ jury and had hours and hours to study and look at this, understands their very complicated system.

I am not putting aside the idea that we should have a good look, at least, at some kind of proportional representation, but I do believe that the democratically elected MPPs should have a role in this. They should have a role in saying to the appointed body that is created in this legislation what their terms of reference are, what their mandate is and what we are going to do with the result when we get it back. I think the Legislative Assembly should have some say in that. I would do as your federal Liberal cousins have done in Ottawa; I would create a select committee of this Legislature to look at other jurisdictions and talk to other politicians about how their new electoral system works.

I’m not sure, however, that changing how we are elected to this place is actually going to make this place any better. I think the dynamics of this place would be changed if we had perpetual minority governments, which proportional systems tend toward. If you read the *Globe and Mail* from yesterday, they are betwixt and between. They want the opportunity to have a majority government but, on the other hand, they like the notion of

proportional representation, because they see the injustices that occur with regard to the fact that you can get a majority government in Ontario with 37%. I think Bob Rae had 37%; I think a few others have had that amount as well.

What needs to be looked at, over and above this: If you really do want to change the way we interact and act within this Legislature, we should sit down and talk about fiscal control and the power of the Senate. I have been in cabinet for about 12 of the 28 years that I’ve been here, I’ve been a backbencher for about four and I’ve been in opposition for the other time. I know from all of those positions of the power at the centre. And it isn’t just the Premier; it’s the people around the Premier who have huge power. Quite frankly, some of those people around the Premier are wet behind the ears. Some of them don’t have a lot of experience in life. Some of them don’t know what they’re talking about. There has to be a way of breaking that lock on control or sharing some of that power out and away from the Senate. It’s just not healthy for our system. We are left with a system where those who sit with the governing party are told in the morning what the line is to parrot today, and off they go and spin, spin, spin, whatever they are told to say for the rest of the day. That’s it; that’s their participation in this process. There’s no opportunity for innovation; there’s no opportunity for constructive participation by either the backbench or the opposition in where we’re going to go in this province.

**1700**

In terms of setting down a standing committee for democratic reform, we should talk about how we in the Legislature can share in the fiscal decisions of the government of Ontario, how each one of us would prioritize the expenditures of the government of Ontario, how each one of us would tack in order to get that money. There has to be a sharing of that. One of the problems you have—it’s not a problem, I guess, when you get into opposition, but I can say just about anything in terms of, “You’re not doing enough here; you’re not doing enough there.” When I say, “Please give me \$5 million to do a hospital in my area,” I don’t have to say, “Will you chop the \$5 million off somebody else?” So I don’t have any financial responsibility in terms of what I say.

But when I was a minister and I had to go to my cabinet colleagues and say, “I need such and such money”—when I was the Attorney General and I said I needed \$36 million for some new judges so that we could catch up with the backlog, I had to be conscious, and my cabinet colleagues had to be conscious, of where that money was going to come from. Were we going to go into debt? Were we going to chop it off of somebody else? So there is no downside over here to saying, “I want more,” and there is no downside to not acting in a responsible manner in terms of what we expect in terms of the public.

My view is that we should use this opportunity. You can do whatever you want in this particular bill. The bill, save and except for the election boundaries, is not that

dangerous. It doesn't really do that much. But we should really look at a mechanism whereby the government of the day throws some of its fiscal power either into the backbench or into the opposition or whatever. Some may say that that is somewhat mirroring the American system of government. I say, so be it, if that's what we need to do in order to get some kind of better balance within this place, so that we can all be constructive in trying to meet the priorities of the people of Ontario.

This bill could have been so much better. If the government had created a select committee and had taken a report from a select committee and worked with that, they could have really taken this province forward.

One of the great parts in politics is election day and election night. I think that's the time when you have the most fun. The most fun that you have is getting here. Once you get here and you start to take on the responsibilities that you have to, then some of the fun subsides. I think that this bill on democratic reform is more about the fun side. It's about the election process and whether or not we should have proportional representation, which means that if you win 5% of the vote, you get a certain break, and all the rest. But the truth of the matter is, it's more important to figure out how this place operates, how the fiscal-financial system works in the province and in our country, than how you get here.

We have a really big problem in gaining the respect of our citizens. I don't think our citizens think that the people here are really trying to govern in their best interests, and that's because the system is very adversarial. We stand up in the House each day and say, "You did this," and they stand up and say, "You did that." They say, "We're great and you're bad," and we say the opposite. That's fun for a little while, but after a while, I think everybody just turns off the TV and goes back. We've got to change the system where the people in this place are all involved in the decisions. Unless you do that, you're going to push yourself into a minority situation. You're going to have minority governments forever. And once you get into minority governments—I have sat in three of them, and I can tell you, as a backbencher, they're more fun. You're more involved. They have to rely on you more than they do now, and what you say does count to some degree, but there are times when a majority government is necessary as well.

At this point in time, I'm going to yield to my friend Mr. Arnott, who wants to talk about election reform with regard to finances.

**Mr. Tim Peterson (Mississauga South):** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: In the gallery, we have the Shanghai Foreign Language School, being hosted by St. Aloysius Gonzaga school in Mississauga and their teacher, Mark Boguski. I'd just like the House to recognize them here on their visit to Ontario and Canada. They will be leaving Ontario and moving on to Vancouver.

Thank you very much for joining us today.

**The Acting Speaker:** The Chair recognizes the member from Waterloo–Wellington.

**Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington):** The member for Lanark–Carleton is indeed a man of Sterling character, as he pointed out to us earlier—he is quite right about that—and we're very fortunate to have the dean of our caucus imparting his wisdom upon the House this afternoon on this important issue.

I'm pleased to have an opportunity to speak somewhat briefly on this. I just wanted to talk about a private member's bill that I have before the House, Bill 180, which is very germane to this issue. My bill is called An Act to amend the Election Finances Act to require publication of contributions. This comes back to the discussion that took place in this House, I guess it was earlier this year, in March, when it came to light that two of the most significant and senior members of the government, the Premier and the Minister of Finance, were present at a fundraiser in, I think it was May 2004, where they asked property developers to spend \$10,000 for a ticket and come to this fundraiser held at a private residence, even at the same time as the government was considering its greenbelt policy. Unfortunately for the government, this particular fundraiser, which I'm sure they had hoped would be kept secret over time, came to light. One of the people who attended talked to some of the media and informed the general public through the media and through the opposition parties that this had taken place.

This raised very serious questions that were asked in this place by members of the opposition and members of the media about the integrity of the government. The government seemed to be quite dismissive of it initially and quite offended that we would ask these questions, but I'm sure if they were on the other side, they would conclude that this just did not pass the smell test.

That leads us back to today. Certainly, the government had been committed to bringing forward what they called real-time disclosure of campaign contributions—I believe they committed to that in their campaign platform, if I'm not mistaken—and almost 18 months had passed and nothing had been done. So in an opportunity that I had in question period, I raised this with the Minister of Finance and asked him when he was going to bring in this legislation. He was extremely irritated by my question and quite indignant. I suggested in my supplementary that I could probably get a private member's bill scratched together within hours, if need be, to call upon the government to do this, and I signalled my desire to do this.

1710

I guess it was the next Monday after my question that the government brought forward this bill. I'm not sure if my question lit a fire under the government. I would hope that from time to time they listen to the opposition, and perhaps it did encourage them to get going on it, I don't know, but what I would suggest is that their bill is deficient in terms of the election finance reforms they brought forward if they are really committed to what they call real-time disclosure. It is my understanding that their bill in terms of real-time disclosure is not real time at all.

The bill would require the donation of \$100 or more to a political party—and this is important: not a riding association, but a political party—to be filed within five days with Ontario's chief elections officer, and then in another five days posted on the Internet for all to see. So this is 10 days, not what I would call real time.

My bill would call upon any significant donation to a political party or a riding association—this includes riding associations—which I would consider to be any donation over \$100, to be disclosed on a party Web site the day the cheques are cashed. I believe it's doable. I believe the provincial government should work, through the chief elections officer, to develop the software that would make this easy for the riding associations to do.

The government has argued that riding associations should be excluded from the legislation because they are run by volunteers and can't be expected to do the paperwork. I completely disagree with that. The riding associations have to be run by very competent people in terms of the administration of the donations, because there's an election finances law currently that they have to adhere to. At the end of the year, when the donations have been tabulated and reported to the chief elections officer, Elections Ontario, receipts have to be issued. You have to have competent people as CFOs of riding associations and campaigns. I believe that if the software were made simple enough, it would make the task very easy for the CFO of a riding association.

I would also suggest that if the riding associations are excluded from the legislation, an unscrupulous person who is trying to buy the favour of the government might very well make a significant number of donations to riding associations through numbered companies.

This is something that Murray Campbell, in a column in the *Globe and Mail* on March 8, alluded to as well and I'll very quickly read it to you, if any of the members on the government side are interested:

"Mr. Bryant's bill contains an enormous loophole in that donations to individual constituency associations are not covered. He defends this by saying that the volunteers at the local level couldn't handle the demands of near-instantaneous reporting, but the exclusion opens the potential for abuse.

"The maximum allowable donation to a political party is \$8,400 a year and while it's true that the maximum to a riding association is just \$1,120, an individual or company can make five such donations for a total of \$5,600. This money can then be passed on to the central party," which could happen.

"Imagine myriad numbered companies making \$5,600 gifts and you get an idea of the magnitude of donations that could be hidden. Robert MacDermid of York University, who studies political giving, estimates that 25% to 30% of the money flowing to the Liberals and the Conservatives in the past decade came through constituency associations."

Clearly, there is the potential here for a huge loophole that the government perhaps is deliberately trying to maintain—perhaps has overlooked—I don't know, but

certainly I would encourage them to take a look at my Bill 180. I'm under no illusions they're going to call it for second and third reading. But at the same time, I believe private member's bills are an important vehicle for members, such as me, to bring forward ideas in the Legislature in a meaningful way, put our name on the bill and say, "This is my position," and advocate for it. That's what I've tried to do on a number of issues, as members will know.

I would ask the government to at least take a good, hard look at this. I would respectfully request of the minister, if he's not prepared to amend the bill to reflect the principle of my Bill 180, I would ask him for an answer as to why he won't, because I think it's important that people who are concerned about this issue have some better understanding of the justification of the government's bill.

I look forward to the further discussion that will take place on this piece of legislation. Again, I ask the government to give serious consideration to my Bill 180 in that process.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Ms. Horwath:** It's my pleasure to make comments on the leadoff speech by the member for Lanark—Carleton, as well as the comments from the member for Waterloo—Wellington. I have to say first off that a great deal of knowledge was brought forward by both of these members, one through the vast experience he has had in this place, and then another from the experience of preparing a bill to address some of the parts that are contained in Bill 176.

I think it's fair to say that people in Ontario and people in Canada—as a matter of fact, people across the world—are worried about the governments they elect and whether or not they actually represent the will of the people who are going to the polls to vote in any particular election. So you have a number of different jurisdictions across Canada and worldwide that are looking to electoral reform or democratic renewal or whatever words you want to use to describe a review and rejigging of the way in which democracies are elected or built in these communities.

I have to say there are many pieces to this legislation that at the outset look fairly benign, but when you really examine the effect—one example that was raised was around election finances and the idea that this piece of legislation is going to deal with real-time disclosure. When you look at the details, you find that not only does it not reflect real time, but in fact not all donations are going to have to be reported. That is silly business. That is the kind of stuff people in Ontario are sick and tired of, and unfortunately this government is intent on feeding them more of this nonsense.

**Mr. McMeekin:** There are few people in this Legislative Assembly who are held in higher esteem than the member from Lanark—Carleton and the member from Waterloo—Wellington, and it was so refreshing to hear them make some helpful comments. I'm waiting in breathless anticipation to get this into committee so that

we can digest some of those ideas, and hopefully practise part of what we preach here about listening and making this place work better and what have you.

So I'm optimistic, although somebody once said, "If you are going to borrow money, borrow it from a pessimist because they won't expect to have it paid back." I don't want to sound too optimistic, because while I'm an idealist, I don't have any illusions.

That said, I want to focus for just a minute or so on a concern I had as I was listening. Sometimes you're damned if you do and you're damned if you don't. We went to the people in the last election and talked about the north and the importance of regionalism and recognizing that larger ridings may need to have some advantage around representation, because it is about access, as the member for Lanark-Carleton said. I don't know, if you listened to the member, you would almost get the feeling that he was about to launch a legal assault against the people of the north. I don't think that's where it's at. I think the folk in the north understood what we were saying, and so did the other people of Ontario, and they embraced it.

We're trying to be held to account every day for promises. If we had not proceeded with this, there would have been members opposite saying, "There you go, another broken promise."

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton):** We talk about amendments and things in committee, and of all the legislation that we've passed in this House and that has come before committees in this House over the last 20 months of this government, but not one amendment from any opposition member has been passed. I don't know what never-never land you live in out there, but there might be something in the water out there.

This whole bill is the start of a disturbing trend to me. This gerrymandering of seats that the member for Lanark-Carleton talked about is a very significant situation. He used a number of examples; he didn't use the example of my riding of Halton. In my riding of Halton—in the new riding of Halton—there will be about 130,000 in population there, based on the 1999 census, plus all of the people who have moved in since. It's one of the fastest-growing areas in all of Canada.

1720

There is a riding up north that has 65,000 people in it. That's half. A vote in my riding of Halton will be worth only half of what it is in another riding in Ontario. I don't care if it's up north or down south or out east or out west. It's not fair that some people's votes are worth one and other people's votes are worth a half. That's a very dangerous trend, to start moving down a road in that particular direction.

Sitting in the House—the proportional representation argument: I haven't seen a situation around the world where proportional representation only lets in people who have stood before the electorate and won an election in their riding. To me, there is something wrong when somebody can sit in this House without having gone before the people and won an election with the majority

of votes. I think that's a problem, and I think the direction you are going in is dangerous down the road. The people's representation—and I will get on to them in the next two minutes, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre):** I'm pleased to respond to the comments made by the member for Lanark-Carleton, Mr. Sterling, as well as those made by Mr. Arnott. New Democrats have been very clear about the need for the north to have strong representation. New Democrats are very concerned about the prospect of the number of representatives from northern Ontario being reduced. However—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Kormos:** Look, don't shoot the messenger. I find the observations made by Mr. Sterling to be in and of themselves troublesome because it's, in fact, the case. We've got a problem here. New Democrats will be adamant that there should be the maintenance of 11 representatives from northern Ontario. New Democrats will be adamant that this government had better address flaws in this legislation that may well cause the whole electoral mapping purported to be adopted by this legislation thrown into turmoil, should it not be effectively charter-proof or charter-responsive. New Democrats say that the government had better look very, very carefully at this. Don't deal with the argument by dismissing it or by belittling the spokesperson putting forward the argument or by minimalizing it. It's got to be dealt with.

My other concern is that this particular issue may not see adequate committee time for it to be the subject of commentary by the expertise that's undoubtedly available out there, whether it's the Osgoode law school type of expertise or the other academics or people from any number of chief electoral offices and their respective officers. I look forward to that taking place.

I'm going to be having an opportunity in two minutes' time to make my contribution to this debate. I look forward to that in two minutes' time.

**The Acting Speaker:** Response?

**Mr. Sterling:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think the most important thing with regard to the boundary issue is the abandonment in this legislation of a process which can sustain us into the future, a process where the boundaries are not set upon the political whim of one party or the other.

This piece of legislation wipes out the boundaries commission, and it says that if we're in government next, then all we do is bring in a piece of legislation and say, "We want to draw the boundaries this way," or if the NDP gets into power next, they could draw the boundaries and say, "We just drew them this way." That's basically the problem with this legislation. You are abandoning one of the most important democratic reforms to occur in this province and in this country over the last 20 or 30 years. You're doing away with independent boundary commissions. I can't be in favour of that. I believe it should not be done by one political party, the majority party. It should be done by an independent commission that has to sit down, work according to rules and justify

its decisions. That's what happens at the federal level. Sometimes they have to give out hard decisions, but when you abandon that, you're gerrymandering. You can't get away from the fact that you're drawing some of those lines to your benefit.

That's what's happening here. We have a bill that does away with one of the most important parts of democratic reform and gerrymanders the northern ridings in favour of the Liberal Party of Ontario. I'm sorry, but that's what this bill does.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr. Kormos:** I'm pleased to be able to participate. I'm asking at this time for unanimous consent to hold down the lead comments by our critic, Ms. Churley, the member from Toronto-Danforth, who can't be here today.

**Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal):** For one sessional day?

**Mr. Kormos:** For the purpose of this search for unanimous consent to the next day of debate. If need be, I'll be calling for it again. But I anticipate that the next day of debate, we'll do that one step at a time. Incrementalism will prevail.

**The Acting Speaker:** With that understood, is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

**Hon. Mr. Caplan:** The spirit of co-operation.

**The Acting Speaker:** The Chair recognizes the member from Niagara Centre.

**Mr. Kormos:** Clearly, there are four parts to the bill. I want to make it very clear that New Democrats are adamant that the north needs, more now than ever, clearly—you've got cabinet ministers in this government who shrug at the plight of northern Ontario. You've got an electricity policy that has put northern Ontario into an economic tailspin, and you have a government that appears to have no regard for the incredibly important role that northern Ontario and northerners, people in those northern communities, very small and bigger, play in this province.

However, we share the concerns around the validity of the remaining ridings in the context of the 11 northern ridings and the disproportionality among them, and very much want the government to investigate this matter, discuss it candidly and address it with a view to ensuring adequate northern representation, but ensuring at the same time that that adequate northern representation, 11 seats, is going to be secure and not the subject of litigation or constitutional challenges, as suggested may well be the case by the member from Lanark-Carleton.

The aspect of the bill that purports—and I say “purports”—to create fixed election dates is one that's incredibly troublesome to me, because I don't believe the bill creates fixed election dates, and the government is not being very forthcoming when it somehow says that it does. Look, we have a fixed election date in the province now: It's that a Parliament can't function for more than five years. All this bill does is say that a Parliament can't function for more than four years, so it doesn't change the rules at all. It purports to create a fixed election date

some day in October—October 4—but look at what will become section 9 of the Election Act, should this bill pass. The section is titled “Four-Year Terms” because, really, that's all it is; four-year terms in contrast to the five-year terms that we have now. “Nothing in this section affects the powers of the Lieutenant Governor, including the power to dissolve the Legislature, by proclamation in Her Majesty's name, when the Lieutenant Governor sees fit.”

Now, we know that the Lieutenant Governor, in the year 2005, here in the province of Ontario or in Canada doesn't run around dissolving Parliaments at whim. What this means is that a government can surrender its mandate, can resign at any time it wants. It can go to the Lieutenant Governor and say, “That's it. We're asking you to dissolve Parliament and call an election.” That's what happens now.

**1730**

Nothing in this bill says that a government can't be defeated in a non-confidence motion, because subsection 9(1) says, “Nothing in this section affects the powers of the Lieutenant Governor, including the power to dissolve the Legislature....” So in the event of a non-confidence motion, the Premier goes to the Lieutenant Governor and says, “Dissolve Parliament; drop the writ.” That means that an election is called within 30-some days from that point in time.

**Mr. Chudleigh:** Twenty-eight.

**Mr. Kormos:** Twenty-eight days. I'm sorry. That's an amendment as well.

So there you are. It is a myth to suggest that this bill creates fixed four-year terms, republican-style. It is a myth to suggest that this bill creates a fixed election date of October 4 in any year, never mind every four years. What it does do is reduce the term of a government to a maximum of four years from the existing maximum of five years.

That takes me to the point where I say: What's the bill addressing? What issue, what problem is the bill addressing? What concern is the bill addressing? I think that the remarkable distinction of the British parliamentary system versus the true fixed dates of the republican system is incredibly valuable.

A government in the British parliamentary system can go to the people if it feels it has to have its mandate renewed by the people. It doesn't have the lame duck quality of an American government that, for instance, has a Senate and a Congress that are dominated by a political party that isn't the political party of the President. That's a horrible position to be in. When you've got domination of a Parliament by political representatives who aren't of the political party of the government, the government can be defeated, as it should be. Then you go back to the people.

I've been here long enough to witness what happens—the peril. I've seen these two things; both things. I've seen the incredible risk that a government takes when it calls an election too early. I saw that in 1990, when there was a rush to an election by the then Liberal government.

Of course, we all know what happened. The Liberal government that had a huge majority in 1987 lost not just the huge majority but was defeated miserably in that 1990 election. There are no two ways about it: People were not pleased that the government called the election as early as it did. That certainly was a factor. There were a whole pile of factors, but that certainly was a factor.

I've also seen governments that have tried to cling on—as a matter of fact, the next one—beyond all hope, hoping against hope that somehow the economic tide was going to turn. Similarly, the voters of the province want nothing to do with a government—

**Mr. Arthurs:** It was 1995.

**Mr. Kormos:** You're darned right; I was there. They want nothing to do with a government that tries to hang on beyond the natural scope of its mandate.

This doesn't create fixed election dates, nor does it create four-year terms, but there are going to be some government members standing up and saying that the bill does. I don't know where that passion comes from to create fixed four-year terms, even though the bill doesn't create fixed four-year terms.

I need for the Attorney General or his parliamentary assistant, both very capable people, to address this issue in a very frank way, not only for the purpose of New Democrats but for the purpose of his own backbenchers as well, because the marketing of this was, "Oh, this creates fixed election dates: October 4"—not September 4, not November 4, but October 4—"and it creates four-year terms," when, in fact, the bill itself says that's hogwash.

Please, take a look. Take a look at the bill, because it very specifically, in statute, preserves the power of the Lieutenant Governor to dissolve the Legislature, and that means the power of the Lieutenant Governor to dissolve the Legislature when a Premier or a government at whim, at any time, calls upon the Lieutenant Governor to dissolve the Legislature, or when they do it as a result of a non-confidence vote or motion.

Ms. Horwath, what's going on here? Is this David Copperfield, a little razzle-dazzle while something's going on over there, a little misdirection? Because it certainly isn't fixed election dates. What it does do, and this is of great concern to me, is it reduces the maximum term from five years down to four years. That's what it does, so let's have that debate. Tell me why the maximum should be five years rather than four years. Because when the maximum is five years—let's take a look at it historically—that turns naturally into four years and a few months, by and large, if you take a look, which will be the natural term of most provincial governments. Does four years turn it into three years and a few months?

Is there the suggestion that somehow the government, any government, won't be able to manipulate the election day in its favour? Horse feathers. Read the bill, because a government, even if this bill is passed, can go to the Lieutenant Governor and say, "Dissolve Parliament, dissolve the Legislature and drop the writ" after one year,

after two years, after three years, to seize on a politically convenient election date, any day other than October 4. So it's a very peculiar sort of thing here.

I don't think the people of Ontario like being flimflammed, yet what we've got here is a bill that says one thing while its sponsor, the Attorney General, says another. Yet at the end of the day, it's not the words of the Attorney General that are going to become law, it's the letter of the law that is going to prevail.

So I ask all our members to take a good, close look at that. At the end of the day, all this does is reduce the maximum term from five years to four years. It doesn't create a fixed election date. It doesn't create a fixed four-year term. That leaves me with wanting very much to hear the argument for reducing the maximum parliamentary term from five to four years.

I want to talk about election finance, partisan finance, party finance, disclosure, because, boy—and the member for Hamilton East, who is sitting here with me, Ms. Horwath, remembers question period after question period when the New Democrats were challenging the government to come clean, because they promised, didn't they, Ms. Horwath?

**Ms. Horwath:** Absolutely.

**Mr. Kormos:** Sorry, Ms. Horwath, I didn't hear you.

**Ms. Horwath:** Absolutely. Broken promises.

**Mr. Kormos:** Thank you, Ms. Horwath. The Liberals promised. Didn't they promise, Ms. Horwath?

**Ms. Horwath:** They did. They promised.

**Mr. Kormos:** The Liberals promised. It was a promise, wasn't it, Ms. Horwath?

**Ms. Horwath:** Definitely.

**Mr. Kormos:** That they were going to introduce real-time disclosure. Now, am I right on that, Ms. Horwath?

**Ms. Horwath:** You're absolutely right, Mr. Kormos.

**Mr. Kormos:** Yet it was like doing dental work. You saw the pained look on the Premier's face or the Attorney General's face—you wanted to call for a nurse to please administer some Novocaine—when in question period after question period, these guys were being drilled front and centre on—well, it all came out in the open when we had the secret little tête-à-tête over the high-priced, solid oak dinner table in some gated mansion up in the Woodbridge area with the Porsches and the Bentleys and the Jaguars and the Mercedes-Benzes being parked by the service staff. Think about it. While the \$10,000-a-pop developers, by invitation only—10 grand, 10,000 bucks; that's a pretty big pile of hundred-dollar bills. We don't have thousand-dollar bills any more. That's a pretty big pile of hundred-dollar bills. You've got these developers getting out of their Maybachs. Have you ever seen one of those Maybachs, those big, new luxury cars? They're around \$400,000. They're the size of yachts. So you've got some big developer going up to this private, by-invitation-only Liberal soiree, tête-à-tête, with the Premier and with the Minister of Finance, and they've got a Loblaws shopping bag with them to hold the money. You understand what I'm saying?

1740

**Ms. Horwath:** Absolutely.

**Mr. Kormos:** Well, not from Loblaws, because these people don't shop at Loblaws; maybe a Pusateri's shopping bag, up on Avenue Road, because when you're in the Maybach, Mercedes-Benz, Bentley, Rolls-Royce, Jaguar crowd, you shop at Pusateri's, which is a fine place to shop. I don't want anybody from Pusateri's mad at me, but it is a little rich, a little dear. So they got the Pusateri's—or maybe from Holt Renfrew. You know, "Hilary, could I have a few shopping bags? You don't mind, do you? Thank you very much, Hilary."

So you've got your Holt Renfrew shopping bag full of hundred-dollar bills, because that's what \$10,000 is, \$10,000 to sit down. And if you're a developer in the midst of the greenbelt—development: very important to developers. So the price of admission, the ticket, the price of the ride: \$10,000, a Holt Renfrew shopping bag of hundred-dollar bills. If it's not neatly stacked, you need two shopping bags. OK?

You get out of the back of the Mercedes-Benz after you pull up in the curved driveway in front of the huge mansion with the double-storey columns out front, the driver opens up the back door of the Mercedes and you get out there with your two Holt Renfrew shopping bags full of hundred-dollar bills and you sit down, and you've got to put the money on the table before there is any discussion. That's the price of admission—not a penny of it disclosed. Holy moly. We found out about it, the world found out about it, and we said, "Whoa!" The Liberals promised—yet another promise. How shocking that they would break yet another promise. Are you kidding? We weren't shocked at all. By then we had been so desensitized to broken Liberal promises that, you know, keeping a promise would be the exception rather than the rule—an exception we're still looking forward to, mind you.

So there we go: \$10,000 and not a penny of it disclosed. Who were the people? Who were they? What were their names? Why were they there? Ten grand a pop, the price of admission. The ticket to this movie is costing you, sir or madam, \$10,000. You got the ear of the Premier; you got the ear of the Minister of Finance, two of the province's most powerful elected officials. And you don't have their ear because you're just a plain old resident of Ontario. You've got their ear because you're a rich resident of Ontario, because you've got two Holt Renfrew shopping bags full of hundred-dollar bills, \$5,000 in one bag, \$5,000 in the other, which you've got to lay on that solid oak table before you sit on the velvet dining chair with the carved French Provincial arms to sit down and have your tête-à-tête with the Premier and the Minister of Finance.

So you've got a real need for a real-time disclosure. Now, what's remarkable is that the NDP introduced a bill, Bill 177, the very same day as the government finally got around to presenting their lacklustre, rather toothless bill, because as Mr. Arnott has already noted, the government Bill 176, the bill of the Attorney General, has a loophole so big you could drive that proverbial

Mack truck through it. You could drive one of those Euclid monsters, one of those Electrahauls—you know, where the tires are higher than my head? Have you ever seen one of those big mining trucks? That's one big truck, let me tell you. But this is one big loophole. It is a huge loophole, because the government says, "Oh well, our legislation will require real-time disclosure to a party. But oh, you can take money out of that slush fund and pump it into any Liberal riding association, so that it will flow up into head office in any event, and not a penny of it has to be disclosed." Tony Soprano himself could be making contributions, and we'd never know. Think about it. Because all Tony Soprano has to do is flow it through the constituency riding association.

Now, the government says, "Oh my, we can't expect riding associations to report \$500 contributions." Are you kidding? We work hard for the money we raise down where I come from. Ms. Horwath, I trust, is in the same situation. Trust me: If my riding treasurer got a cheque for \$500, she would be on the phone to everybody, because we raise money \$5, \$10 or \$20 at a time, but the Liberals are prepared to have shopping bags full of \$10,000 paid through riding associations. Not a penny of it has to be reported, nor does the identity of the donor have to be disclosed.

I regret that my time is up. I know Ms. Horwath has a lot to say about this bill, as do other New Democrats. This is an important debate. I have been able to deal with but three facets of this four-faceted bill. All four of those facets have some pretty distinct problems. I think it's incumbent upon all of us to make sure that the bill isn't just greased up and slid through like the proverbial lubricated pig, but rather receives the debate, attention, analysis and focus it deserves. The government's talking about making some pretty bizarre changes to some pretty important laws. I say to them that they'd better get it right, because it's going to have some impact for a good chunk of time to come.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Tony C. Wong (Markham):** Bill 176 is an extremely important piece of legislation that the Attorney General has introduced, because this impacts on the future of Ontario and it certainly impacts on the well-being of all Ontario residents.

The member from Lanark-Carleton spoke at some length with respect to the representation of the north. He spoke about section 3 of the charter, the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada and so on. I think he's missing the point. The point is that representation is not exacting mathematics, nor is it a legal matter. This is a matter with respect to what is fair and appropriate. I think it is fair and appropriate. I'm happy the member from Niagara Centre agrees with us that we need the 11 ridings in the north to maintain a strong voice in that area. We've done the right thing, because we are not reducing the number of seats unnecessarily. We could have increased it from 11 to 12 or 13, but I think we've struck the right balance so that we will retain the 11 seats to let the north have a

strong voice. If there are additional changes that should be necessary, then that can be dealt with in due course.

I want to touch on the aspect of the citizens' jury and the citizens' assembly very quickly. This is also important, because I don't think the residents of Ontario are incompetent to deal with these matters and require the MPPs to do so. I think that in fact they would love to be part of the process. This is exactly why the Attorney General has allowed this to happen. Just to remind members here, of course these participants will be selected through a process that is non-partisan, open and transparent—

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you. The member from Halton.

**Mr. Chudleigh:** The member from Niagara Centre always speaks eloquently on these matters, especially on legal matters. I believe he's a lawyer. Are you a lawyer, Peter? Did you ever actually practise? He's a lawyer, but he never actually practised. Did you? His clients aren't sure if he's a lawyer either. He's talking about the fixed election dates this bill brings in. I think it's just going to fix elections. I think they forgot about the dates part, the gerrymandering of seats up north and across Ontario, possibly sitting in this House without being elected from a riding.

This whole bill is supposed to be done in the interest of reinvigorating voter interest in the process to raise the level of voter participation. You're not going to do that with confusion. You're not going to do that with gerrymandering. You're not going to do that with free entry into the House without being elected. How you're going to accomplish that is by providing integrity in government, providing honesty in government and providing respect for the acts in this place that we govern from. That's what will reinvigorate interest in our election process, not this bill before the House today.

1750

**Ms. Horwath:** It's my pleasure to comment on the remarks of my colleague from Niagara Centre, a great community that I had the pleasure of visiting not too long ago. Boy, when he talks about the real people in Ontario, the real people who can't afford \$10,000-a-plate dinners, I met some of them there and they are a wonderful group of people. I have some friends who live in that riding as well, in the area of Thorold. The meeting I went to I think was in Welland, as a matter of fact.

Nonetheless, I have to say that one of the things the member from Niagara Centre was very clear about is this government's refusal to address one of the fundamental problems in Ontario in regard to how they raise money and how they are claiming they want this disclosure to occur, but when you look at the bill, it doesn't accomplish that.

One of the things the member from Niagara Centre talked about was who was at that dinner and how much you had to have to be there and what it is you were buying once you got there, and that is the ear of the Premier and the finance minister. But guess who couldn't go to that dinner? The kids with autism in this province,

whose families can't get a fair shake out of this government, who can't get IBI treatment for their children. That's who wasn't at that dinner. The other people who weren't at that dinner were the people who are getting their national child benefits clawed back every month to a tune of a couple of thousand dollars a year per family. Those people, who need the national child benefit money the most, weren't at that dinner, because of course they can't afford \$10,000 a plate. Workers who want a fair shake on Bill 144 weren't there. They can't afford two shopping bags, whether they're Gucci bags or Holt Renfrew or whatever they are. They can't afford those dinners. Stelco pensioners, Steelworkers who are worried about their jobs, they weren't there either.

**Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek):** I have to say that I'm a new politician, I'm new at this business or game or whatever you want to call it. Maybe I was a little bit idealistic. I thought, I'm going to take a turn at public service, try to make things a little bit better.

**Mr. Leal:** We're glad you're here.

**Ms. Mossop:** Thank you. Maybe I'll end up with a flatter forehead at the end of all this, but maybe I'll actually make a contribution and do something.

One of the things that's happened since I've become a politician is I occasionally get phone calls or e-mails from upset people and they say, "You guys are all the same." Suddenly I'm "you guys," and they're not talking about me or Liberals. They're talking about "you guys" and "you guys" and all of "us guys," if you don't mind me butchering the language, everybody of every political stripe in the political arena.

When I listen to some of the rhetoric and some of what we call professional wrestling, perhaps, that goes on in this place, we don't do ourselves any service. We're actually our own worst enemies in this regard because we are duking it out, and maybe sometimes not being completely fair in some of our accusations and conversation. So we don't do ourselves a very great service in some of this. There's some cynicism out there—a lot of cynicism out there. As I say, we are our own worst enemy sometimes.

This bill is going to try to address that in a number of ways. We're going to try to make not just a collective image, but to get people involved in this discussion, essentially get "you guys" out there on the other side of the camera involved in a conversation about how to make the democratic process better. The democratic process is still the best thing we've got on the planet. If you don't believe me, you can drop into some other countries around the world where they operate under other political regimes that you might not wish to take part in.

So we're going to talk to "you guys" out there in a citizens' assembly, a citizens' jury, to help us make these processes—

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you. In response, the Chair recognizes the member from Niagara Centre.

**Mr. Kormos:** I thought I was only going to deal with three of the four elements of the bill. These citizens' juries—the Reform-Alliance party movement has finally

found some company, some sisterhood and brotherhood in the Liberals here at Queen's Park.

Look, New Democrats have been clear. We were clear in the last provincial election. We believe in proportional representation. That's what we advocate. That's what we announced as part of our platform. We think it's a fairer way to elect people. We think it's a better way to run Parliaments. We think it's a more effective way to make governments work and to make every voter's vote count.

So what's this with citizens' juries? Is this a high-priced focus group? Is this a group that's going to be manipulated in terms of the input that's given to them so that they come up with the answers the government wants? Why aren't politicians prepared to stand up on principle, on the basis of what they advocated and what they stand for as members of a political party and when they run a campaign to get elected, and engage in the debate?

What's this with passing the buck? This is democracy. Make it work. Don't pass the buck off to citizens' so-called juries. Take the bull by the horns, and cut out some of the bull in the process, but take the bull by the horns right here in this chamber and put forward a proposition. You're either for proportional representation or you're not. If you're for it, stand up and say so. Don't go out and do polling and decide, "Oh, we'll take a position that happens to be popular at the moment," because that position may not be popular the next moment. Heck, a year ago, the Liberals federally were popular. They are not very popular now, after Gomery and all those revelations of all the theft and the money taking place and flowing to Quebec. Look what happens in the course of but 12 months, friends.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you. It being close to 6 p.m., this House stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

*The House adjourned at 1757.*

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO**  
**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

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Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	<b>Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John</b> (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
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Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kitchener–Waterloo	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
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Essex	<b>Crozier, Bruce</b> (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Cansfield, Donna H. (L)	Niagara Falls	Craitor, Kim (L)
Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Qadri, Shafiq (L)	Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Broten, Laurel C. (L)	Nipissing	Smith, Monique M. (L)
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Guelph–Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)	Oak Ridges	Klees, Frank (PC)
Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)
Haliburton–Victoria–Brook	Scott, Laurie (PC)	Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)
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Hamilton East / Hamilton-Est	Horwath, Andrea (ND)		

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Ottawa–Orléans Ottawa–Vanier	McNeely, Phil (L) <b>Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (L)</b> Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	Timiskaming–Cochrane	<b>Ramsay, Hon. / L'hon. David (L)</b> Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Oxford Parkdale–High Park	Hardeman, Ernie (PC) <b>Kennedy, Hon. / L'hon. Gerard (L)</b> Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins-Baie James Toronto Centre–Rosedale / Toronto-Centre–Rosedale	<b>Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L)</b> Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée Churley, Marilyn (ND) Marchese, Rosario (ND) <b>Sorbara, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (L)</b> Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances
Parry Sound–Muskoka Perth–Middlesex Peterborough Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge Prince Edward–Hastings Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke Sarnia–Lambton Sault Ste. Marie Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est	Miller, Norm (PC) Wilkinson, John (L) Leal, Jeff (L) Arthurs, Wayne (L) Parsons, Ernie (L) Yakabuski, John (PC) Di Cocco, Caroline (L) Oraziotti, David (L) Duguid, Brad (L)	Toronto–Danforth Trinity–Spadina Vaughan–King–Aurora	<b>Arnott, Ted (PC)</b> First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative Flaherty, Jim (PC) Zimmer, David (L) <b>Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L)</b> Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine <b>Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L)</b> Minister of Energy, Chair of Cabinet, Government House Leader / ministre de l'Énergie, président du Conseil des ministres, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest Scarborough–Agincourt	<b>Chambers, Hon. / L'hon. Mary Anne V. (L)</b> Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	Waterloo–Wellington	<b>Arnott, Ted (PC)</b> First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative Flaherty, Jim (PC) Zimmer, David (L) <b>Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L)</b> Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine <b>Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L)</b> Minister of Energy, Chair of Cabinet, Government House Leader / ministre de l'Énergie, président du Conseil des ministres, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Scarborough–Rouge River	<b>Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L)</b> Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement <b>Curling, Hon. / L'hon. Alvin (L)</b> Speaker / Président Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Whitby–Ajax Willowdale Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	<b>Arnott, Ted (PC)</b> First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative Flaherty, Jim (PC) Zimmer, David (L) <b>Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L)</b> Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine <b>Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L)</b> Minister of Energy, Chair of Cabinet, Government House Leader / ministre de l'Énergie, président du Conseil des ministres, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord Simcoe–Grey St. Catharines	Wilson, Jim (PC) <b>Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L)</b> Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs	Windsor–St. Clair	<b>Arnott, Ted (PC)</b> First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative Flaherty, Jim (PC) Zimmer, David (L) <b>Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L)</b> Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine <b>Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L)</b> Minister of Energy, Chair of Cabinet, Government House Leader / ministre de l'Énergie, président du Conseil des ministres, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
St. Paul's	<b>Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)</b> Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique	York Centre / York-Centre	<b>Arnott, Ted (PC)</b> First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative Flaherty, Jim (PC) Zimmer, David (L) <b>Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L)</b> Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine <b>Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L)</b> Minister of Energy, Chair of Cabinet, Government House Leader / ministre de l'Énergie, président du Conseil des ministres, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
		York North / York-Nord York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	<b>Arnott, Ted (PC)</b> First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative Flaherty, Jim (PC) Zimmer, David (L) <b>Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L)</b> Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine <b>Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L)</b> Minister of Energy, Chair of Cabinet, Government House Leader / ministre de l'Énergie, président du Conseil des ministres, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
		York West / York-Ouest	<b>Arnott, Ted (PC)</b> First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative Flaherty, Jim (PC) Zimmer, David (L) <b>Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L)</b> Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine <b>Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L)</b> Minister of Energy, Chair of Cabinet, Government House Leader / ministre de l'Énergie, président du Conseil des ministres, leader parlementaire du gouvernement

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

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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