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**Official Report  
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des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Monday 9 May 2005**

**Lundi 9 mai 2005**

Speaker  
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président  
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier  
Claude L. DesRosiers

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 9 May 2005

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 9 mai 2005

*The House met at 1330.  
Prayers.*

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### NURSES

**Mr. John O'Toole (Durham):** It is my pleasure and privilege to rise today to pay respect to Nursing Week in Ontario. This morning I met with three very dedicated nurses from my riding of Durham who serve at Lakeridge Health in Oshawa. My constituent Kim Cearn, a registered nurse, is the policy and political action officer with the Durham-Northumberland chapter of the RNAO. Also in attendance were RNs Laurie Grills and Jackie Doiron. They are caring and professional nurses.

We also spoke about the vital role of nurses in the field of mental health services. Because of the stigma attached to mental illness, this is not always a very high-profile area; some would say it's the silent health issue. However, mental illness affects society at many levels, including the individuals who have been diagnosed, their friends, family and co-workers. One in four is directly affected. The nurses pointed out that four of five people in Ontario are affected at some level by mental illness.

Our meeting this morning was a reminder of the far-reaching impact of the work done by Ontario's nurses in all aspects of health and wellness. Citizens of Durham riding are proud of the care and professionalism shown daily by nurses in our communities across Ontario. They are trusted, vital professionals who are concerned about their patients.

These nurses work at Lakeridge Health, where the Ontario Ministry of Health is failing to fund mental health adequately.

#### ACHIEVEMENTS OF THUNDER BAY RESIDENTS

**Mr. Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay–Atikokan):** I would like to announce today in the Ontario Legislature that the residents of my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan have great reason to celebrate the accomplishments of a few of its residents. Recently, not one but two significant athletic achievements were accomplished.

The first was by Hugh Dale-Harris, a 33-year-old Thunder Bay teacher and dogsledder, who on April 27, along with a team of explorers, mushed his way to reach

the North Pole in just 37 days, setting a world record by coming in several hours earlier than a disputed record set in 1909 by Robert Peary's expedition.

The team left Cape Columbia in northern Nunavut on March 21, hoping to retrace Peary's route to discover the North Pole. After reaching the pole, the explorers raised the Canadian, US, Nunavut, British and South African flags.

The second and no less glorious recent achievement was by the Thunder Bay Bombers men's senior hockey team. On April 24, ex-Lakehead University goaltender Cory McEachran backstopped the Thunder Bay Bombers in a 4-3 overtime win for the Allan Cup championship game over the Montmagny Sentinelles in Lloydminster, Saskatchewan. Derek Levanen scored the overtime goal. Other ex-Lakehead players included Jeff Adduono, Craig Priestley, Mike Jacobsen, Kevin Hoogsteen and Barry McKinlay. This achievement is made even more remarkable by the fact that just a few weeks earlier this team was not yet formed nor had a league to play in.

This is the ninth Allan Cup championship for Thunder Bay area hockey teams. Thunder Bay has enjoyed a long and glorious history of winning the cup, the most recent team being the Thunder Bay Twins in 1989.

To both Hugh Dale-Harris and his family and the Thunder Bay Bombers hockey team, I would like to recognize you today in this Legislature, and would add that the citizens of Thunder Bay also congratulate you for honouring your hometown.

#### SCHOOL CLOSURES

**Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina):** I rise today to recognize the value and importance of small schools in Ontario. Last year, 44 schools in Ontario were closed by the McGuinty Liberal government. This June, 36 more schools are slated to close. There are at least 40 schools under review for closing, with more to be added by the end of May. These closings will affect a total of 69,949—70,000—students. How can this possibly serve to meet the needs of these students?

Today, the minister has received a letter from Sarah Doub, a very articulate grade 12 student at Glencoe District High School in London. This school has received an 87% success rate on the grade 10 literacy test—6% above the Thames Valley board average and 5% above the provincial average. Sarah's letter attests to the tremendous value provided by small schools, which give

support for every student and encourage active community engagement.

Small schools work. School boards need to be provided with a new funding formula that recognizes the value and importance of small schools. Many parents whose children attend small schools are anxiously waiting for you to keep your promise. It's time to change the Conservative funding formula.

#### HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West):** The generosity and benevolence of the Hamilton community knows no bounds. I rise today in the House to acknowledge that Hamilton Health Sciences has raised over \$71 million in funding from various donors across our great city.

One of our corporate leaders, Dofasco, who states, "Our product is steel, our strength is people and our home is Hamilton," has made the largest contribution yet to the hospital's campaign. We in Hamilton West would like to applaud Dofasco's donation of \$2.5 million that has been generously given so far to Hamilton's hospitals. We might add a fourth line to Dofasco's advertising, which might say, "Our character is our community."

The hospital community in Hamilton announced its campaign on April 13, 2005, with the goal of raising \$100 million from the community. The provincial government will raise that total to \$250 million.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the donors to Hamilton's medical community. I would like to thank the Ontario government for its commitment to improving our health care. Our community will be putting their funding to good use. Together, we can all make a difference.

#### SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

**Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke):** On Friday, my office in Pembroke was visited by a group of school bus operators in Renfrew county. They are very upset with this Minister of Education, who has committed on a number of occasions to looking at, reviewing, adjusting and changing this funding formula that would respect what is happening in rural Ontario with regard to school transportation.

With gasoline and insurance costs escalating far faster than any of their incomes are going up, they simply have their backs to the wall. As a matter of fact, transportation committee chairman Norm Hazelwood has as much as said that this is a crisis situation that must be addressed by the Minister of Education. They are among the lowest-paid and oldest fleets in the province.

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Mr. Speaker, I wrote a letter to the Minister of Education on December 10, imploring him to get involved in this because it was reaching a crisis situation. Do you know what the response was? Nothing. Absolutely nothing; no reply. I wrote again on April 20; no reply. But I'm not surprised, because each of these operators

has also told me that the minister has not responded to their letters at all.

The minister has been bragging about achieving peace in the classroom, and I commend him for doing so. However, if you have no children in the classroom, it's not too hard to have peace. If we don't do something about school transportation in rural Ontario, that is exactly what we will have: no one to get our children to and from school safely.

#### HOCKEY

**Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre):** Last week in front of this Legislative Building, the London members—Chris Bentley, Khalil Ramal, Steve Peters, John Wilkinson and myself—challenged the Ottawa members—Premier Dalton McGuinty, Richard Patten, Jim Watson, Madeleine Meilleur, Phil McNeely and, no stranger to hockey, Jean-Marc Lalonde—on who is going to win the championship of the Ontario Hockey League.

We're putting up London's favourite product, Labatt beer; they're putting up Ottawa's favourite product, the legendary beaver tails. You see, the London Knights are challenging the Ottawa 67's for the OHL championship. This is sure to be a great series. Both teams are fighting hard, and the series is tied at one apiece.

The London Knights have captured the hearts of the city of London. They've rejuvenated the downtown core and set the city ablaze in an unbelievable year. The Knights have had an impressive season by anyone's standards. They set a record of 31 consecutive games without a loss. They finished first in the league in total points, total wins, most goals for, fewest goals against. They swept the Windsor playoff series and the Guelph playoff series. They continued their domination over Kitchener in the last round, and they are going to wipe the floor with Ottawa.

I am very proud to stand behind the London Knights, not only for their amazing regular season and their outstanding playoff performance, but also for their outreach to the community and to the province. I want to congratulate the players, coaches, trainers and support staff for this tremendous accomplishment. Soon we will have the league championship; then on to the Memorial Cup. Go, Knights, go. I can't wait to taste those beaver tails.

#### FABRY DISEASE

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo):** I rise today to share with members of this House an e-mail from Darren Nesbit, a desperate 28-year-old Fabry patient from Sarnia who is being denied treatment by this Liberal government.

Darren writes, "Hi. It's Darren Nesbit, just writing to let you know I haven't had a treatment in a month and three days. My body needs treatment now; my kidneys, head and stomach hurt. I have no energy in my body to

do any normal things in life. Does anyone there know how this must feel for us?

"I have been in contact with the drug company, the hospital" and the health ministry. "They all have the same answer for me: Sorry, we can't help you live! My question is this: If Canada is a great country with a health care system, why do 40 different countries around the world pay for treatment for their Fabry's patients and we don't here?"

He ends by saying, "Please help us to continue to live. This issue is not about the Liberals, PC or NDP; it's about humans helping other humans to live. That's what I thought it was to be Canadian!"

Minister Smitherman, listen to the desperate pleas of Darren Nesbit, Rick Sgroi, Bill Taylor, Carolyn Auger, Julia Strauss and others. I beseech you, Minister: Show compassion and provide permanent funding for enzyme replacement therapy, as do 40 other countries around the world.

#### VETERANS

**Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh):** Yesterday was a day of great significance, not just for those living in Ontario, but for citizens of all nations. While VE Day celebrates victory in Europe, what it symbolizes is the victory of freedom over tyranny and the great sacrifices that were paid to make that victory possible.

The SD&G Highlanders, headquartered in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh, played a significant role in this great conflict. They left the safety of their homes in Canada to fight for a cause they knew to be just. One of their accomplishments was the liberation of the Dutch town of Zutphen. Eleven members of the regiment paid the ultimate price to free this town. In a ceremony that the Highlanders attended this past week in Holland, the people of Zutphen named 10 streets and one bridge in a new subdivision in remembrance of these men.

The people of Holland have never forgotten the lengths our brave soldiers were willing to go in defence of their freedom. They continue to teach their children about the role Canadians played in the liberation of their country. They continue to honour the men and women who travelled so far and risked so much for complete strangers, because the idea of standing by while others suffered was unthinkable to them.

As the Dutch continue to honour our veterans, so must we remember their sacrifices and recognize that our freedom was built on the foundation of their actions. Nor can we forget what made these sacrifices necessary. We must tell our children about the horrors that can happen when hatred is made an institution. We must join with our brothers and sisters the world over and swear that we will never allow such atrocities to happen again.

In this Year of the Veteran, there is no greater tribute we can pay our veterans than to preserve and promote the peace for which they fought.

**The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling):** Could I have a bit of quiet, please? I'm not able to hear the statements.

#### NURSES

**Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West):** Today I'd like to take the opportunity to recognize one of the most honourable professions in our province. As you know, this week is Nursing Week and I'd like to highlight some of the achievements our government is making to strengthen the nursing profession around the province.

This government has created 3,052 new full-time nursing positions. In my riding alone, we've invested \$1.37 million at Sunnybrook and Women's hospital, which has created 22 new full-time nursing positions. When we passed Bill 8, legislation that the Conservative Party and John Tory did not support, our government installed accountability agreements that will ensure the protection of nursing jobs in a way that's never been done before.

We've also invested \$60 million for 11,000 bed lifts in hospitals and long-term-care homes to improve the working conditions for nurses. We've directed hospitals to make significant progress toward a 70% full-time nursing percentage. We've provided \$34.8 million to create graduate nursing positions, mentoring relationships, a late-career nursing strategy and to provide clinical simulation equipment. We're doubling the number of education spaces for nurse practitioners, from 75 to 150.

But there's something we're not doing. We're not comparing nurses to Hula Hoops. That is what the previous government did while they fired thousands of nurses at a cost of \$400 million and then spent hundreds of millions more in a vain attempt to hire them back. We're treating nurses with the respect and dignity they deserve, and we'll continue to ensure that Ontarians receive the highest quality of health care in Canada.

#### BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

**The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling):** I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table a copy of an order in council appointing Elizabeth Witmer, MPP, as a commissioner to the Board of Internal Economy, appointed by the caucus of the official opposition, in the place of John R. Baird, MPP.

#### REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

##### STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

**Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West):** I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on finance and economic affairs and move its adoption.

**The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Todd Decker):** Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 164, An Act to rename and amend the Tobacco Control Act, 1994, repeal the Smoking in the Workplace Act and make complementary amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 164, Loi visant à modifier le titre et la teneur de la Loi de 1994 sur la réglementation de l'usage du tabac, à abroger la Loi limitant l'usage du tabac dans les lieux de travail et à apporter des modifications complémentaires à d'autres lois.

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

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

## MOTIONS

### HOUSE SITTINGS

**Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** I move that pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. till 9:30 p.m. on Monday, May 9, 2005, for the purpose of considering government business.

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

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those against, please say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

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

*The division bells rang from 1350 to 1355.*

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

#### Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Dunlop, Garfield	Peters, Steve
Arthurs, Wayne	Flaherty, Jim	Phillips, Gerry
Baird, John R.	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Pupatello, Sandra
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bentley, Christopher	Hardeman, Ernie	Racco, Mario G.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jackson, Cameron	Ramsay, David
Bountrogrianni, Marie	Klees, Frank	Rinaldi, Lou
Bradley, James J.	Kular, Kuldip	Runciman, Robert W.
Broten, Laurel C.	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Brownell, Jim	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Scott, Laurie
Bryant, Michael	Levac, Dave	Sergio, Mario
Cansfield, Donna H.	Marsales, Judy	Smith, Monique
Caplan, David	Matthews, Deborah	Smitherman, George
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Mauro, Bill	Takhar, Harinder S.
Cordiano, Joseph	McGuinty, Dalton	Tory, John
Craiton, Kim	McMeekin, Ted	Watson, Jim
Crozier, Bruce	Miller, Norm	Wilkinson, John
Delaney, Bob	Mitchell, Carol	Witmer, Elizabeth
Di Cocco, Caroline	O'Toole, John	Wong, Tony C.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Oraziotti, David	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Zimmer, David
Duncan, Dwight	Patten, Richard	

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

#### Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Marchese, Rosario	Prue, Michael
Horwath, Andrea	Martel, Shelley	Yakubski, John
Kormos, Peter	Murdoch, Bill	

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 65; the nays are 8.

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

## STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

### FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

### POLITIQUES FISCALES FÉDÉRALES-PROVINCIALES

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs):** I rise to inform this House and the people of Ontario of developments in Ontario's campaign for fairness, our campaign to narrow the \$23-billion gap.

This weekend, I met with the Prime Minister. Working together, we succeeded in making what I believe is some real progress for Ontarians. Clearly there is more to be done. Unfairness remains in some key areas, and our campaign will continue. But let me take a moment to detail what we accomplished this weekend and what it means, most importantly, for the people of Ontario.

It means new hope for new Canadians, who will now get more of the support they need, from the settlement services they need at first to the job training they need to help our economy finish in first place.

#### 1400

It means stronger supports for unemployed workers who want to upgrade their skills. It means a more efficient, effective system of tax collection for Ontario businesses.

It means additional funds for post-secondary education and recognition of the importance of higher education in Ontario and Canada.

And it means a fairer deal for Ontarians when it comes to infrastructure. In other words, Ontario just got stronger, and that means Canada just got better.

I want to thank the Prime Minister in particular for working with me on two specific areas: immigration and labour. For at least the past decade, Ontario governments of various stripes have tried to ensure fairness for Ontario by seeking a new immigration funding arrangement and a new labour market development agreement with the federal government. Unfairness for Ontarians when it came to immigration funding had been in place since 1990. Unfairness for Ontarians when it comes to training funding had been in place since 1995. What previous governments have sought, this weekend we have achieved.

On immigration, we have reached a breakthrough agreement on settlement, language training and employment assistance for immigrants, an agreement that will see funding for these services in Ontario double next year and quadruple over five years. Under this agreement,

average annual spending on settlement services in Ontario will rise from \$819 to approximately \$3,400 per immigrant. This goes a long way toward addressing the unfairness that had seen our province receive 57% of new immigrants but only 34% of national funding. It also achieves what amounts to parity with our neighbours in Quebec, which receives \$3,806 per immigrant, the difference being accounted for in how Quebec assumes responsibility for administrative costs, whereas in Ontario the federal government will continue to assume that responsibility.

On job training, a new labour market development agreement, to be concluded within 30 days, includes a rise in funding for the training of unemployed people in Ontario, an increase that brings us for the first time to the national average.

To streamline the tax system for business, we have achieved agreement to create a single administration of corporate income tax in Ontario at the federal level.

On higher education the agreement provides \$1.55 billion over the next five years.

Mais ce qui est le plus important, c'est que le gouvernement fédéral a finalement accepté notre argument qu'en principe, l'Ontario devrait recevoir une portion per capita de tout nouveau financement alloué à l'éducation postsecondaire.

What is most significant is the fact that the federal government has finally agreed with our contention that as a matter of fundamental principle, Ontario should receive a per capita share of all new funding for post-secondary education. This is a big step toward fairness.

On infrastructure, we received a recognition that Ontario has fallen behind when it comes to funding, and a commitment for \$300 million in infrastructure funding over the final three years of this agreement.

Taken in total, this is progress we can all be proud of. But more work, as I said earlier, remains to be done, which is why I am pleased that the Prime Minister has agreed that the two of us will meet again to discuss what has come to be known as the \$23-billion gap.

I am particularly interested, for example, in addressing the lack of movement when it comes to Canada health transfers to Ontario. Whereas the other provinces continue to receive \$941 per person for CHT and CST, Ontario only receives \$857 per person. This difference translates into a shortfall of over \$1 billion for Ontario. Just as we worked with all parties in this House on this non-partisan issue of fairness, we are willing to work with the various parties in the House of Commons. I will be meeting with the Leader of the Opposition and will be happy to meet with the leader of the federal NDP, should he request such a meeting.

I'm proud of what we have achieved and how we have achieved it. I don't want to enlarge our success this weekend beyond what it is, but neither should we minimize it. We have made real progress. We have taken the first step. After the first step comes a second step; after the second step comes a third step and so on. What Ontarians are counting on is progress, and there's no doubt

about it: We are making real progress. We have approached this issue in the best tradition of our province by making a case based on the facts, founded in fairness, respectful of our history and devoid of histrionics.

I'm proud most of all of how Ontarians continue to work together as one on this issue. I want to thank the leaders of the opposition and the members opposite for supporting an all-party resolution on this issue. I can tell you that having that support behind me made a big difference. The unity that started here has extended to every corner of our province. Our campaign has been endorsed by the Ontario Medical Association, the Ontario Hospital Association, the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, the Council of Ontario Universities, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, to name just a few. Our numbers have been backed up by leading economists, including studies from the TD Bank and CIBC World Markets.

Nous avons fait des progrès parce que nous avons parlé d'une voix unie. Nous allons continuer de faire des progrès si nous continuons à agir de cette façon.

We've made progress because we have spoken as one. We will continue to make progress if we continue to speak as one.

There's one more thing I want to say, because it bears repeating. Ontarians are proud Canadians. No one identifies more closely with a nation as a whole than do the people of this province.

We have been commissioned by history to play a leading role in Confederation, to help ensure fairness from coast to coast to coast, and we will continue to play that role. But to share wealth, we must be able to create it in the first place, and the best way to do that in the knowledge-based economy of this century is to invest in our people.

There's more work to do to narrow the gap further so we can help our people go farther. I'm not satisfied but I am pleased—pleased to report that we've made real progress, pleased because Ontario just got a little bit stronger, and that means our country did too.

## NURSES

**Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** That's what I call a tough act to follow.

I rise in my place today to remind my colleagues in this House that today marks the start of National Nursing Week. It is an opportunity for us all to reflect on and to give thanks for the extraordinary contribution that nurses make in our society. It's something that I and others have said many times, but it always bears repeating: Nurses are the heart and soul of health care. They are often the people with whom we have first contact when we have a health problem. They are very often the people with whom we have the most contact when receiving treatment for that problem. Nurses do a job that is frequently hard, usually stressful and always demanding. They do it

with a compassion and a grace that are a credit to them and to their profession.

Our government shares a vision with Ontarians of a health care system that will help people stay healthier, give them great care when they get sick and be there for their children and grandchildren. I can tell you that nurses have a critical role to play in our plan to make that vision a reality. Quite simply, we cannot do it without them. Not only that; we need more of them, and more nurses are precisely what we have begun to deliver. In all, last year we funded 3,052 new full-time nursing positions in our hospitals, in our long-term-care homes and in home and community care. Already 2,402 of these have been created, with another 650 funded and in the process of being created. We have also invested heavily in better education and professional opportunities for our nurses, as well as safer working conditions.

**1410**

We are making this province the best place in Canada in which to work as a nurse, from mentorship programs to initiatives to provide late-career nurses with less physically demanding roles to keep them working longer; from investing \$10 million a year for continuing education programs which will ensure that nurses will have the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in a very, very demanding profession to another \$10 million over four years to the nursing faculty fund to ensure we have the educators to impart that knowledge and those skills; from investing \$60 million for bed lifts in all our hospitals and long-term-care homes to more than \$11 million on safer needles and medical equipment—all to reduce the risk of on-the-job injuries. In short, we're working very hard to make the lives of nurses better and the jobs of nurses safer and more satisfying.

We are also working very hard to bring nurses more fully into our health care system to make the best use of their skills, their knowledge and their dedication. The 55 family health teams we announced last month are a prime example of how we're doing that, while at the same time increasing access to nurses and doctors. These family health teams, as we call them, are going to deliver better care in better ways to more Ontarians.

By bringing doctors, nurses and nurse practitioners together, along with pharmacists, dieticians and other health care providers, these teams are going to be able to provide the very best in comprehensive primary care. They will be able to care for more patients than any solo doctor's practice ever could, specifically because nurses and nurse practitioners will be on hand to work alongside doctors, providing complementary skills to ensure that patients receive great care when and where they need it. I consider this to be one of the very best ways to use the knowledge and skills our nurses have to offer, and we're doing it initially with 55 teams in 47 communities. There will be 150 family health teams by 2007-08.

As we mark National Nursing Week, I should note that nursing has been a profession in Ontario for more than 100 years; 101, to be exact. They are now into their second century. I'd like to say, on behalf our govern-

ment, that I expect it to be a century in which nurses don't have to fight quite so hard and quite so often for the recognition and respect they deserve. Certainly they're not going to have to as long as we're on this side of the House.

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

#### FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

**Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition):** I'm pleased to rise today to respond to the Premier's statement. I think everybody in the House will welcome more money coming to Ontario for the matters the Premier discussed: post-secondary education, immigrant settlement, skills training and so on. I think it's critical that we have the necessary funding to ensure that new immigrants are welcomed to Ontario and that their road to full partnership in the Ontario economy happens as quickly as possible. Similarly, I think we all agree that improved funding for post-secondary education is critical for the future of our province. I sincerely hope the improvements will be investments we can see actually being made and that we'll be able to quantify the benefits received.

That's the good news. I think there are some things that are a bit more disappointing.

First—and this underlines the point we have been making for weeks, if not months—the fact that we went into the meeting with numbers that perhaps were not the result of as careful thought as there might have been probably caused the Premier to come out with less than if he'd entered the meeting, as we suggested, with a specific list of individual inequities that required addressing.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling):** The Leader of the Opposition and members of the opposition gave careful consideration and listened in silence. I would expect the same respect to be given to the Leader of the Opposition as he continues his reply.

**Mr. Tory:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To some extent, I think the result, which is well less than the \$5-billion down payment the Premier talked about without any reference to a five-year term, is as a result of the Premier not really having a plan over the past few months and not doing a better job in advance of the meeting.

We could have seen a list of items where there is inequity. This could have been shared with the public, with the media and with the opposition parties, among others, and I think could have contributed to a more focused, more broadly supported agenda that the Premier could have carried with him into the room.

We're left today with the somewhat sketchy list of details the Premier has outlined, combined with some curious words from the Prime Minister about how just about all of this money was included in their existing plans and budgets anyway, thus causing one to wonder what actually happened over the nine hours.

I also note with interest the apparent lack of any discussion between the Premier and the Prime Minister or any real initiative by the Premier of Ontario, as chair of the federation as well, to commence any kind of process to look for longer-term solutions. While I know that you, Premier, and the Prime Minister both said there will be other meetings to follow—in fact, you mentioned that today—I really feel that we urgently have to go to work on finding a better way to address these issues in the longer term.

It just doesn't seem right that months after the Premier signed a deal in effect causing us to automatically pay more for equalization, he should be put in the position where he's having to go to Ottawa to plead for money, and this in the wake of deals that are done elsewhere in the country. I'm sure the Prime Minister can't think that that's the right way to run the country in the long term, and as Premier of Ontario, I would hope that you would agree. It's like adding layer after layer of varnish on top of the wood. You soon can't even see the original wood at all, and you can't really get to the bottom of it, where you started.

In your role as chair of the federation for a while yet and, in any event, in your role as Premier of Canada's largest province, I urge you to take initiatives to get a longer-term discussion going on how we can reform this system, which has now had far too much tinkering and fiddling on all sides, for various reasons, over the years by all kinds of different people.

Finally, consistent with the rest of what I've said today, I hope that the Premier will, as we go forward, choose the tenor and the tone of his representation of Ontario very carefully.

It is my own experience that the more specifics and substance you have on the list of items you're putting forward, and the more thought you've given it in advance—ideally, backed up by lots of facts and evidence—and the more you include longer-term considerations and solutions as opposed to short-term fixes, which by definition can provoke more short-term emotion, and finally, the more carefully one chooses one's words, without weakening your resolve, the better you will often do.

We look forward to learning more details of the agreement, and any progress, as I said over the weekend, is welcome progress. We also look forward to working with you to advance Ontario's cause in the days, weeks and months ahead.

#### NURSES

**Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean–Carleton):** It should be on the record that I was the only member of provincial Parliament to show up to lend personal support to the Premier and his Ontario team.

I want to congratulate and acknowledge the tremendous contribution that nurses make in the province of Ontario. I had the opportunity to work as a nurse at the Queensway Carleton Hospital for a day to learn about the

good work they do. We should acknowledge their outstanding contribution to making our health system the great system it is.

#### FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

**Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River):** I want to respond to the Premier's statement today to say that I think any member of this Legislature who has served here over the last 15 years recognizes that there is some imbalance between federal governments, provincial governments and municipal governments. The federal government continues to enjoy the greatest taxing room and the greatest taxing power. Meanwhile, over the last 15 years, more and more of the responsibilities for providing the services that are important in people's everyday lives have been downloaded on to provinces and on to municipalities. I think we all recognize that that is something that needs to be addressed within the Canadian federation, and I, as much as anyone else in this Legislature, want to see that addressed.

But I want to remind the Premier of what he and his colleagues used to say on this issue. This is a quote from the current Minister of Finance: "I was appalled and embarrassed that an NDP Premier, any Premier in Ontario, could whine and whimper about not getting more from the national government." That was only a few years ago.

I want to quote the present Minister of Energy: "They like to blame the federal government for this, that or the other thing, they like to imply a whole bunch of things..." That was the current Minister of Energy just a couple of years ago.

So one of the things I find interesting is that this is a government that is a very recent convert to this. You used to scorn, you used to literally ridicule anyone who raised the issue of either fiscal imbalance or responsibility imbalance with the federal government.

#### 1420

I just want to review this weekend, because the Premier has given his speech, but I want to remind the Premier of this; there are a few things here that are important. For example, there is the \$1.5 billion for post-secondary education. I just want to remind the Premier that Paul Martin and Jack Layton reached that accord a couple of weeks ago. This money was going to come to Ontario regardless, as a result of that accord. I just want to point out that there's going to be some money for environmental initiatives. Again, that accord was reached between Paul Martin and Jack Layton a couple of weeks ago. That money was going to come to Ontario regardless. Then there is the issue of a new labour market agreement, with some training money. You will know that additional money for training for workers was again part of the accord reached between Paul Martin and Jack Layton a couple of weeks ago, and that money was going to come to Ontario regardless.

I just want to say to the Premier that I'm glad you had a good weekend with your federal colleague, but in fact

much of what you try to boast about here was already agreed to in an accord between Jack Layton and Paul Martin. That money was coming to Ontario regardless. So congratulations on the weekend. What did you add?

### NURSES

**Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** It goes without saying that my caucus and I salute Ontario nurses for the tremendous work they do every day for Ontario patients. They provide excellent, high-quality care in Ontario hospitals, in all floors and in all capacities, in long-term-care homes, in home care, in community health centres and in public health units. We thank them for their commitment, their dedication, their hard work and their incredible contribution to Ontario's health care system.

It's too bad that the McGuinty government sent a chill through the nursing profession when the Minister of Health approved 757 full-time equivalent nursing layoffs in mid-January. So many nurses work part time, work casual, so the number will probably be 1,000 nurses actually lost. Of course, our hospitals can ill-afford this.

Doris Grinspun, executive director of the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, said, "I am not aware of any hospital that has said to me, 'We have a surplus of nurses.' All of a sudden we do? That means we're cutting services."

This is counter to anything the minister has said about this, or the president of the ONA, who also said that the McGuinty government has done a 180-degree turn on its stated commitment. Nurses feel betrayed; nurses have lost confidence.

During this week, we should be hiring and not firing nurses. That's the message Ontario New Democrats want to deliver.

### VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling):** We have with us in the Speaker's gallery a parliamentary delegation from the Kingdom of the Netherlands: the standing committee on education of the second chamber of the States General. Please join me in warmly welcoming them to the assembly.

**Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent for a member from each party to speak for up to five minutes in recognition of Yom Hashoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day.

**The Speaker:** Do we have unanimous consent, as requested by the government House leader? Agreed.

### HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

**Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services):** In a ceremony at Queen's Park earlier today, we recognized and honoured 14 Holocaust survivors whose unbelievable stories of anguish, suffering and survival of both body and spirit

are a testimony to the human will to live. These Holocaust survivors, who are in the House today, came to Ontario, rebuilt their lives and were honoured for their wonderful contribution as citizens of Ontario.

Today, we recognize Yom Hashoah Ve Hagevurah, Holocaust Memorial Day—a day designated for Holocaust remembrance in communities around the world. This is the 12th year the Ontario Legislature has observed Holocaust Memorial Day, and I'm proud to say that Ontario was the first jurisdiction in the world, outside of the state of Israel, to officially recognize it.

This year's memorial is especially poignant for me, coming as it does near the 60th anniversary of the Allies' victory over Nazi tyranny in Europe. But it's also poignant because last March I travelled to Israel with the Commissioner of Emergency Management and a number of police officials to look at how the Israelis handle emergencies and counterterrorism. It was a working trip with firm, practical goals to achieve. We did what we intended, and yet we did find time to visit Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial and museum in Jerusalem.

The memorial is dedicated to preserving the memory and story of each of the six million people who died in the Holocaust. As a Jew, these memories strike the heart and the soul. Every Jew is touched by the Holocaust. We lost loved ones, family members or friends, or members in the community lost someone. The Holocaust echoes through generations. The loss is extraordinary.

At Yad Vashem, that loss is made real. It is concrete. You can touch it. In the Valley of Communities, you stand before wall after wall, carved out of solid rock, listing the names of more than 5,000 communities that lived, breathed, had life, in which men and women loved, married, raised children, worked, laughed and worshipped. Today, in most cases, nothing remains of these Jewish communities except for their names, forever frozen in the bedrock of Yad Vashem. It was here that I found the name of the town where my father was born, Czestochowa, and the town where my mother was born, Sosnowiec.

As I said, the Holocaust reaches out of the past and touches the shoulder of every Jew. But the Children's Memorial is especially sad. It commemorates the one and-a-half million Jewish children who perished in Hitler's Final Solution. The memorial is carved out of an underground cavern, and memorial candles, the customary Jewish tradition to remember the dead, are reflected infinitely in a dark and sombre space. They reminded me of a million stars. As you stand there, you can hear the names of the murdered children, their ages and countries of origin read in the background.

Holocaust Memorial Day commemorates all who died in the Holocaust, not just Jews. We also remember those whom the Nazis targeted for their race, their religion, their politics, their disabilities or their sexual orientation. It's important to set aside time to remember all these victims whose lives were taken by the Nazis. In remembering, we bear witness to what these men, women and children endured.

Tragically, other genocides have followed since World War II, in Cambodia and Rwanda and in the former Yugoslavia. It is evident that we must continue our struggle to keep alive the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights approved by the United Nations 56 years ago in the shadow of the Holocaust. The declaration recognized the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family as a foundation of freedom, justice and peace throughout the world. It called on the world to protect human rights by the rule of law.

We are indeed fortunate to live in Canada and in Ontario, but we must never take our good fortune for granted. We must guard our democratic institutions and democratic freedoms. We must appreciate, nurture and protect them, and we must constantly remind ourselves how easy it is to lose them.

While we were in the Valley of Communities at Yad Vashem, we laid a wreath and I recited a brief traditional Hebrew mourner's prayer, the Kaddish. Today in Jewish communities around the world, people will be reciting that prayer. On behalf of the victims, the survivors and their families I would like to recite that Hebrew prayer that is something for which all people may pray, and I ask for unanimous consent to allow me to do that.

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

**Hon. Mr. Kwinter:** *Remarks in Hebrew.*

One line of this prayer translates as, "He who creates peace in His celestial heights, may He create peace for us."

We must always remember so that the world will never forget.

1430

**Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington):** On behalf of our leader, John Tory, and the PC caucus—in fact, all members of the House—I'm pleased to speak on Yom Hashoah, the Day of the Holocaust. I first would like to say that I will share my time with and commend my colleague from Halton for bringing forward his bill to declare Yom Hashoah as a day of provincial observance.

Today we stand in silent remembrance of the six million Jews who were murdered in the Holocaust. The commemoration is also an integral part of the 60th anniversary of the victory in Europe, which was also a victory over the Nazi genocidal terror.

However, 60 years after the inmates of the death camps were liberated, anti-Semitism continues to persist in Canada. The 2004 audit of anti-Semitic incidents issued by B'nai Brith's League for Human Rights reveals that such incidents have risen dramatically by over 46% last year alone, the highest number of anti-Semitic incidents ever recorded in its 22-year history.

But what is even more disturbing is when our justice system fails the victims of hate crimes. On April 16 of this year, an Ontario Court justice acquitted two teens of the charge of willfully promoting hatred against an identifiable group, saying that their intention was simply to get themselves on television. They painted swastikas on a

synagogue, they toppled gravestones, they shattered windows in the temple, they sprayed profanities on Jewish community property. But in delivering his verdict, the justice said that the charge that they were motivated by prejudice or hatred was not proven.

I join with Frank Dimant, the executive director and president of B'nai Brith Canada, in affirming that "the court has failed to recognize the hate-motivated aspect of this crime, which has had a deep impact on the Jewish community." The Ontario government needs to send a very strong message that anti-Semitism will not be tolerated in Ontario or anywhere else. I join with B'nai Brith in calling on the Attorney General to review this decision immediately.

I also join with B'nai Brith in calling for an amendment to the Criminal Code to include Holocaust denial as a hate crime and for new, stringent legislation to prohibit the publication of hate speech while establishing clear sentencing guidelines for hate crimes. It is only by taking such decisive action that we complete the tribute we pay today to the victims of the Holocaust and ensure that "Never again" becomes a reality.

Shalom aleichem.

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton):** With the 60th anniversary of V-E Day and many of that greatest generation now gone, it's perhaps all the more poignant that we remember Yom Hashoah and Holocaust Memorial Day in Ontario. Having sponsored the bill that enacted Holocaust Memorial Day in Ontario, I have always been honoured to have taken an active role toward the goal of rooting out hatred and promoting human rights, civic and moral responsibility, and individual and democratic freedoms.

Holocaust Memorial Day in Ontario started out with a simple concept. It is clear from the lessons of history that there is an ever-present need to defend the pillars of justice in our society. We provided a day for the citizens of Ontario to reflect on the past, consider the present and prepare for the future. We commemorate the victims of the most terrible genocide in human history and hold it out as an example to all people from which to learn. We use it as a central point for our youth to learn the lessons of our society, our history and our shared values.

In 1933, the Nazis had systemically stripped the rights and freedoms from their own citizens simply because they were of Jewish descent. By the time the war began, Jews were second-class citizens. It must not be forgotten that each turn in the sickening spiral of the Holocaust occurred as, one by one, Jewish human rights were stripped away and no one rose to their defence. A lesson we have tried to take from this is "never again."

Each time we see even the smallest blow against the armour of a just society, we must rise to its defence. We must teach our children that the death of a just society can occur as a result of thousands of seemingly small attacks.

The lack of true democratic freedoms paved the way for these atrocities to occur. This theme runs through all examples of state-sponsored genocide, including Stalin's

Russia, Pol Pot's Cambodia and Rwanda. Where individuals do not have a direct stake in their own government, they often abrogate their civil and moral obligations as well. Citizens need to take an active role in defending society. These atrocities were carried out with the active help of local collaborators and the acquiescence or indifference of numerous bystanders.

However, some people recognized those obligations even while facing their fear. I ask everyone to remember the example of heroism set by Raoul Wallenberg, Canada's only honorary citizen, who was the Swedish ambassador to Hungary during World War II. Raoul Wallenberg saved the lives of over 100,000 Hungarian Jews, but was himself deported to Russia by Soviet forces at the end of the war, never to be heard from again.

Holocaust Memorial Day—Yom Hashoah—is an appropriate way to honour the memory of six million Holocaust victims and the victims of state-sponsored genocide around the world. We can remember this event in union with the Holocaust survivors living in Ontario and people around the world who have experienced or are indeed now defending themselves from similar horrors.

Finally, the ideals of cultural harmony, respect and multicultural societies have been forged from the fires of the Holocaust experience.

Ontario was the first jurisdiction outside of Israel to recognize Holocaust Memorial Day. Today, Holocaust Memorial Day is recognized in seven of the 10 provinces in Canada and 26 out of 50 US states, as well as many countries in Europe. It would be my hope and dream that respect for minorities, respect for individuals, can spread in the same way that Holocaust Memorial Day has spread around the continent and indeed around the world.

**Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River):** On behalf of New Democrats, I'm proud to speak on this very important occasion.

Between 1933 and 1945, over six million Jewish men, women and children, in addition to millions of Polish, Russian and other nationals of Eastern Europe, were systematically put to death. Today, we pause to remember, because though time has passed, it is so important that we never forget.

During those 12 years, from 1933 to 1945, entire communities, villages, indeed entire generations of families were exterminated in the most brutal and calculated fashion. The suffering cannot be described and the loss to humanity and the damage to human dignity cannot be measured.

We need to remember that these acts were carried out in our times by a supposedly civilized society. Indeed, the Western world learned a lesson from these terrible events of the Holocaust. We learned that what we call "civilization" can be very tenuous—very tenuous indeed. That is why we must not allow ourselves to forget. For example, the early warning signs of the persecution of Jews existed in 1935, 1936 and 1937, but much of the world did nothing to oppose the persecution, and while

tens of thousands of Jewish families tried to flee Nazi Germany, many countries closed their borders. Indeed, in the pre-war years from 1935 to 1939, Canada essentially closed its borders.

We must always be on guard so that this cannot happen again. We must always speak out against anti-Semitism, hate and racism of any kind. When we reflect, we see that some of these events still happen today, in Rwanda, in Darfur. Our world still remains a violent and oppressive place for too many people. Countries continue to put their own citizens to death and continue to use military violence against their own citizens. People still live in incredible poverty, without access to food and shelter.

Today, we remember the sacrifices of those men and women who suffered and died during the worst period of modern history and, today, we remember our responsibilities to each other. Today is about recommitting ourselves to the task of making the world a safer place, a better place for everyone, no matter their race, their religion, their gender or their age. That must be our commitment.

**1440**

**The Speaker:** Would all members please rise to observe a moment of silence in recognition of Yom Hashoah.

*The House observed a moment's silence.*

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

**Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition):** My question is for the Premier. Premier, on Saturday you settled for just over \$1 billion a year for five years from the federal government—some distance from the \$5-billion down payment you spoke of before the meeting. Putting that aside for the moment, can you tell us exactly how your deal breaks down over the five years and which parts of the deal, if any, can be implemented without federal legislation?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** First of all, let me make it clear that any arrangement we have with the federal government is entirely dependent on having a federal government that supports fairness for Ontario.

I'm very pleased with what we have been able to accomplish. With respect to the immigration agreement, for example, new Canadians arriving in Ontario, instead of benefiting from \$800 worth of supports, will now get \$3,400 worth of supports. I think that is a significant increase. By the way, that funding does not flow to the Ontario government; it flows to our settlement services, ESL services and the like. With respect to the labour market agreement, funding will go from about \$1,100 per worker to \$1,800 per worker. Again, that money does not

flow to the Ontario government; it flows to our training agencies.

This is an agreement that benefits the people of Ontario.

**Mr. Tory:** As I said earlier, we welcome the progress. Any progress is indeed welcome and we are just trying to nail down some of the specifics.

The Prime Minister said in the press conference that the two of you held after the meeting—and you told reporters yesterday, according to Karen Howlett's story in the *Globe and Mail*—that more than half the funding promised under this deal is in danger should the budget bill not pass. Given this, at any time during the nine-hour meeting, did you raise with the Prime Minister the possibility of a separate piece of legislation that could ensure speedy passage by all parties of the benefits of this particular deal that would flow to people in Ontario?

**Hon. Mr. McGuinty:** I note with interest that we have had indication now from the federal Conservative Party that they are fully supportive of the arrangement I was able to make with the Prime Minister on the weekend. Again, I say to the member opposite that it's incumbent upon all of us in this House to understand that unless we have a federal government that is supportive of fairness for Ontario, we cannot continue to move forward.

We've made some important initial steps this weekend. I think the people of Ontario are pleased with that progress, but I think they are quite right to expect more of us still to come. The Prime Minister has agreed to a second meeting. I've indicated to Mr. Harper that I'm prepared to meet with him. Should Mr. Layton wish to meet with me, I will be prepared to do that as well. The people of Ontario have demanded that we approach this in a non-partisan way and we will continue to do so.

**Mr. Tory:** The Premier has pointed out that the deputy leader of the Conservative Party, Peter MacKay, has already stated that a Conservative government would honour this deal. In the spirit that the Premier spoke about, I did visit, as I think he knows, with the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Harper, in Ottawa, and with the Ontario Conservative MPs to support the argument being advanced on behalf of Ontario. Mr. Layton has already indicated as well, as I understand it, his support for this deal.

So my question would be, given that perhaps it didn't come up on Saturday, would you now consider a request to be made of all three party leaders on your behalf and on behalf of Ontario that this deal be put into a separate bill to ensure speedy passage and so that this money can start to flow to the people who will benefit from it as soon as possible?

**Hon. Mr. McGuinty:** I sincerely appreciate the advice offered by the leader of the official opposition. But rather than my engaging in the orchestration of some tactics that may or may not succeed on Parliament Hill today, where much is in the air, I think it's more important to secure support from the individual party leaders for

the arrangements we made, and that is the avenue we will proceed down.

**The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling):** New question. The leader of the official opposition.

**Mr. Tory:** My question again is to the Premier—and I would tell him that I'm prepared to continue to assist in that regard as best I can.

Still on the matter of this agreement, on Friday, in yet another one of the Prime Minister's announcements, it was revealed that Ontario would receive money for institutional daycare. The announcement totals \$1.8 billion over five years for Ontario. Because there seem to be a couple of missing parts in the list that has been carried in the press, and even in your own outline of the money today—the total of \$5.7 billion—can you tell us whether or not this \$1.8 billion announced for daycare on Friday is included in the deal you made with the Prime Minister on Saturday, or is this money in addition to the deal you made?

**Hon. Mr. McGuinty:** Those were two separate matters, and I know that the minister is prepared to provide more detail should the member require it.

**Mr. Tory:** Premier, in the deal that Mr. Martin struck with Mr. Layton, \$1.5 billion over two years, was set aside for post-secondary education and training. Ontario's share of that money, therefore, would have been approximately \$300 million a year, based on population. Your deal, arrived at on Saturday, calls for \$1.55 billion over five years for post-secondary education, or exactly \$300 million a year in each of the next five years. Can the Premier confirm whether the money you claim to have negotiated from the Prime Minister is the same money that he already agreed to give Ontario, or is this additional money to that which was promised to Mr. Layton earlier?

**Hon. Mr. McGuinty:** The innovation connected with the particular matter of the post-secondary funding is that I was able to secure from the Prime Minister for the first time an agreement that, moving forward, this funding for post-secondary education will be delivered to Ontario for the first time on a per capita basis, which is really good news for Ontarians and especially for our students.

**Mr. Tory:** That is welcome news, but maybe I could just repeat my supplementary question to the Premier: Is the \$1.55 billion over five years for post-secondary education that you have outlined as part of your deal with the Prime Minister, which we all welcome—we're simply looking to see whether this is money that you negotiated for the first time on Saturday, or whether it is the same money that Mr. Layton negotiated with the Prime Minister some time ago. It's a very simple question, and I'd appreciate an answer. Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. McGuinty:** What we achieved was the per capita commitment for the people of Ontario, which I think is welcome news. I also indicated that I'm prepared, and the Prime Minister is prepared, to meet once again. We had a very lengthy discussion about post-secondary education. I can tell you that when I have an opportunity to meet with Premiers, there is tremendous

interest in what we can do together to develop our human capital.

So, yes, to be very direct, what we have done is not new money. I did not negotiate that new money. What we did of significance was ensure that that money is now delivered to us on a per capita basis, and all new money going forward when it comes to post-secondary education.

#### PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

**Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River):** My question is for the Premier. Ontarians are worried that they are going to get a nasty surprise on May 11: a budget featuring privatization and deregulation through the back door, a budget that Mike Harris could be proud of. They are particularly worried and concerned about privatization of the Liquor Control Board of Ontario, an organization that delivers over \$1 billion in revenue to the government every year and an organization that, frankly, results in safer, healthier distribution of alcohol in the province.

Premier, will you categorically rule out any form of privatization of the Liquor Control Board of Ontario, including royalty and income trusts, in your May 11 budget?

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

**Hon. Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet):** Again, I think the public should be aware that the Minister of Finance has established a group to look at this very matter. They are looking at it very comprehensively. I think what the minister has said is that we can expect them to report sometime in the spring, so I think we're best advised to await the outcome of that quite comprehensive study that the minister has indicated will be available in the spring and see what that study shows. They have been given very clear direction. I think the minister has indicated that there's no intention to sell off the LCBO, but the interest is in finding the best long-term way of dealing with beverage alcohol in the province of Ontario. As I've said, we have a very competent group of people looking at that, expected to report later this spring.

**Mr. Hampton:** I'm shocked and appalled. The McGuinty team that used to rant about privatization now refuses to rule it out.

Ontarians are worried about another privatization through the back door: P3 partnerships in terms of schools and hospitals. Ontarians want public hospitals, public schools. They know that when you move to private financing or private involvement, the borrowing costs are greater, plus the private corporation will want to make a profit. For example, on a \$1-billion hospital, \$200 million gets siphoned off to private corporations.

Premier, will you today rule out any P3 involvement in our schools, our hospitals and other kinds of public infrastructure in your May 11 budget?

**Hon. Mr. Phillips:** Because this involves the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, I'll refer that to him.

**Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal):** I thank the member for the question. Back in July of last year, we introduced an investment framework for the province of Ontario that had five fundamental principles. I want to list them for the member, because I know it's too easy for him to go to a Web site to actually look it up.

Number one: Public interest is paramount. Number two: Value for money must be achieved. Number three: Appropriate public ownership and control must be preserved, and we have specifically said that hospitals, schools and water will continue to be publicly owned. Number four: Accountability must be maintained. Number five: The process must be fair, transparent and efficient.

The strategies that we are bringing do not involve the privatization of public assets. Talk of privatization could in fact misinform and potentially mislead the public, and I think it is important that we all be very clear about the strategies we're going to bring and the benefits we are going to bring. We are going to get on and solve the infrastructure deficit that the previous government left, because this government has the courage to undertake those strategies.

**Mr. Hampton:** It was a simple question: Will the McGuinty government rule out any P3 operation of schools and hospitals and other public infrastructure? Once again, I think what we heard is that the McGuinty government is entertaining just that.

Premier, over the past 10 years, skyrocketing tuition fees have forced university and college students into greater and greater debt. Now students and their parents are scared that your government is going to deregulate tuition fees, causing another round of skyrocketing tuition. Federal moneys for post-secondary education negotiated by Jack Layton and Paul Martin are expressly dedicated to making tuition fees more affordable for Ontario students and their families. Will you rule out any further deregulation of college and university tuition fees in your May 11 budget? Yes or no?

**Hon. Mr. Caplan:** To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

**Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities):** I'm really happy to rise to respond to the question from the leader of the third party.

First of all, I have encouraged him to wait. He doesn't have much longer to wait. You know, we will all wait together for the good news that we'll hear on Wednesday.

I'd also like to remind the member that our government, the McGuinty government, is the first government ever to have frozen tuition fees here in Ontario for two years. I think it's also important to remember that the NDP had actually promised to freeze tuition fees. Instead, they raised the fees by 50%. So I rest my case.

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

## CHILDREN'S SERVICES

**Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River):**

Again, to the Premier. I've asked three simple questions: Please rule out tuition deregulation—won't do that; please rule out P3 hospitals, P3 schools—won't do that; please rule out any form of privatization of the LCBO—won't do that. All of this sounds like backdoor privatization to me.

I want to ask now about autism treatment for children aged six and over, because before the election, Premier, you said, "I believe that the lack of government-funded IBI treatment for autistic children over six is unfair and discriminatory. The Ontario Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six."

Premier, will Wednesday's budget extend and safeguard IBI treatment for all autistic children over the age of six?

**Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration):** There are more services available to children with autism of all ages than ever before. We have increased the under-six program by \$10 million, hired over 100 therapists, and as of April increased the number of children receiving IBI by 25%; and as of April as well, decreased the waiting list for assessment by 72%.

We know we need to do more and we will do more in order to meet the needs of these children.

**Mr. Hampton:** I take it from that that despite the Premier's promise, children over the age of six will continue to go without IBI treatment

I want to ask now about families that have children who are severely disabled. The Ombudsman is investigating why families are being forced to give up custody of their children in order to obtain services, and on Friday a group of families came to Queen's Park to announce a lawsuit against the McGuinty government for failing their children. One parent was Anne Larcade, of Huntsville. She was forced to sign a temporary custody agreement in February to get her son, Alexandre, into a group home in Guelph, three and a half hours away. She doesn't want to lose custody of her family, but your government is forcing her to do that.

Denying services to families who don't give up custody is wrong. Will Wednesday's budget include enough money to support children with special needs with their families, rather than the families having to give up custody: yes or no?

**Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni:** We are already doing a great deal for these children. It's a system that's been underfunded for many years. This can't be fixed overnight.

In our first budget we increased funding for special needs by \$74 million—a 15% increase. What I have done in the meantime is ask my ministry to reissue the directive that was issued by the former government that no children's aid society should take parental rights away unless the child is in need of protection. This should not be happening. I understand it is happening. I welcome the

report from the Ombudsman, and we will move forward to solve this problem.

**Mr. Hampton:** This is not an issue of money. The minister says the children are getting service, but the McGuinty government forces these families to give up custody before the children can get the service.

I want to ask the Premier about a federal funding issue. The federal government provides Ontario with money through the national child benefit supplement for the poorest children in Ontario. Your government claws back that money. You take money from the poorest children and the poorest families in Ontario. Now, you just gave a long statement celebrating your meeting with Prime Minister Paul Martin. Will you tell us, Premier, are you now going to stop clawing back federal money which should be going to the poorest children in Ontario? Are you going to stop the clawback which you yourself said is morally wrong?

1500

**Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni:** I'd like to refer this to the Minister of Community and Social Services.

**Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues):** I do welcome the opportunity to speak once again to the third party to explain the host of changes that we've brought in to help people of low income in Ontario, and in particular children. When we look across the breadth of our government, right across the board—the move with affordable housing, thanks once again to the federal government signing finally with the provincial government, where we can help low-income families; child care monies finally going to child care from the federal government to Ontario; increases to agencies that they have not seen in 12 or 13 years.

Finally, let me say to the third party that in our last budget, when we stopped the policy and \$7 million more was returned to families across the province, that happened to be a part of the last budget that your party voted against. So let's not forget your history on this. When push comes to shove and you finally see a party that wants to help families—you, in your history in this House, voted against the last budget.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling):** Order. I'd like the members to stop their uttering of unparliamentary language and stop inciting unparliamentary behaviour.

## ONTARIO BUDGET

**Mr. Jim Flaherty (Whitby–Ajax):** My question is for the Premier. You say you won't raise taxes in the budget on Wednesday, and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities just used the word "frozen" about tuition. There's another set of big fees that are frozen in Ontario. Those are fees on real estate transactions—people buying houses in the province. As you know, those fees now are payable to Teranet. There is a freeze on Teranet's fees and the right to regulate them after the freeze expires. Now, media reports have it that you've

planned some sort of sale or income trust or some kind of deal with Teranet. What I'd like you to do, Premier, today is to confirm to the people of Ontario that you will not take any steps that will result in an increase of fees on real estate transactions in Ontario.

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs):** The Minister of Consumer and Business Services.

**Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services):** I find it rather ironic that the honourable member asked that question, when in fact it was his government, in one of their ludicrous fire sales, that actually sold the Ontario government's share of Teranet. This is the same party that gave us the 407. They have absolutely not a whit of credibility when it comes to talking about Teranet or about public-private partnership.

I'm not going to stand here and speculate on what's going to be in the budget. Two days from now, the Minister of Finance will stand and deliver the good news to the people of Ontario.

**Mr. Flaherty:** The minister is correct about one thing: It was the previous government that put in the freeze on the fees.

Given his answer, after Wednesday the people of Ontario can now expect an increase in fees to happen on real estate transactions; a tax, by any other name.

Premier, our leader, John Tory, asked you last week to ensure that revenue for any sale of assets will go to reduce the growing provincial debt under your government in the province of Ontario. We hear lots of rumours about fire sales and assets that may be sold in the announcements that come in the budget on Wednesday. Will you ensure that proceeds from these fire sales that you undertake will not go into the consolidated general revenue fund but will go into separate accounts so that the people of Ontario can follow that money and make sure the money is not used up in your reckless spending from the consolidated general revenue fund?

**Hon. Jim Watson:** I refer it to the Chair of Management Board.

**Hon. Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet):** The public has recognized that two days from now we will see the budget here, and you'll know that.

The thing I can guarantee you is that under Dalton McGuinty, we will never see a deal like the 407, where the users of the 407 have been ripped off with a deal that sold them down the road for 99 years. The people of Ontario are now stuck with having to pay exorbitant tolls for 99 years. I can guarantee to the member that you will not see a deal under a Dalton McGuinty government like the 407 rip-off.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION

**Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** A question to the Minister of the Environment: Bill 133 falls far short of providing the kind of pollution prevention Ontarians want to protect both the environment and human health. Today, leading environmental groups called on

you to strengthen, not weaken, Bill 133, so that it includes a mandatory requirement for pollution prevention planning and not simply pollution control. My question is, will you amend Bill 133 to make pollution prevention plans, emergency reduction targets and annual reporting on the plans mandatory?

**Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment):** I'm very pleased to say that Bill 133 very obviously demonstrates our government's commitment to protect the environment, to require industries to implement spills prevention plans and, I would also say very importantly for municipalities that are impacted when a spill happens in their community, to provide a fund they will be able to access in a very few days to help compensate them for their out-of-pocket expenses.

I believe that our commitment to the environment, to being proactive and preventive is very clear in Bill 133.

**Ms. Churley:** Minister, you should read the bill again, because it's not in there at all.

Your own industrial pollution action team recommended mandatory requirements for pollution prevention in their report to you last year. This morning, environmental groups reported that from 2003 to 2004, under your watch, the volume of spills by MISA-regulated facilities increased 360%. Rick Smith of Environmental Defence said that toxic spills are "as common as potholes in the spring." Only mandatory pollution prevention plans will reduce the amount of chemicals in use and therefore able to enter the environment through spills in the first place.

Minister, a 360% increase would make even the Conservatives blush. I'm going to ask you again, will you make pollution prevention planning, reporting and emission reduction targets mandatory requirements under Bill 133?

**Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky:** The honourable member should know that it was because of the number of spills events that Bill 133 was introduced. Our government has said that we are going to take action and ensure (1) that communities are protected and (2), that prevention plans will be required. That is a part of the bill. You've suggested I read the bill; I think she hasn't read the bill.

It's very important. We have made a commitment to the people of Ontario. We are prepared to act. I'm very happy that this bill is going to committee. We will be very eager to hear the proposals and suggestions by a range of people who have indicated an interest in this bill. But make no mistake; our government is absolutely committed to protecting communities and the environment in the province of Ontario.

#### PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

**Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale):** My question is to the Minister of Transportation. We all know that getting people out of their cars and on to public transit is vital to sustaining our communities, our environment and our economy. Getting people on to public transit means our roads are less congested, which means there is less idling and our investments aren't

stuck in traffic. And increasing public transit also means a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions that fill up the air and create smog, which negatively affects the health of Ontarians.

During the election, we promised to provide municipalities with two cents of the provincial gas tax to support growing municipalities like my city of Brampton fund public transit. Can you tell me how our government is keeping this commitment to municipalities and also how it will help communities like Brampton with public transit?

1510

**Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation):** I would like to thank the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale for his question. The other government made a commitment to share two cents of the gasoline tax with the municipalities. This was one of the key election commitments that we made, and we moved on that commitment in our very first budget. What that means is about \$156 million to the municipalities that they never had before, in the very first year of the gas tax sharing. Over a three-year period, this amount will be around \$700 million, and in four years, roughly \$1 billion.

We need to create a transit culture in this province if we want to address the issues of congestion, and this gas tax money will go a long way for us to improve the service levels and also increase ridership in this province. I was very pleased to be with the mayor of Brampton this morning to make the gas tax announcement.

**Mr. Kular:** I'm positive that the funding Brampton will receive will greatly assist in increasing public transit ridership. It will also improve the quality and reliability of the transit system throughout my community.

Minister, the projected growth rates for the GTA are expected to rise by four million over the next couple of decades. How is this government ensuring that transit ridership increases in order to ease the congestion on our roadways?

**Hon. Mr. Takhar:** As I said, I was with the mayor of Brampton this morning to make the announcement on the gas tax. The city of Brampton is getting \$3.2 million in gas tax money this year. I want to congratulate the city of Brampton for coming up with a very strong and innovative transit plan to improve transit in the city that will improve service and increase ridership. They're expecting an 8% increase in ridership in the city of Brampton, and they are going to connect it to York region as well. Out of the 30 routes they currently have, 22 routes will be revamped, and five new routes will be added. They will also increase employment and add new buses. I'm sure that will go a long way for us to address some of the issues that the member has raised in his question for the city of Brampton.

#### FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

**Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean–Carleton):** My question is to the Premier. It was with great interest that I read the

communiqué following your meeting with the Prime Minister this past Saturday. The one word not contained in the communiqué is the single biggest priority not just for people in Ottawa, but for people right across the province of Ontario, and that word is "health." Premier, why isn't there a single new dollar for the number one priority of people in Ontario?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs):** I can tell you that we did talk about health, and I share the member's disappointment, to be perfectly honest, that we weren't able to achieve more progress in that particular area.

For example, as I mentioned earlier in my statement, we get much less on a per capita basis in Ontario than they do in other provinces. I think that is unacceptable. I think it's a blatant unfairness, one that has existed for far too long. Obviously, that means we still have more work to do.

Having said that, I will say that I'm also proud that I was able to play some role in landing the last health accord between the federal government and all of our first ministers, which brought new money to the province of Ontario and all provinces. There's more to be done, and we look forward to doing it.

**Mr. Baird:** Premier, in the communiqué released following your meeting with Paul Martin, there are a lot of words like, "Our officials will work..." or "Within 30 days we will conclude..." What amounted out of your meeting were five promises, and I have a simple question I'd like to ask the Premier. My simple question to you is, do you trust Paul Martin?

**Hon. Mr. McGuinty:** It's a question that's better suited to the other House, to which my friend aspires.

The issue here is—and I think we've done a pretty good job of negotiating this; it's not the easiest thing in the world to do—we have tried to proceed in this matter on a non-partisan basis. It will always be in the interests of the people of Ontario that we have a federal government that recognizes there is a blatant issue of unfairness here. We made some progress over the weekend. We look forward to making more progress in the days to come.

#### REFINERY CLOSURE

**Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** My question is for the Premier. Inco Ltd. seems poised to make a decision to shut down its copper refinery in our community and process raw copper outside Ontario. If that happens, we will lose about 160 good-paying union, management and support staff jobs from the community.

Inco has been refining copper at the Copper Cliff refinery for over 60 years now. There is no reason for them to shut down the refinery or process raw copper outside Ontario at a cost of 160 jobs to our community.

Premier, will you tell Inco they can't do this?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs):** To the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines):** The member across would know full well that on Friday I met with the United Steelworkers of America representatives. We had a good, frank and very productive meeting. They asked that I try to bring all parties together for a meeting. I should let the member know that I am working on that and hope to facilitate that as quickly as possible.

**Ms. Martel:** A supplementary to the Premier: They also asked that the Premier intervene and tell Inco they can't do this, and that needs to be on the public record.

Look, Premier, the resources in the Sudbury basin belong to the people of Ontario, not to Inco. It's a privilege for Inco to mine and refine the resources, not a right. Your government has agreements, permits and licences with Inco to use the resources, and you should use all of those to force Inco to continue to refine copper at the Copper Cliff refinery.

Inco made \$612 million in 2004. They made over \$300 million in the first quarter of 2005, and \$215 million of that came out of the Ontario division, primarily out of Sudbury. There is no reason for Inco to be allowed to refine raw copper outside Ontario.

I ask you again, Premier, will you intervene and tell Inco they'll not take the resource and not take the jobs out of our community, yes or no?

**Hon. Mr. Bartolucci:** We on this side of the House are certainly all very concerned about any potential job loss. That's why I continue to be in touch with the union, with the company and with all the other stakeholders involved. It's my hope that all parties can come together and come up with ideas and suggestions as to how we can work to protect refinery jobs. It's not my intention, nor will it ever be the intention of this government, to stand up and bash companies or unions or anything else. We're about finding solutions to problems. They're about Shelley-come-lately, bringing a problem that's already being addressed by our government in a very proactive, real way.

#### ONTARIO ECONOMY

**Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre):** My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. As we all know, Ontario is the economic engine of Canada. We can cite all the statistics we want, but the most important one is the job numbers that come out on the first Friday of every month.

At the moment, Ontario faces some real challenges in terms of a sluggish US economy and high oil prices. Despite that, in my community there are businesses like Arvato Services, which has announced it is expanding and hiring 150 new employees; Brick Brewing, which is investing \$7 million in a new warehouse facility in my area; and Brock Solutions of Kitchener, an engineering firm which has added 70 employees in the past year.

In light of the figures released last week, can the minister report to the House the state of job creation and the strength of our economy?

1520

**Hon. Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade):** I'd like to thank the member for the question. The good news is this: In the month of April, we had a net increase in jobs of 26,000. Full-time jobs increased by 58,000. That was the largest monthly increase in the past eight years. Since October 2003, employment has risen by 146,000. In addition, the unemployment rate went down to 6.8%. So there's a great deal of confidence in the Ontario economy.

I'm happy to report that there are some additional investments that have been made. ISRA Textile Manufacturing is scheduled to open in Niagara Falls, with an additional 500 people hired. That's good news for the Niagara region.

**Mr. Milloy:** I think we recognize the good news. In my community of Kitchener-Waterloo, the unemployment rate is at 5.9%. I know the unemployment rate in Hamilton is at 5.1%, and Kingston is down to 6.3%.

Despite this, I know there's still concern about the manufacturing sector in our province. In my area, we have a strong manufacturing sector and also a strong IT sector, but there are always concerns about the future. I was wondering if the minister could report about the future for these two sectors, as well as other key sectors in our economy.

**Hon. Mr. Cordiano:** The good news, as well, is that manufacturing jobs increased by 8,000 in the province of Ontario. That's really good news for us. There was also an increase of 20,000 new jobs in the construction sector. The IT sector is also seeing an increase in jobs.

But what I'm really interested to report is that when I was in Washington, I had a meeting with the National Association of Manufacturers of the US. What they confirmed for us is that we continue to hold a cost advantage over the US when it comes to manufacturing. The differences are quite significant.

For example, in the costs of health care and pension benefits, we have a 4.8% advantage over the US. When it comes to health care costs in the auto sector alone, this amounts to \$2,000 per vehicle produced in the auto sector. In IT, the advantage is 16.7%. So the economy in Ontario, despite the challenges of being faced with a higher dollar—we're overcoming those challenges and we're meeting the test. Things are going very well in the Ontario economy.

#### STUDENT LITERACY

**Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges):** My question is to the Premier. Premier, today's Globe editorial does something that, for some reason, you failed to do last week. It credits the previous government for implementing the high school literacy test. It highlights the fact that the test was developed to help young people by making very certain that they have the literacy skills they need to succeed as adults, and to ensure that those who need extra help are identified long before they hit the job market.

Premier, do you now agree that we owe it to our young people and to their parents to hold our own education system accountable through continued standardized testing?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I have always agreed with the notion of standardized testing. I think Ontario parents, and Ontario taxpayers, for that matter, are entitled to know what kinds of results we're getting for the investments that we are making in public education. By the way, of course, when we do have results, it enables us to determine on a year-to-year basis our improvement or lack thereof. In fact, I've said in the past that I like the notion of a standardized test. I have congratulated former Premier Harris for bringing those innovations in.

Where I was critical was that you can't just put in the tests; you've got to put in place the additional supports to ensure that our young people can perform well on those tests. That's why we're proud to have invested thus far \$1.1 billion more into public education for more supports, more teachers and better training.

**Mr. Klees:** Thank you, Premier. We're encouraged by that. We want to congratulate the students and we want to congratulate the teachers for the some 11% improvement in the student passing rate on this literacy test.

Can you commit, to students and their parents, that future test score improvements will in fact be as a result of student achievement, not as a result of lowered standards being applied to those tests?

**Hon. Mr. McGuinty:** I don't know whether or not the member opposite is intimating that somehow improvements this year are the result of a reduction in the standard. I don't think he's saying that. If he is saying that, then I would have preferred that he had said that directly.

It's not about reducing standards. Our young people have tremendous potential. It's about ensuring that we have the necessary supports. We're doing that through smaller classes, more teachers, better training for our teachers, peace and stability, long-term agreements, and a government that supports public education. That's fundamentally how we're going to improve those test scores—better results for our students.

## ENERGY CONSERVATION

**Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches—East York):** My question is to the Minister of Energy. Ontario needs leadership to promote the conservation of electricity. However, your plan to allow landlords, without the consent of the tenants, to install sub-meters is wrong for all the 1.5 million tenants of this province. Sub-metering apartments will cost the vast majority of tenants more than they could ever hope to save. Low- and modest-income tenants can ill afford to pay for the lack of their landlords' conservation strategy.

Minister, it is the landlords who refuse to invest in conservation by replacing dated appliances, the landlords who refuse to insulate and provide energy-efficient

doors, and the landlords who do not convert from electric heat and water heaters.

Are you going to rethink this plan that, in the end, is only going to zap Ontario tenants?

**Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** First of all, the government has not formally introduced a policy for implementation of smart meters across the province. We are committed to them. We are moving forward. We haven't addressed the specific issue of rental accommodation.

The member quite correctly points out that there are challenges associated with extending the benefits of conservation to those with modest means and those particularly in rental situations. Accordingly, we will be introducing legislation later this year that will establish a broad framework for the installation of smart meters and will leave open to this Legislature and to members of this government the opportunity to discuss implementation issues around smart meters.

The issue was raised by low-income groups last week. They raised some valid concerns that do need to be addressed in greater detail and need to be studied with more precision. I look forward to the member opposite's input into those discussions.

**Mr. Prue:** I thank you on the one hand, but I want some assurance from you on the other. The conservation strategies must start at the root. The basis for many problems in older-stock buildings in Ontario, as you're well aware, is out-dated, energy-hogging appliances. The tenants simply turning on or off the lights or on and off the television is minuscule in comparison with the heating systems, the water heating systems, the insulation and the energy-hogging old refrigerators that burn way too much electricity.

Minister, do the smart thing. At least announce today that you encourage conservation at the source. Don't punish the tenants. They've had enough. I want your assurance today that you're going to do the right thing and start with the landlords first.

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** The right thing is to conserve energy and to assist low-income residents of our province and people of more modest means to share in the benefits of conservation.

First of all, my ministry is working to help low-income energy consumers in Ontario. We've partnered with LIEN—that's the group that brought forward this report last week—to help this segment of Ontario's population. We partner with LIEN on a whole variety of things, including DSM plans, to help low-income electricity consumers. Brantford Hydro, for example, recently received authorization from the OEB to deliver low-income energy conservation in their community. We've partnered with the Social Housing Services Corp. to pilot centralized energy management services in 20 non-profit buildings in Ontario, a project that will be rolled out across 250,000 units.

That member and his party cancelled all conservation programs when in government. We're moving forward on them, and we're going to do it in a prudent manner

that will assist low-income Ontarians to share in the benefits of improved conservation of energy.

1530

#### GROW BONDS PROGRAM

**Mr. David Oraziotti (Sault Ste. Marie):** My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Northerners, and certainly my constituents in Sault Ste. Marie, were very pleased that last year's budget committed to a pilot program for northern Ontario grow bonds. As you know, grow bonds are an idea generated by northerners, and our government responded quickly by working to implement this exciting initiative.

Grow bonds are provincially guaranteed, with competitive interest rates for residents of northern Ontario. The proceeds will be used to fund loans to small and medium-sized businesses, because northern businesses often have difficulty gaining access to capital. Could the minister please tell us the final total sales for the northern Ontario grow bonds program?

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines):** The member from Sault Ste. Marie asks a very important question for northerners. I am very pleased and proud today to stand in the House and tell my fellow members in the Legislature, and also all of northern Ontario, that northerners purchased \$12.9 million worth of grow bonds over the purchase period. It is very important as well to know that this is roughly \$13 million that will go toward loans to create and expand businesses that will create real, long-term jobs in northern Ontario.

I am particularly impressed with the dedication and enthusiasm of northerners with regard to the grow bonds project. This was a pilot project and it's turning out to be a very successful project, because northerners believe in northerners.

**Mr. Oraziotti:** I'm very pleased to hear that. After years of neglect by the past government, we have taken the initiative to implement a new program that is already showing success for northerners.

I know that we, as a northern caucus, worked hard to spread the word about this important opportunity, as did many of our northern stakeholders and community leaders. These people must be applauded for their confidence and their efforts to develop this program. My community of Sault Ste. Marie invested \$500,000 in the northern Ontario grow bonds program, and I'm very proud of our city's support for it.

Businesses are now applying for these loans. Who will be responsible for accessing and approving the loan applications?

**Hon. Mr. Bartolucci:** There is a board set up called the Northern Ontario Grow Bonds Corp. It's made up of northerners and they will be responsible for loan approvals, as well as the management of the corporate business affairs.

The deadline for submissions for loans was May 6. I am very encouraged by the response from northern in-

vestors, and I will be reporting to the House in a little while as this material becomes more available.

Again, I know my colleagues, and certainly the Minister of Finance, are very pleased with the response from northerners to our northern Ontario grow bonds pilot project. Finally we have a government that is responsive to the needs of northerners.

#### DOCTOR SHORTAGE

**Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka):** I have a question for the Minister of Health. Last week, I drove to the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association conference in Kenora. While I was there, I spoke with municipal representatives about the doctor situation in the community of Geraldton. The people of Geraldton would like to know what you're doing to fill the void left by the doctors who are leaving their community this Friday.

**Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** I've been working very closely with my colleague, the local member, on that issue. It's a very challenging one indeed for the people of Geraldton, and I recognize this entirely. We've worked very closely with the mayor as well, and a variety of initiatives are together and in place to assist, both on the short-term and on the longer term.

I think it's fair to say that on the shorter term, the health needs of the people in Geraldton will be met through a variety of coverages, which are often referred to as locums. These tend to be very short stints of doctors coming in from other places. On the longer term, we have in place very generous funding incentives for doctors to practise in communities like Geraldton. We will continue to work with the local community until we're satisfied that their needs can be met on a longer-term basis. But on the short term, for certain, the people of Geraldton should know that through locums and through the work of the Group Health Centre in Sault Ste. Marie, which has been helpful, and adjacent communities like Marathon, we're seeking to provide the necessary coverage while we address these concerns on a longer-term basis.

**Mr. Miller:** Minister, the situation is that all the doctors but two leave this Friday, May 13. The reality is that the locum pool has suddenly evaporated, so there's a very big question mark hanging over the heads of the people in Geraldton. You made a commitment to Geraldton that services wouldn't be cut or the hospital closed. I'd like you to tell the community of Geraldton where the replacement doctors are coming from and when they will arrive.

**Hon. Mr. Smitherman:** I hope that the honourable member had the candour, while he was addressing the situation, to acknowledge that a big contribution to this problem is the fact that for five years, the party that he's part of sat on their hands while communities like Geraldton and more than 100 others across Ontario fell short of doctors.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay):** That was then; this is now.

**Hon. Mr. Smitherman:** The honourable member heckles to say, "That was then; this is now." He's one of those who subscribe to the view, I guess, that you can produce a doctor as fast as you can produce a pizza, for example. But you can't. We're working overtime—double-step, two-time—to be able to produce more doctors in Ontario. There's tremendous evidence of that. On the shorter term, we will have to rely upon things like locums. I personally have come across doctors, even in the last five or six days, who have indicated to me that they'll be taking part of their summer leave and making it available to people in Geraldton. That's evidence that we've let everybody know of the really difficult circumstances that are there. We have common cause with the people of Geraldton. We're working hand in hand with the mayor with a view toward addressing this situation that we all acknowledge is a very challenging one indeed.

#### ANIMAL PROTECTION

**Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay):** The minister should get his hecklers straight.

My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. You know that there are more roadside zoos in this province than anywhere else in this country. We have no regulations in place to protect the welfare of the animals—or the visiting public, even more importantly. We know that there are regulations that have been written up that have been sitting on your desk for some months now, and we've seen nothing come out of the process to date. Can you please tell us today when we can expect those new regulations dealing with this issue to be brought before the province?

**Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources):** This is an important issue, and there's a lot of public interest, obviously, in how animals are cared for and tended in zoos across this province. We've been consulting with that community to make sure that the regulations we bring forward are sensible and practical and can be implemented in a timely fashion. I'm saying to the member that he should stay tuned and we will be presenting them shortly.

**Mr. Bisson:** That's just the problem. People have been staying tuned, and they've seen nothing coming out of this channel just yet. The issue is that not only are the regulations not coming out, but it's also—

**Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** Don't be so hard on yourself.

**Mr. Bisson:** When you're heckling me, it is funny. That was good.

Anyway, the issue is that not only are the regulations not coming out, but you know as well as I do that one of the outstanding issues is that of the exotic species, such as lions, tigers and others. It is rumoured that there is nothing in the regulations you're looking at that will deal with exotic species. Will you confirm, yes or no: Will the regulations deal with exotic species?

**Hon. Mr. Ramsay:** I'm addressing an exotic species right across the room. As a fellow northerner, I add that as a compliment, and I know he takes it as a compliment.

I would say again to the member that we want to make sure we get this right. There are a lot of concerns, whether it be caring for indigenous species or exotic species in the varied zoos across the province. We're working with the stakeholders to make sure we get new regulations right, that they be practical and that we can implement them in a timely way. I say to the member that we'll get there shortly.

**Mr. Bisson:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Teddy bears are not an exotic species.

#### SPORT FISHING

**Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward–Hastings):** My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Sport fishing is an extremely popular activity in this province. My wife and I have a 7- and an 8-year-old who, once we taught them to not eat the worms, discovered that they really enjoyed fishing. Over the past weekend, the Bay of Quinte in my area was literally full of boats, with the opening of walleye season. I understand that you're proposing a number of changes that will better serve today's anglers, and I wonder if you could share them with us, realizing that what you're doing will preserve the fish stock in Ontario. What are the regulation changes that you're proposing?

**Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources):** I'm glad to have the details of the fishing habits of the Parsons family, and I wish them well out there.

I would say to the member that what I want to be doing over the next few years is working with the anglers of this province to make sure they have a stake in how we regulate and conserve our fish resource. Rather than taking arbitrary fishing zones and formulating our regulations over that, what I want to do is look at ecologically based zones and basically form a type of stewardship council that would have governance over them. Working with the people who have the greatest stake in this in each community, I think we can come up with regulations that are sensible, and not just arbitrary, based on large geographic zones.

1540

**Mr. Parsons:** I believe anglers in Ontario want to do the right thing and abide by the rules, but currently they are rather confusing, to put it mildly. There are different seasons and different species throughout Ontario. In fact, the document your ministry puts out identifying rules and regulations throughout the province is fairly lengthy. Is there something you could do that would simplify it so that citizens don't inadvertently commit an offence and get themselves in trouble?

**Hon. Mr. Ramsay:** That's an excellent question. I think the complexity of the fishing regulations over the years has really turned people off. They're so complicated, and for some it's hard to figure out what the intent is. We're going to reduce the number of fishing zones to these ecologically based zones. They will be sensible and understandable. We want to make sure that anglers in this province have an understanding of that and

have confidence in what they're doing, so that when they go out with their family, as the member does, and enjoy the pursuit of angling across this province, they're able, with great confidence and assurance, to know that they are obeying the law and regulations and providing for the conservation of our fish.

#### HIGHWAY INTERCHANGE

**Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa):** I have a question for the Minister of Transportation. As you well know, we've had dialogue regarding the Stevenson Road interchange in Oshawa over the past months. I'm hearing various things about the timelines for construction, the start of the project and what's happening with Stevenson Road. We've heard it has been delayed for a four-year process. I have since found out that part of the reasoning was to minimize the impact on traffic, and lately I've heard that it has gone to five years. Can you update the Legislature as to what is actually going to take place with the Stevenson Road interchange?

**Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation):** I am very pleased to let the member know that we are making steady progress on the project he talked about. The Stevenson Road project is about a \$57-million project. It's large, it's complex and it requires various stages of construction. We are ready to award the contract to start construction on this new interchange in Oshawa, pending, I think, one final acquisition of property; 20 of 21 properties have already been acquired. We are moving ahead with this project.

**The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling):** I just want to commend the members for an excellent question period. We moved along nicely.

#### PETITIONS

##### HEALTH CARE

**Mr. John O'Toole (Durham):** I'm pleased to be recognized first for a change.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

"Whereas abandoning support for these services will place greater demand on other health care sectors such as physicians, emergency wards and after-hours clinics; and

"Whereas no Ontario citizen should be denied access to necessary medical care because of lack of funds;

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

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

I am pleased to support and endorse this on behalf of my constituents of Durham.

#### CREDIT VALLEY HOSPITAL

**Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West):** I have a petition regarding the Credit Valley Hospital from a group of residents in the Lisgar area, and it reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

I thank, especially, Susan Ksiezopolski and Joan Hongens of Lisgar. I'm pleased to sign this petition and ask Nathan to carry it for me.

#### ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

**Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the current government has proposed province-wide legislation that would ban smoking in public places; and

"Whereas the proposed legislation will also prohibit smoking in private, non-profit clubs such as Legion halls, navy clubs and related facilities as well; and

"Whereas these organizations have elected representatives that determine the rules and regulations that affect the membership of the individual club and facility; and

"Whereas imposing smoke-free legislation on these clubs disregards the rights of these citizens and the original intention of these clubs, especially with respect to our veterans;

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

“That the Parliament of Ontario exempt Legion halls, navy clubs and other non-profit, private or veterans clubs from government smoke-free legislation.”

I affix my signature in support.

#### REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

“Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

“Whereas closing Huronia Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities; and

“Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of Huronia Regional Centre to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, open, and to transform them into ‘centres of excellence’ to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live.”

I’m very pleased to present this to Madison.

#### VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

**Mr. John O’Toole (Durham):** I’m pleased to present yet another petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas many volunteer fire departments in Ontario are strengthened by the service of double-hatter firefighters who work as professional, full-time firefighters and also serve as volunteer firefighters on their free time and in their home communities; and

“Whereas the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association has declared their intent to ‘phase out’ these double-hatter firefighters; and

“Whereas double-hatter firefighters are being threatened by the union leadership and forced to resign as volunteer firefighters or face losing their full-time jobs, and this is weakening volunteer fire departments in Ontario”;—and indeed my riding—“and

“Whereas Waterloo–Wellington MPP Ted Arnott has introduced Bill 52, the Volunteer Firefighters Employment Protection Act, that would uphold the right to

volunteer and solve this problem concerning public safety in Ontario;

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

“That the provincial government express public support for MPP Ted Arnott’s Bill 52 and willingness to pass it into law or introduce similar legislation that protects the right of firefighters to volunteer in their home communities on their own free time.”

I’m pleased to present this petition to Trishaala and sign it on their behalf.

#### REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

**Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke):** I’m pleased to present a petition as well. I misplaced my glasses, so I might have a little struggle here, but anyway, we’re going to give it a go.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario; and

“Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close the Rideau Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

**1550**

“Whereas closing the Rideau Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities;

“Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of the Rideau Regional Centre to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep the Rideau Regional Centre open as a home for people with developmental disabilities and to maintain it as a ‘centre of excellence’ to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live.”

I affix my name to this petition.

#### CREDIT VALLEY HOSPITAL

**Mr. Tim Peterson (Mississauga South):** It’s a pleasure to rise today and petition the Ontario Legislative Assembly about 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 sign this petition and I give it to Derek to take to the House.

#### TAXATION

**Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

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

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

I affix my name in support.

#### REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** Here are some of about 45,000 names that are on petitions in the province today.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

“Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

“Whereas closing Huronia Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities; and

“Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of Huronia Regional Centre to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, open, and to transform them into ‘centres of excellence’ to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live.”

Mr. Speaker, I’m pleased to sign this and present it to Madison, once again, to present to you.

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

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

“Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

“Whereas closing Huronia Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities; and

“Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of Huronia Regional Centre to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, open, and to transform them into ‘centres of excellence’ to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live.”

I’ll sign this petition and thank my aunt Jane Rodgers and cousin Andrew for bringing it into my office this morning.

#### HEALTH CARE FUNDING

**Mr. John O’Toole (Durham):** Yet another petition on behalf of the people of Durham.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

“Whereas the Ontario Liberal government moved in their 2004 budget on May 18, 2004, to delist what were publicly funded medical services such as chiropractic services, optometry examinations and physiotherapy services;

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

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

I'm pleased to sign in support and present this to Trishaala and endorse it on behalf of the people of Durham.

#### REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** This is a very important petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

“Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

“Whereas closing HRC will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities; and

“Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of Huronia Regional Centre to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, open, and to transform them into ‘centres of excellence’ to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live.”

I'm pleased to sign this and present it to Kaitlin to give to you.

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

##### ELECTION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 5, 2005, on the motion for 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 / 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 Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Further debate?

**Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West):** I'm pleased to address the implications of Bill 176, the Election Statute Law Amendment Act.

Our governance structure in Ontario is strong, and our governance structure in Ontario works well. What Bill 176 asks Ontarians to think about is whether our governance structure in Ontario could be stronger and whether our governance structure in Ontario could work better.

Most of this bill is about process rather than outcomes. It talks about the creation of a citizens' assembly to look at how we choose our elected representatives. My experience has been that Ontarians—and I've had the good fortune to have lived in three provinces in our country, so I can extend this and say that my experience has been that Canadians—are a politically aware and intelligent people. Trusting a thorough examination of how we choose our elected representatives to an assembly of Ontarians places that question in very good hands, assuming that the quality of input to that assembly also stresses the strengths of the electoral system that has served us well for one and one third centuries.

#### 1600

Some measures proposed by Bill 176 are outcomes, and they ought to be supported by all parties in this issue. One such measure is the preservation of 11 northern ridings. Some in this House have called the preservation of representation from our northern ridings to be—and I use the term exactly—political gerrymandering, which seems to me almost like speaking out of both sides of their mouths. We're committed to preserving 11 ridings in Ontario's north. We ran on that commitment, and with Bill 176 we say to the people in northern Ontario, “We're delivering that commitment.”

Allowing for the redistribution of seats in southern Ontario along federal lines, Ontario will elect 107 members in this House where 103 now sit. The bill incorporates the provisions of Bill 86, which fixed election dates in Ontario. Is fixing election dates a good idea? We'll find out in an election or two. But one thing we do

know is that the next election won't follow a Magna-style budget. It won't be engineered in a political backroom, and it will be held on October 4, 2007.

Bill 176 will probably be remembered as the political donation transparency act, because much of its impact will be on how political donations are recorded and how they're disclosed. The bill will require real-time disclosure of political contributions. This means that within five days of a riding association or a central party accepting a donation cheque and depositing it in the bank, the identity of that donor will need to be disclosed. This is not meant to stigmatize political donors. Donations are the only source of funds for political parties and their candidates. People contribute proudly to our political system, and their money, their passion, their ideas and their commitment are what make our system strong and vibrant.

But Bill 176 seeks to ensure that money alone doesn't drown out the passion, the ideas and the commitment. It is said that money doesn't talk, it screams. The screams of a hard-core, well-funded and strident political ideology can drown out a broader-based moderate ideology.

Bill 176 will ensure that if a narrow class of donors for whom the donation limits of politics are merely chump change try to drown out any other voice, then we're going to be able to find out who is funding that voice. If it should come to pass that a systematic effort is underway to tap a specific type of donor to give the max to the central party and to give the max to each of the maximum number of riding associations, we will be able to see through this campaign as it's happening. If a group of wealthy people donate the max through their company and through a group of linked or numbered companies that they or their companies closely control, then we'll be able to see their donations come. We'll be able to track their frequency, link the companies and, if it looks excessive, then raise the matter for debate.

Again, this is not to stigmatize a political donation. A political donation is a legitimate way to express your intent, to express your ideals. A political donation is the equivalent of getting out and canvassing.

Politics works on a blend of people and money. You design your campaign based on what you have or what you can get. You need money and you need people. You need them both, because the pizza that feeds our canvassers, the soft drinks that fuel our phoners, the voice messages, the print ads, the brochures, the broadcast spots, the office equipment and supplies, the election signs and all the other things that go with asking a few tens of thousands of Ontario households to make an informed decision all cost money.

Bill 176 is less about catching illegal contributions—because, very frankly, our system in Ontario is comparatively honest—than it is about shining light on improper contributions. Those members and those candidates who cast their nets far and wide and whose fundraising efforts cause people to come together and share ideas need to be rewarded. Those members or parties who narrow their appeal in a fundraising campaign, whose intent is to keep

people apart and divided, and to use the resource of money as a sledgehammer against contrary ideas, need to be exposed.

People will talk a lot about Bill 176 and some of the things it can do. It proposes to elect a citizens' assembly to examine the way we choose our representatives. A point to keep in mind is that the people from this citizens' assembly won't be nominated by the political parties in this Legislative Assembly. They'll be chosen at random by Elections Ontario. This obviously means that those people chosen should properly mirror Ontario society. Some will support this party; some will support another party. Some may be intensely political; others may be unabashedly apolitical. The point is to bring together a group of people who can make an informed decision, expose them to a number of different ideas, have them provide advice to this House, this Legislative Assembly, and come back with a recommendation.

A similar process was followed in the province of British Columbia. The citizens' assembly there proposed a system called the single transferable vote. British Columbians will go to the polls in a number of days, and on May 17 will cast their ballot, not merely for their elected representative, but for whether or not a system recommended by their citizens' assembly, which is, by any admission, complex, should be adopted by that province.

In British Columbia, the rules regarding the adoption of the citizens' assembly recommendations stated that the referendum has to pass by a margin of 60% in 60% of all of the ridings in British Columbia. This is a good measure of check and balance. This says to the province: "If you come up with a recommendation that may be a significant departure from a system that has served us well, then that system should be a clear consensus of the majority of the people in the majority of the ridings before being adopted."

What will happen in Ontario? At this point, we're not there. At this point, Bill 176 proposes forming that citizens' assembly. My advice to them would also be to look at the strengths of the system that has served us well for one and one third centuries and never to forget one very strong advantage of it that doesn't exist in many systems of representation around the world; that is, it allows for the defeat of incumbents.

In the United States, for example, incumbency is a huge advantage. At the state and federal levels, the rate of re-election approaches 90%. Often that's good. As some of my friends in this House who have been here a number of terms—longer than I have—have said, "When the political winds are changing and the government shifts, often some of the good members go along with some of the ones who likely should go, and some of the people coming in on the wave may not deserve to be here as a much as some of those who don't get here."

We in Ontario are going to focus on questions of similar magnitude and, in Canada's largest province, trust our faith to a citizens' assembly chosen from people who watch our system carefully, who see what goes on here

from day to day and in whose judgment I'm sure Ontarians will have a set of strong, workable ideas to debate, come the next election.

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

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to make a few comments on the speaker from Mississauga West, who made clear points on his government's plans for Bill 176.

There are a couple of points I'd like to make. I, for one, won't be supporting this legislation. I don't believe in the Americanization of Ontario politics, and I believe that's what four-year terms, the set election dates, do. I know there are people in our caucus who would probably agree with it, and there are probably other members in the House who would disagree.

One of the reasons I wanted to put on the record is the fact that, as the Prime Minister or as a Premier, I think one of the really nice things a Premier gets to do is to call the election with his advisers and his own decision-making. I've always felt that that was a little intriguing. That kept our politics a little bit different than the politics south of the border, where they're already campaigning for the next election and that's all we'll see for particularly the year and a half ahead of the election: campaign ads, smearing etc.

1610

I, for one, prefer the system that we have in place. I think it has served Ontario well. I don't like to see our Ontario become like a 51st state. That's what I think we're seeing with these fixed election dates.

I'll have a number of other comments to make as we go through this, but that's one I wanted to put on the record to begin with.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay):** I'm going to have a chance to speak more fully as I do the lead for our caucus on this particular issue, but I just wanted to say that, on the citizens' assembly part of what the member talked about, I'm completely in disagreement involving that process. Let me tell you why. There are two reasons.

First of all, I've seen in this Legislature over the last 16 years, as have others who have been here longer than me, that governments do all kinds of things when it comes to changing fundamentally how we conduct business in the province of Ontario, be it the roles of the municipalities, hospitals and school boards, amalgamation of cities etc. We've always had the understanding that the right to do so is a right of Parliament. Parliament is here in order to make those important decisions on behalf of Canadians.

The number two issue on the citizens' assembly is that at the end of the day, I think a government could very much control the outcome of the work that the citizens' assembly should do if you give the power to the minister to set one of those up. If you take a look at what happened in BC, they so much complicated, in my view, the whole issue of, "Should there be reform or should there not be reform, and what should it be?" that, quite frankly, that referendum passing will be somewhat surprising.

What I would argue is that if we're serious about saying we want to have electoral reform, there is a process in this assembly to do that. That is, you refer the matter out to committee. If you want to do a standing committee or a select committee, that's entirely in the purview of the government in this assembly. But you refer it out to committee. You allow members of the assembly who know something about elections and parliamentary reform to go out and canvass across the province, as we do on all legislation, and you bring it back in here for a vote.

At the end of the day, the people of Ontario will have an opportunity to vote. When it comes to an election, they either agree or disagree with what a government has done. That's the best form of referendum: the election date itself, when members agree that we've done the right thing here in this Legislature.

**Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward–Hastings):** The member for Mississauga West said that money talks. I know it does, but in my case it says, "Goodbye."

*Laughter.*

**Mr. Parsons:** On a serious note, we live in a pretty special country. We're one of the few countries in the world—sorry; I didn't mean to start that way, because this is a serious topic. We live in a pretty special country, where literally anyone can say, "I'm not happy with the current system, and I have the right to stand for election." In far too many countries, it literally requires war or civil war. We have that right.

We are also unique, I think, for many parts of the world, in that the elections are affordable for the vast majority of individuals. We have a process in place now that allows donations, and, rightfully so, there's a cap on it from any one organization or individual. A member who is phenomenally rich can't simply buy a seat by putting their own personal money in it to any extent. The system is pretty fair, except that there is concern among the public at times: "This member has been influenced too much by one particular donor," or group of donors, or a particular industry.

I applaud this bill, because this bill will make it transparent. It will be obvious to anyone in the public who has supported the candidate how much they have donated. Rather than waiting a year for it to then be published and for someone to seek it out, this bill will provide that within five days it must be posted on the Internet. Literally now, the Internet is accessible to almost everyone in Ontario, thanks to libraries and schools that provide free use of computers.

I applaud this bill, which I think will reinforce my belief that we have a pretty honest and good group of politicians in this country, people who have come to do the right thing. I believe this is the right direction, which opens up more to the public so they can see where their members' or their candidates' funding came from.

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

You have two minutes to reply.

**Mr. Delaney:** I want to thank the members for Simcoe North, Timmins–James Bay and Prince Edward–Hastings

for their contributions to this debate. I'm hoping this debate will be as non-partisan as possible, because there are no ideas here that are cast in concrete, and we can truly examine them.

To my colleague from Simcoe North, I share your sentiment that we need a system that makes for a stronger Canada and not a pale imitation of the United States; I fully agree with you. I'm hoping that the citizens' assembly doesn't recommend something that reminds us more of the United States than of a parliamentary democracy.

To my colleague from Timmins–James Bay, Bill 176's purpose is in part to ask if we are serious about having electoral reform. It doesn't assume we're going to take apart our existing system; it simply asks, what are the alternatives? Let the people come forth with an idea that they feel is an alternative to what we have now, let's debate it and then vote on it, and let the best idea win. One option has always been to stay with the status quo.

To the member from Prince Edward–Hastings, I think his money speaks the same language as mine. Having been raised in Quebec, my money mostly says, "Adieu." He noted, however, that one attribute of democracy in Canada, not just Ontario, is that you don't have to be inordinately wealthy to run. In fact, when one looks around the chamber here, one finds fairly few people we can look at and say, "Aren't the members from this, that and the other riding terrifically wealthy?" In fact, most of us are as average as the people we represent, and most of us fairly represent the spectrum of Ontarians who send us here to do their work, build Ontario and make it strong.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka):** It's my pleasure to join the debate this afternoon on Bill 176, which is 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.

This bill basically covers four components. It provides for fixed election dates for provincial general elections. Bill 176 would also authorize the selection of representative bodies of electors to consider specified matters relating to democratic renewal. It amends the Election Finances Act to require disclosure of certain political contributions. When a contribution exceeding \$100 is made to a registered political party or a registered leadership contestant, the chief financial officer must file a report with the Chief Election Officer within five business days after the contribution is deposited, and the Chief Election Officer in turn publishes the information on a Web site. Failure to file the report is an offence that may result in a fine up to double the amount of the unreported contribution. I know that Ted Arnott, the member from Waterloo–Wellington, has a private member's bill which takes that idea and expands upon it. The fourth part of this bill is that it amends the Representation Act, 1996, which sets provincial boundaries in line with federal electoral boundaries, and instead would maintain 11 northern ridings and increase the number of southern

ridings to 96. I would like to discuss that point to begin with, and if I have time, I'll come back to some of the other points.

The one I would like to focus on is maintaining 11 ridings in northern Ontario. Just last week, I went on a northern road trip. I left from Muskoka at 6:30 a.m. on a Monday, headed north and made my way up to the northwestern Ontario municipal conference in Kenora by road. I went via Sudbury and then stopped in Espanola and had a meeting there. I stopped in Blind River and had a meeting in Blind River. I stopped in Thessalon and had another meeting there. I made my way through Sault Ste. Marie and on to Wawa, where I stayed overnight and followed Highway 17 through Thunder Bay; had a meeting in Thunder Bay and then stayed overnight in Atikokan; then on to Fort Frances, and then farther on up to Kenora to where the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association conference was going on; then made my way back via Highway 11, coming back to Thunder Bay, stopping in Dryden; stopping overnight in Thunder Bay, holding more meetings there and continuing on via Highway 11; stopping in Longlac and Kapuskasing and staying overnight in Kapuskasing; then farther on, having meetings in Iroquois Falls, Kirkland Lake and Elk Lake before making my way back to Muskoka six days later on the Saturday evening.

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As the critic for Northern Development and Mines, I can tell you that that trip, for one thing, was very useful for me in terms of learning more about some of the issues on the ground in the north. It also gave me a very real sense of just how huge northern Ontario is. I think that is one of the main justifications for maintaining 11 ridings in northern Ontario. The riding of Kenora–Rainy River, to give you an example, is some 336,783 square kilometres. It's just an immense area. I think that's bigger than three times the size of all the southern Ontario ridings. It's huge.

There are a couple of northern riding which are not all that large, they being Sudbury and Sault Ste Marie. Landmass-wise, they're not that huge. Nipissing is not that huge as well. I know the member from Lanark–Carleton spoke yesterday and was concerned with gerrymandering on the part of the government because they hold seven of the current northern ridings. I think it's safe to say that it's easier for an incumbent to win an election than it is for a new candidate coming along.

**Mr. Michael A. Brown (Algoma–Manitoulin):** It depends who it is.

**Mr. Miller:** I hear the member for Algoma–Manitoulin agreeing with that point.

Perhaps what we should have is an independent commission that looks at those ridings so that there isn't gerrymandering. Perhaps the boundaries need to be redrawn so that the sizes are equalized a little bit more and you don't have those fairly small ridings in Sudbury and Sault Ste Marie. As the representative of Parry Sound–Muskoka, which is, I believe, some 15,000 square kilometres, it is a fairly big riding when you're trying to

drive around it and look after constituents' concerns. In fact, just a couple of weeks ago I visited Dokis First Nation from my home. To give you an idea: One way, to have a meeting in Dokis was a three-and-a-half-hour drive. Just getting there and back is seven hours in a day before you start having some meetings. So there are some practical concerns to just the sheer size of the ridings in northern Ontario.

I know the member for Timmins–James Bay is going to speak in a moment. He's a private pilot and does a fair amount of flying around the north. I'm a private pilot. I'm looking forward to having the opportunity, as northern critic, to visit some of the more remote First Nations communities—hopefully this summer. But it shouldn't be a requirement to be an MPP for the north that you also be a private pilot so you can cover the vast geographic area of the riding. I think there has to be consideration given to the vast size of northern Ontario. That's why I am in favour of maintaining 11 northern ridings.

We need to go to the root of the problem, which is that we're seeing declining populations in the north and an out-migration of youth. We really have to ask ourselves why that is happening. Why is the government not addressing that problem? What we need to have are jobs in the north, economic activity in the north to keep the young people there and attract new businesses to the north. I can tell you, having just made my tour of northern Ontario, that northern Ontario is hurting big time.

The trip I did—first of all, it was spectacular scenery most of the way, even though it snowed a good part of the trip. There's beautiful scenery from Sault Ste Marie through Thunder Bay. From Thunder Bay up the coast of Lake Superior is absolutely spectacular. If anybody who hasn't made that trip, I highly recommend that you start making plans and stimulate the economy of northern Ontario. It's absolutely beautiful. There's fantastic variety.

One of the places I visited was Red Rock, on the shore of Lake Superior. Red Rock is aptly named because it is a huge cliff that is red. In terms of the colour of the roads at that point, it feels like you're down in Georgia or something. There's quite a variety.

I met with the mill manager there. The mill is the town in Red Rock. It's a container board mill. If that mill goes, so goes the town. That's the case in many, many, many communities in northern Ontario. You drive into the town, and there's a huge mill, and it is, in most cases, the main employer in the town and it's often the main feature of the town. In Red Rock, they're hurting. The mill was doing very well 10 years ago. Right now they're struggling; they're losing money, I believe. One of the main costs of most of the mills is energy. At Red Rock, 30% of their costs is natural gas. They've been faced with cost increases which are not necessarily the responsibility of this government but which are piling up on them.

We've seen the Canadian dollar appreciate 35% in the last few years. We have the softwood lumber dispute. We have challenges with fibre supply, wood supply, to many of the mills, and I hear, from speaking to northerners, that the Ministry of Natural Resources is often part of the problem.

One of the things this government does have control over—and I certainly hear from many people in northern Ontario that they're very concerned about it—is energy costs. I have to ask myself, what are the local Liberal members doing to deal with these energy costs; what's the government doing? Well, the government is making the situation worse. They have a policy where they're going to shut down the coal-fired electricity generating stations in Ontario by 2007. That's going to be very difficult to do, but they're planning on doing that. As far as the northwest is concerned, it could be the nail in the coffin for many of these mills. What do you think is going to happen to the price of natural gas, in the case of Red Rock, when 25% of the electrical generating capacity of the province switches to natural gas-fired generation by 2007, the easiest thing to do in a quick time frame? Well, the price of natural gas is going to increase dramatically. I say that it'll very much negatively affect these northern businesses, as it will all the people who are paying for natural gas to heat their homes etc. It could be the nail in the coffin for many of these mills. So the government is actually making the situation worse with their policy.

If anything, in the north, we need the reverse. We should perhaps be giving consideration to preferential pricing. At this time, in the northwest, I think they generate about 1,500 megawatts of electricity. They're usually using about 1,100 megawatts. Well, if you shut down the two coal-fired plants in Atikokan and Thunder Bay, you'll lose about half, about 500 megawatts of power. At this point, they have an excess of capacity. If they could pay the real cost of electricity, it would be a real plus for northerners and might attract businesses. Instead, the government is embarking on policies which are going to force up the price of electricity and force up the price of natural gas. We've recently seen them bring in a 12% increase in the price for large industrial users. This is making it very difficult for all those mills that are the central employer in northern Ontario and it's very difficult for the mining industry, which also uses a lot of energy.

I stopped in Atikokan. I stayed there overnight, and met first thing in the morning with their energy committee. They were looking for me to ask a question of the Legislature, which I did shortly after getting back, because they're nervous. They had the Minister of Energy up in Atikokan. He made a speech to the chamber of commerce. He told them that he's planning on shutting the mill down but he's going to somehow magically replace the 90 jobs in that coal-fired generating station. The year 2007 is coming quickly, and they're wondering what the Minister of Energy's plan is to replace those valuable jobs in the coal-fired generating station. They have some interesting ideas that I wish the government would listen to and consider implementing. They'd like to see Atikokan stay open and become a research station for new technologies in making coal cleaner.

You have China opening many, many coal-fired generating stations. A brand new coal-fired generating

station, a Genesee 3 plant, just opened March 1 in Alberta.

### 1630

In Atikokan, they'd like to see new technologies tested there that help reduce emissions, that help reduce things like mercury from the emissions of the coal-fired plant. They'd like to become a centre of excellence so they can export that technology to other countries, like China. I would say that's worth considering. You could not only maintain those 90 jobs but expand upon those jobs in Atikokan, which very much needs to see that sort of support from the government to maintain some jobs in that area.

While I was up north, Abitibi announced that they're selling the Mission mill in the Thunder Bay area, along with 500,000 acres of land. Obviously they wouldn't be doing that unless they are hurting.

I stopped in Kapuskasing. The day before, Highway 11 had been closed at Kapuskasing. They closed the highway for a couple of reasons: One, to protest the fact that the government hasn't approved a hydroelectric generating station. The group KERRA is behind that. They're trying to get some new hydroelectric generation going and the government is not approving that project. They'd like to see that, especially if they're planning to shut down those coal-fired plants. We know they're going to need electricity. So they closed the highway to protest that. Second, at Opatatika, the mill there is scheduled to close in May. They have concerns in Kapuskasing about the process the Ministry of Natural Resources is following, the fact that there hasn't been full public input into that process, and that's something they'd like to see. They're very determined to try to maintain those jobs at Opatatika.

We clearly see that the government is not supporting the north. That's the root of the problem, and why we're talking about having less representation. There are fewer people in the north because there are fewer jobs. We need to do things to stimulate the economy in northern Ontario, not to shut it down. We also need to support the communities in northern Ontario.

I went to the northwestern Ontario municipal conference, stayed overnight there. I was there for the first session, which was explaining the new funding program from the provincial government to the municipal governments called the Ontario municipal partnership fund. It replaces the old community reinvestment fund. I got to go through the explanation; unfortunately, I didn't get to see the fireworks afterwards. I had to get on the road to find out how the people of northwestern Ontario felt about the fact that in just about every case this government is reducing its support for those municipalities.

A quick list: Atikokan, under the old CRF program, received \$1.6 million in 2004, while in 2008, four years down the road, they're only going to get \$1.4 million; Fort Frances goes from \$3.1 million in 2004 to \$2.6 million in 2008; Kenora goes from \$4.9 million in 2004 to \$3.5 million in 2008; Greenstone (Geraldton), where they so desperately need to attract doctors, goes from

\$4.3 million down to \$3.3 million, losing \$1 million; Pickle Lake goes from \$766,000 in 2004 to \$567,000 in 2008; Rainy River goes from \$578,000 down to \$512,000; Red Lake goes from \$2.1 million to \$1.8 million; Sioux Lookout goes from \$3.5 million to \$2.4 million; Thunder Bay goes from \$25.6 million to \$22.2 million; Ignace goes from \$1.1 million to \$925,000.

I don't know why this government has it out for northwestern and northern Ontario, but it is severely cutting the funding that these municipalities so need.

Look at the other provincial funding program, COMRIF, the Canada-Ontario municipal rural infrastructure fund. That's a Canada-Ontario program. I met with the mayor of Smooth Rock Falls. I can tell you, the mayor of Smooth Rock Falls is not a happy camper. They have a work order on their water system. It has to be completed by December 31, 2005. You'd think that would be a health and safety priority, something the government might want to support. Well, their COMRIF application was turned down, and the mayor is not very happy about it.

In Rainy River, they can't build a house because they have an environmental caution in place. All the other municipalities in the Rainy River area were stunned when Rainy River's COMRIF application was turned down. They couldn't believe it. Obviously a health and safety concern—turned down. Thunder Bay's application was turned down. I read a clipping in the Thunder Bay newspaper with an explanation from the spokesperson from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing talking about how the number one priority was health and safety concerns. If that was the case, I would have thought those other applications I mentioned would be approved. The government needs to reverse the trend that is happening in northern Ontario, and needs to listen to northerners.

I met with a group of people in Kirkland Lake, and they talked about the fact that the federal government has done something that makes sense in Kirkland Lake. They have a great big veterans' affairs building located there. Kirkland Lake is a town that has gone—my numbers might not be exact—from roughly 25,000 down to 8,000. So obviously they have infrastructure, they have houses; everything is there for people to arrive and help solve some of the problems of the north. I think it would make sense for the Ontario government to consider locating a ministry at Kirkland Lake. I'm sure the rent would be a lot cheaper there. The experience of that federal office is that they actually have only a 3% turnover rate in the Kirkland Lake area, so they're doing a great job of keeping people there.

Unfortunately, I'm just about out of time. I did want to hit on some other points, but perhaps I'll do that in my two minutes.

I see the local paper in Thunder Bay talking about what this government isn't doing. There used to be a guarantee that Bombardier would have the first right to build rapid transit, and I see that the McGuinty government is planning to sign a memorandum in Ottawa which

would allow the city to seek tenders from around the world for its \$725-million north-south light-rail transit program. It was an agreement put in by Bill Davis that gave Bombardier the first crack at the job. I was in Thunder Bay, and I can tell you that there are a lot of stores boarded up. They need those jobs in Thunder Bay, and they need the support of this government. If they want to maintain 11 ridings in the north, they need more people in the north and they need to support the north with some real jobs.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Just before questions and comments, I draw the members' attention to the members' gallery east, where we have visiting us Gino Matrundola, the member for Willowdale in the 34th parliament. Welcome.

Questions and comments?

**Mr. Bisson:** I want to thank my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka for touching on a number of issues that are very important to northern Ontario. But here is the point I would like to make in regard to that: One of the basic problems we have in northern Ontario, as in other parts of rural Ontario, is that the number of elected representatives sitting in this Legislature is fewer and fewer as time goes by. Why? Because the population in urban centres is getting larger and larger. There used to be a time in this assembly when the rural vote counted for a majority of what happened inside this Legislature, or certainly had a much heavier say than it has now. What we've got, as an example, is 11 members to represent northern Ontario in an assembly now of 103, soon to be 107. I guess the point I would make is that we need to find ways, if we're really talking about democratic renewal, of giving regions of the province a greater voice in the Legislature so the voices of the citizens can be better heard.

For example, my colleague talked about what happened last week or two weeks ago in Kapuskasing, where KERRA organized community members from around to come and basically scream at the provincial government—that's the best way I can put it. They organized a rally so that the provincial government could hear that there are some serious economic problems in the forestry industry in northern Ontario and they want them addressed. The unfortunate part is, we're always in the same situation. This is no disrespect to my good friend Mr. Miller, but the person who goes out for the PC caucus to tour northern Ontario to deal with the issues and understand better is another northerner.

**Mr. Dunlop:** Don't take that away from him.

**Mr. Bisson:** I don't want to take it away from him, but the point is, we need more southern members, urban members, coming to northern Ontario to see first-hand what is going on so that when we raise these issues in the Legislature there is far more understanding, and with understanding comes solutions.

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**Mr. Brown:** I have travelled with the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. He is quite an amiable partner in travel. I kind of wish I had had the opportunity to ride

with him on this trip from Bracebridge to Kenora. I think members should know, one of the important things about that trip is that going from Toronto to Kenora is similar to going from Toronto to the Florida border, to give you some idea of the expanse of this province.

What I really wanted to ask the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka—he was sort of part of a government that reduced northern representation from 16 to 11 seats. Now I think he said, if I heard him correctly here—he might want to clarify this—that his party supports keeping 11 seats in northern Ontario. That isn't the message I heard from other members of his caucus, the member from Lanark–Carleton, for example, who seemed to think that keeping the 11 seats in northern Ontario—which, as a matter of fact, as people would know, had been done in at least one prior redistribution and possibly two more; I'm not exactly clear on that. It had frozen the representation in northern Ontario so that we would have members. I'm sure that when the member gets up to respond, he will clearly state the position of his party on maintaining the 11 seats in northern Ontario. I think it is critical to northern Ontario to maintain its representation, at the very least, in the north. I think the way to do that is for his caucus to support this bill.

**Mr. Dunlop:** I'm pleased to rise and make a few comments on the speech from the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. Clearly, as the critic for northern development and mines, he takes his job very seriously. In fact, when someone does that kind of tour of the north and visits as many people as Mr. Miller has visited, he gets a good sense of the problems we have in northern Ontario.

There are a couple of things I wanted to put on the record. He mentioned, "What can the government do?" I'm already disappointed in this government's position on the expansion of Highways 11 and 400. The minister now responsible for northern development and mines was a strong advocate when he was in opposition. He read petitions continually; he demanded that both of those highways be expanded to four lanes. Of course, the Progressive Conservative government under Mike Harris and Ernie Eves responded to that and put in the largest four-lane expansion in the history of this province in northern Ontario.

Since then, there have only been a couple of small contracts on Highway 400 and Highway 11. I am really disappointed in the Dalton McGuinty government, and particularly in the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, because they have not responded to that. They've been in power for 18 months, and we haven't seen the contracts allocated. As far as I'm concerned, that's one area, for public safety and for economic development, that the government of Ontario could do a lot for, particularly as they screamed so loud when they were in opposition.

I didn't really get a chance to put my second point across, but I just wanted to point out that this member works extremely hard, not only on behalf of his constituents in Parry Sound–Muskoka, but on behalf of all

Ontarians, and as a strong critic for northern development and mines.

**Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth):** I'm going to thank my colleague Mr. Bisson, who is going to do the leadoff for me today as the democratic renewal critic, because he's just—

*Applause.*

**Ms. Churley:** That's you, clapping for yourself.

Of course, I've asked him to say certain things on my behalf, but he's got a lot of his own things to say as well, as a former critic in this area.

New Democrats have been interested in reforming the system for some time. Several years ago we did a whole consultation around moving to some form of PR, proportional representation. That is still our position, and the law reform commission recommended a specific form: mixed-member. One of my major interests in changing the system is getting more women—and, I should add, visible minorities, aboriginals—into this Legislature. I work with Equal Voice. It's a non-partisan group that women members from all three parties sit on and its goal is to get more women elected. In this Parliament right now, in 2005, we still only have 22% women. New Democrats have an affirmative action system that goes a long way. We always do better, proportionately, than the other parties, but what's needed is that along with a change in the system—and we've seen it happen in other jurisdictions. So that is a major interest of mine.

I have to say, being a northerner myself—even though I represent downtown Toronto proudly, I come from Labrador—I certainly understand the concerns of the north. But I have to speak up as well for the concerns of Toronto, because everybody loves to bash Toronto. It's everybody's favourite pastime. But let me tell you, there are times when people also don't have a clear enough understanding of the difficult issues facing us in our cities these days. Let's keep it all in perspective and stand up for all of our constituents everywhere.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Member for Parry Sound–Muskoka, you have two minutes to reply.

**Mr. Miller:** Thank you to the members from Timmins–James Bay, Algoma–Manitoulin, Simcoe North and Toronto–Danforth for adding their comments.

One area I didn't really get a chance to talk much about in my 20 minutes was democratic renewal and the citizens' assembly that is a part of this bill. I just wanted to go on the record as saying that I think the points made by the member from Lanark–Carleton yesterday, who I see has joined us, and the member from Timmins–James Bay, who's going to speak in a moment, that we should use the collective wisdom of this place and the experience of members who have been here and establish a select committee—there's no reason why that couldn't be done right now to look into changes to this place. I believe we need to look more at fiscal responsibility as well. That's one of the responsibilities in this place that has become removed from MPPs. I think we need more input from opposition.

From my little trip around the north—it was 3,700 kilometres in 43 hours in the car—I note that the Trans-

Canada Highway is not much better than a side road in some places. I believe we need a long-range, non-partisan plan for making a Trans-Canada Highway right across this country that's four lanes and that it absolutely involve the federal government, because it's not something that can be done solely by the provincial government.

**Mr. Dunlop:** Highway 69.

**Mr. Miller:** I note that the member from Simcoe North brought up Highway 69. It's true that when the member from Sudbury was in opposition, that was his main issue. There wasn't a whole heck of a lot of construction on that section of highway as I drove up to Sudbury. There's a little bit started right at Sudbury, but otherwise not too much progress has been made in the almost two years the government has been in power.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate.

**Mr. Bisson:** I've been looking forward to this opportunity all afternoon—as a matter of fact, longer than that. I want to say that an hour is not going to do it. There is so much to say on this particular issue that, quite frankly, we could revert to the old rules where a member took the floor, and ceded the floor when the member, he or she, was done their speech. But I will do the best I can. I have an hour and I will try to rise to the challenge.

I want to say that the first question we have to ask ourselves under this bill is that we're amending the Election Statute Law Amendment Act, which deals with a number of things. It deals with fixed-date elections; it deals with the issue of election disclosure as far as money; it deals with the issue of whether we should change the electoral process that we have in the province; and it also deals with the issue of the number of seats in northern Ontario remaining at 11, such as it is now.

Let me just first of all put this question forward—and I know some friends of mine will disagree and other friends will agree: Does the current system work perfectly well? First of all, no system works perfectly well, I will be the first to admit. Does this system really suit us well? I guess the answer I give to that is, not really. One of the basic problems we have with the current system of electing MPPs and MPs in this country, which is what we call “first-past-the-post,” is that it really is disproportionate, that the number of people who are elected to this place do not represent the major part of our constituency.

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For example, ask yourself the question, why, if over 50% of our population are women, don't we have 50%-plus of the people in this assembly representing ridings—in other words, MPPs—who are women? There are a number of issues, but one of the issues is the way that the current electoral system works. It is really disproportionate against women when it comes to elections. There are a whole bunch of other issues, and I'm prepared to get into that debate at some time when we do refer this matter out to a committee, but the current system does not serve us well. If you look at our Legislatures over the years, we're lucky if 20% to 25% of the people who are

elected to Parliament or elected to this Legislature are women. You have to ask yourself the question, why is that? We know that women are as capable, and sometimes probably more capable than men, in a number of disciplines, and we need to find the answer as to why that doesn't happen. There are various organizations out there that have been putting their minds to this, such as Equal Voice, which makes a number of very good points as to why there is a systemic problem in our system that makes it that a majority of representatives in this Legislature are men, and those are many. We can get into those details when we get into committee.

I would argue that part of it is our electoral process and part of it is the way that parties choose political candidates. Many times it's big money that wins a riding association nomination, and those who are most well-connected. Unfortunately, in most of the political system, it tends to be the men who are more politically connected within the parties, and that gives them an advantage in being able to get themselves elected in a nomination race.

There are also a whole bunch of other issues about how elections are run. I think, if you look at other jurisdictions around the world, there have been really good steps and very good progress made in other countries to encourage women to run by providing the type of support that is needed to allow them to run and to win, and then once they come to Parliament, to make sure that Parliament is also conducive to the lifestyle of a young mother or young professional woman coming into the assembly. The reality is, we are all different and our needs are different, and I think we need to represent that not only through our electoral system but also in the way that we conduct business in this place.

The other thing that you have to ask yourself in this current system we have is, why is it that, for example, almost 50% of people who live in the city of Toronto or the greater Toronto area are people of colour or visible minorities, and yet when you look at this assembly, that is not the case? We don't see about 50% of people within our communities being elected to this Legislature.

Why is it that in places like where I come from in northern Ontario, we don't see—as a matter of fact, we have never seen an aboriginal person elected to this assembly in the history of this province. There is something wrong. You would think, after 130-some-odd years of Confederation, that we would have figured out how to elect at least one aboriginal person to this assembly. I'll tell you, it's going to be difficult to do in this current system. Often in aboriginal communities, they are not the majority within that particular constituency. They may be a majority within a part of the constituency, but not the constituency itself. There is no outreach on the part of most political parties to activate those people in the aboriginal community to run and to understand our political system and to encourage them and support them in their bid for nominations within their parties. But there is also no mechanism within the electoral act to give an opportunity to aboriginal people to run.

Let me throw something out that's really, I would say, avant-garde. Take a look at what happened in New

Zealand. When New Zealand went through a process of changing the electoral system from what it used to be—first-past-the-post, like Ontario—to what is now a mixed proportional system, they basically set aside a number of seats for the aboriginal community. They said, "We will look at the aboriginal people"—the way I would do it is that I would say, "We will look at the aboriginal people within our province as a constituency, and if that constituency happens to be part in Brantford, Timmins–James Bay, Kenora or Algoma–Manitoulin or wherever it is, it represents two or three seats. You allow elections to happen on-reserve. Also, possibly, you could take a look at giving status Indians who are living in urban centres off-reserve a vote toward an aboriginal candidate to represent them in this Legislature. Who better to do that than somebody who has walked a mile in their shoes?"

I give the example, and I want to publicly thank Monte Kwinter again, who came to Kashechewan with me last week as a result of the flood situation we have there. I give all the credit to Monte Kwinter. He came up, he saw and he understood that there are huge problems in those communities. He said, "My God, how is this allowed to happen?" We had quite a long chat about that.

Imagine if we had had aboriginal people representing those ridings in this assembly over the last 130 years. I would argue we would probably be further ahead. And it's not because we haven't had good representatives. I consider myself an excellent representative of the community of Timmins–James Bay, but who better to do it than somebody who has actually lived the experience?

Our current political system, I would argue, does not properly represent the constituency of Ontario. When we look at this assembly, we should see a mirror of Ontario. As I look at the assembly, if there are 103 seats today, or 107 after the next election, any citizen of this province should be able to look into this assembly and see himself or herself and say, "There is somebody there to speak for me." If I'm a woman, if I'm a person of colour, if I'm from whatever ethnic background or different region of the province, that person should be able to see themselves. This assembly should be a mirror of the population of this province is, as close as humanly possible. Our current system of first-past-the-post makes it very difficult for us to achieve those goals.

I would argue that there are a number of ways we can get closer to the goal of having true representation in this assembly to reflect the population of Ontario. Now, I understand that a lot of this process is rather difficult to go through, because the population doesn't have a lot of confidence in politicians and our political institutions such as Parliament, especially when you see the type of scandal that is going down in Ottawa with the Gomery inquiry. The problem is, we need to find a way to reconnect the voters and give them some confidence in this whole assembly and the whole political process. I think one of the ways to do that is to engage in a very serious dialogue with the public about how we redo the electoral process to make it more representative of what we see. That is the first issue we need to deal with.

Before I get into the various models, the other issue that I think is a failure of this Parliament and our parliamentary system is that a political party today, as it has been for the last 100-and-some-odd years, could get 35% to 37% of the vote, as it did with the NDP, or some 40%, as it did with the Liberals, and even though they do not have 50% of the vote in the general election, they end up with a disproportionate number of seats.

For example, I was a member of the Rae government. I think we got 38% of the popular vote, but we ended up with over 60% of the seats in this assembly. There is something wrong. Back then, the majority of Ontarians did not say, "We want to have an NDP government." What they were saying was, "We would like to have 38% of the assembly made up of New Democrats."

The same thing with the Harris government in 1995 and 1999: The majority of Ontarians did not say in the last election, specifically in Toronto and the amalgamated communities, that they wanted to have a majority Tory government. The vote was 46% or 47% in the first election and somewhere around that in the second election. They said they wanted to have Conservatives in this assembly, but a majority of Ontarians said, "No, we don't want Conservatives; we want New Democrats and Liberals there as well." The problem with this current system is that the Conservative government got elected with a majority even though they didn't have a majority of the popular vote. They came into this assembly and conducted a revolution, to the consternation of a majority of the population of Ontario. What was clear in the 1995 election and the 1999 election was that a majority of people did not vote Conservative; a majority of people voted Liberal or New Democrat. As a result, that should have been factored into any decision that was made in the system.

I know there are friends of mine in this assembly who favour this current system. Yes, if my party was a party that typically won government in the first-past-the-post system, I probably wouldn't mind the system either, because you know at the end of the day that it favours the majority parties. I would like to have it reformed because, from a minority view, I don't see the system working as well as it should.

**1700**

What can we do to reconstitute the Election Statute Law Amendment Act to really have an assembly that reflects the composition of the province of Ontario?

I'll get into that in a minute, but I want to talk about the process the government has set up in this legislation—which some in my party support, but I don't personally—and that is the whole issue of constituent assemblies. This government is going to form a constituent assembly by going to the chief electoral officer of Ontario and saying, like in British Columbia, "Give me a number of people, randomly, from the electoral list, from the existing ridings within Ontario, who somewhat reflect the composition of those ridings, and we will form a citizens' assembly." They will then turn their attention to the issue: Should there be electoral reform when it comes

to moving to a new election system? Should it stay first-past-the-post or should it move to some sort of proportional representation? And those people will go out and do what they do.

I am opposed to that process, and I'll tell you why. I spoke to it a little bit at the beginning. This Parliament, like all Parliaments in this great land of ours, has the authority to deal with this matter. It's as simple as that, in my view. I look at the Liberal government, the Conservative government before them, and the Rae government, the New Democrats, before that. All these governments, at one time or another, have done something fairly major—a significant piece of legislation. It may be consternating or non-consternating to certain citizens, but at the end of the day, the parliamentary system says that the government, or this House more specifically, has the right to do that by majority.

I believe that if we want to change the electoral system, it should be referred to either a standing committee of the assembly or a select committee to take a look at this issue. I would prefer a select committee, but I'd live with a standing committee. For those who are watching and don't know, a select committee means that the party leaders get together, there's a discussion about wanting to do that, a committee is formed and each of the whips, in conjunction with their party leaders, will put a representative from each of the caucuses—NDP, Conservative and Liberal—on that committee to look at this issue. The people on the committee are those who have an interest and those who will represent the views of the caucus. Their first job would be to do some background research, get briefed by those people who are knowledgeable in election systems—either PR or first-past-the-post—get themselves immersed in the issue, because they want to be caught up, and then go out and do public hearings.

When we did the Meech Lake accord and the Charlottetown accord after that, this assembly put together a standing committee. Under what led to the Charlottetown accord, the province of Ontario went out and consulted Ontarians from one end of the province to the other. There was a report written by that committee. There were New Democrats, Liberals and Conservatives on that particular committee at the time, of which I was a member. We travelled across this province, we came forward with recommendations, and those became the basis of the Ontario position at the negotiating table for the Charlottetown accord.

There's nothing wrong with that process. I would argue that it's best to have a standing committee or select committee do this, not only because Parliament has the right, but politicians and MPPs have an interest. To all of a sudden say we're going to abrogate our responsibility to the public, through citizens' assemblies, to make up our minds about what kind of system we should recommend, I think is basically shirking our responsibilities to a certain extent. I would also argue that it's a lot easier for a government to sway a citizens' assembly, depending on the selection process. That will be seen once you go to the selection process, the final outcome.

If you take a look at British Columbia, I would argue that the Liberal government has really set this up to fail. There's not a real attempt there to take a look at, "Should we stay with first-past-the-post or should we move to proportional representation?" They've complicated the thing. What came back from the citizens' assembly was fairly complex. I think most of us who have read it would sit back and go, "Oh, my Lord." Basically, what we've now got is a pretty complex set of recommendations that came forward which I think could have been made a lot simpler.

The basic question we have to ask Ontarians is simply this: "Are you satisfied, yes or no, with the current system of election? And if you want it to go to a plebiscite"—again, I would not support that; I'd rather that if a party says they're going to do this, they run an election and go out and do it by way of a select committee. But the basic question is: "Are we satisfied as Ontarians with the current system, and, if not, what system do we want to go to?" That's where I want to go next.

What is proportional representation? A lot of people get that confused; I think less so as time goes on. I hear more and more debate out in the general public when it comes to the issue of being able to understand this. There's been more and more debate, provincially and nationally, specifically about what the various forms of PR are and what proportional representation means.

Some people get PR mixed up with a whole other concept, which is the concept of one person, one vote. We don't want to get all of that mixed up. PR is simply this: You have an election; at the end of the election, if a political party gets 45% of the vote, they get 45% of the seats in the House. That's the easiest way to explain proportional representation.

There are different PR models that get you there. Some are more favourable; some, I would argue, not. For example, there's the pure PR system that they have in Israel. Israel has the purest form of proportional representation. You basically have an election; if a vote is, let's say, 47% Likud, Labour or whatever, they get that as a percentage and then they go out and form a coalition with other minority parties to form the government. Italy does the same thing, by the way.

Some people will argue and say, "Oh, PR doesn't work. Look at how unstable it is." I would argue it has been very successful for Israel. Israel could never have survived the 60-some-odd years or 50-some-odd years that it's been there if it had not been for a PR system because, quite frankly, in that particular nation—and, I would argue, with other nations, but very much exemplified in Israel—you need to bring around the table the various different groups that make up the state of Israel, so that at the Knesset there is a working at trying to build some sort of consensus about how to move forward.

We only need to take a look at what has happened over the last three or four years, or longer than that, since George Bush has turned this world on its ear, and we

now have this instability that we have in the Gulf region that—I think he precipitated what's happening currently in Israel, between Palestine and Israel, by giving free licence to do—anyway, that's a whole other debate. The point is, the PR system has allowed Israel to deal with very difficult issues that allowed that state not only to survive but to basically flourish. I think without PR, that couldn't have happened.

If you look at Italy, it's the same thing. People use Italy all the time as an example of why not to do PR. My good friend Michael Colle knows Italy is not a country made up of a group of people who all think the same way—and he laughs. You know as well as I do, if you go to Calabria, you go to Aosta or wherever in Italy, they were different nations for many, many years. Italy is not one homogeneous nation that has existed all of the time.

**Mr. Mike Colle (Eglinton–Lawrence):** They were all Italian city-states.

**Mr. Bisson:** They were all Italian city-states. As my good friend from Eglinton–Lawrence says, they were city-states. If you look at Venice, Milan and Genoa, all of them were basically countries unto themselves. Italy as a nation is rather new. It's how many years, Mr. Colle?

**Mr. Colle:** Since 1867.

**Mr. Bisson:** Since 1867 it's been one country. They came and were born out of many different city-states. How many in total I don't know offhand, but certainly—

**Mr. Colle:** About 30.

**Mr. Bisson:** About 30 or 40. They came together to form a country now called Italy, and they needed to have some sort of mechanism in order to try to bring the various parts of the country together to form a Parliament. They basically went to a pure PR system and, quite frankly, I would argue it worked.

Italy is a very modern nation. Anybody who has travelled there, as I have at least three times—I'll tell you, they'll blow your socks off. It is a great nation, great people. Some of the best cuisine, I might say, the best wines—almost. France has better ones, I must say, as a Frenchman.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Bisson:** The south of France. Monsieur, I want to tell you, you travel up to a little place called Tourrettes sur Loup, just north of Nice, there's a wonderful little French restaurant that specializes in beautiful sauces, five mushrooms—oh, I'm digressing—and a wonderful red wine as you sit there and overlook the valley of Vence. Anyway, that's a whole other story.

The point I make is that their pure PR system, I would argue, has allowed Italy to not only survive as a nation, but to flourish. Why? Because that Parliament has been able, with all of the different regions, to find voice in it. So if you're from Calabria, from Aosta, from Florence, from wherever, there is a mechanism in that Parliament to allow the people of those regions, those old city states, to have voice within the Parliament so they can see themselves, and it's quite successful.

1710

There are other models. I would argue that Ontario should not try to go the route of either Italy or Israel,

because it wouldn't work with us. We are used to a system where you have a single constituency with one representative. People want to be able to vote for their representative in their constituency. They don't want to vote strictly off lists. They don't want a system that says, "Which party do you vote for?" then the party selects who their representative should be. People don't want that in this country, and I don't advocate that for a second. I support the concept in our system that says you vote for the representative who you think will best represent you in this Legislature, and there are ways of doing that.

For example, I would argue that Germany, New Zealand and other countries have some of the more interesting models, which are called mixed proportional representation models. Simply said, in one system you have basically two votes. On whatever the date will be in 2007, which I'll talk about a little bit later, the person goes into the ballot box and says, "Who do I want to be my representative in this next Parliament, and which party do I want to form the government?" So the person goes in and says, "I want candidate X and I want party X." At the end of the day, all those members who got elected by people by first-past-the-post—all of the constituency people are elected and they go into Parliament. So, "Let's work this through," and then they tally up all of the votes for the political party.

How does it work? Simply like this: There's an assembly, at this point, of 103 members. You have an election. Let's say that the Liberals got 49% of the votes in the last election. That means that technically they should have around 51 or 52 members in this assembly—whatever the math is. If the Liberals elected 70 members, that 70 ends up representing the 49% that they got in the election. Then for each of the other political parties, you count up their members that were elected directly and you say, what is the difference between what they elected directly and what they need to get in order to meet the proportion of vote they got in the election as a party, and the rest of them come off a list or some other means. At least in that way, what you end up with in the assembly is the will of the people, which is, we should have in this House the majority of the people of the province of Ontario making the decision.

If the majority of Ontarians said, "No, I don't want a Liberal government. I want a PC and New Democratic government"—that's what happened in the last election—the other political parties would have some say. That means that if the government, for example, were trying to shut the mill in Opatatika, as they're doing right now, they would have to get the support of one of the two opposition parties in order to get it done. Quite frankly, our party wouldn't give its support, so I don't think it would go anywhere. Is that the people's will or is that a bad thing? I think it's the people's will, and I think that's a good thing in the end.

I would say that one of the aspects of this bill which I support—but I don't like how you're getting there as far as process goes—is looking at the electoral system. I

would argue that yes, we need to change the electoral system. I agree that the current system does not properly reflect the constituency of Ontario and that it doesn't reflect the will of the people when it comes to the general election. I believe, at the end of the day, that there should be a system of proportional representation put in place for Ontario.

That system, I think, should be consistent with a couple of themes. One is that we need to find a way in the electoral system to make sure that the province and the people within that province are seen in this Legislature by way of demographics: women, people of color, visible minorities etc.

I believe the other issue should be that we should see in this Legislature the will of the people. If the people of Ontario said, "I vote in the next election, in 2007, that a majority of representatives in this House are from two political parties," then there should be a representation within the House. I didn't explain that well. Let me come at it another way. I was getting at it from one side. It didn't work. I've got to go the other way. That is, if the people in 2007 say, "In the next election, I want the NDP to come in at a percentage of 43%," that should not mean to say that they form a majority government. That should only mean to say that they get 43% of the seats in the House. Then it would be up to the New Democratic government to work in co-operation with both opposition parties or other parties that may be formed in order to get legislation through. It doesn't necessarily mean that you have to form coalitions; there are other ways of getting there.

The other issue is that in the election statutes that this bill deals with is the whole issue of dealing with real-time disclosure. Now I'm moving to the other part of the bill. Real-time disclosure deals with donations. Let me just say, generally, I support real-time disclosure; I think it's a good idea. However, I would argue that the whole way that we collect money for political parties in this country, in this province—especially in this province—is really, quite frankly, susceptible to all kinds of problems. We have seen it with the Gomery inquiry. We have a situation where the federal Liberals were giving contracts to their friends in order to get both favour and money back into the Liberal Party. That's wrong.

The other issue—and I think the bigger issue—is that he or she who gives the most money to a political candidate, it is thought, has more influence in the decisions that member makes. It should never put a member in that position. In our party, we have particular rules around that. I'm not allowed to accept donations larger than \$1,000; I can't accept from corporations. There are a whole bunch of different things that we have done in the New Democratic Party to deal with that, to a certain extent, but I would argue that even our rules are not perfect.

I would argue state-paid elections. What does that mean? It means the province of Ontario should pay for the elections, and they should pay for the campaigns of the candidates and political parties. Now people will say:

“Whoa, that’s a lot of money. We can’t do that. That’s a bad idea. You’re going to bankrupt the province doing that.”

Well, I’m going to answer your question. Who do you think pays for the election now; right? My good friend across the way, you know what happens. You go out and run a \$60,000 campaign. You raise \$60,000. Everybody gives you checks for a \$100 or up to \$1,000, and what do you do when they give you a check? You give them a tax receipt. So Mrs. Smith on the corner who gave you a hundred bucks gets \$75 back from the provincial coffers as a rebate toward that \$100 donation. So who paid for the donation? Was it Mrs. Smith or was it the province of Ontario? Well, 75% of it for sure was the province of Ontario.

It gets better. I then get a rebate from the province of Ontario on the basis of the number of voters who voted for me in the last election. I think my rebate cheque last election was around \$18,000 or \$19,000 dollars. So let’s put this into context: I raised in the pre-election, election and post-election periods probably around \$60,000. The election cost me about \$60,000 and I got a rebate like everybody else, because I got more than 15% of the vote. It works out, when you look at the rebate that I got that was paid by the province of Ontario and the tax receipt that everybody got and then their rebate at tax time, that the whole darn thing was paid by the province. There is no other way to cut it.

Let’s be real here when we say, “Oh no, we have to allow individuals to contribute to campaigns and the state shouldn’t pay.” The state is now paying. But the problem is that the system is currently flawed even though the state pays. So I would argue we should do away with all political contributions whatsoever. We may want to have a small ability to be able to allow, let’s say, \$100 from individuals counted in some way and taken off your total. Maybe there is something we could do there for those who do want to contribute, or if you’re doing a fundraiser or a “meet the candidate,” and have a supper for 25 or 30 bucks, whatever it is, to cover your costs there should be some mechanisms that allow that to happen. But we should never put politicians in the position of having to be beholden to a particular individual or corporation because they gave you money. We shouldn’t be doing that.

I would argue that what we really need to do is to move to state-funded elections so that the parties get a certain amount of money in order to run their provincial campaigns. A percentage of that could be worked out similar to what they have done federally; I wouldn’t argue that was a terrible model. Depending on the results of the last election, it would determine how much you get for this election. The only problem is, you have to have some sort of floor amount of money allowed to parties because you should allow other political parties to form, if that’s what the people want, and there should be some mechanism to reflect that. And then individual ridings, as far as candidates, those elections quite frankly should be paid by the state as well. Certainly they’re doing it now. What does that do? It allows campaigns to be run basic-

ally on issues of principle, it allows us to make sure that individuals are not influenced by big money and I think it’s one of the ways we can bring back some of the credibility we need to get in this institution, when it comes to people thinking and feeling better about the institution of Parliament.

1720

We see now what has happened federally with the Gomery inquiry. I’ll tell you, when I first saw that come out, my initial reaction, like most other people’s, was, “Oh, my God.” But what I really thought was, “There we go again. We’re all going to be painted with the same brush.” Because there were a couple of bad apples in the bunch—probably more than a couple, as it now appears from the Gomery inquiry—a majority of federal politicians, provincial politicians and municipal politicians are seen as dirty and, quite frankly, probably rated somewhere below lawyers or used car salesmen; you know the old jokes about people’s confidence in particular people.

That’s really sad, because I think that gives bureaucrats and business much more influence on what happens within Parliament. I think it’s important for people to have confidence in their elected officials, and I think it is important for them to hold us accountable. To do so, I think, allows good decisions to be made. One of the things that I think we need to do is take the influence of money out of Parliament.

Within the bill, we deal with the issue of real-time disclosure. I want to say again that I’m in support of real-time disclosure. But you know as well as I do that you can drive a Mack truck through the loopholes this bill creates. Yes, it’s going to allow for real-time disclosure for political parties. Basically, within five days the Chief Election Officer of Ontario will have to report on the Internet any donation over \$100 to a political party. That’s a good thing; I haven’t got a problem with that. But I can take a \$1,000 donation in my riding and you would never know about it under this system, and then that money could be funnelled back to the party—something that already happens.

We know that over 30% of money that is raised for political parties comes through riding associations; it doesn’t come directly to the political parties. About 70% of the money comes—well, not even 70%, because part of it comes by way of rebates and the other part comes by way of donations to the political party. But on average at least 30% of the money that goes to Liberals, New Democrats and Conservatives at the central party level comes from riding associations.

So what we’re going to do if we have real-time disclosure for donations to leadership candidates or donations to a political party—if I want to hide a \$1,000 contribution, all I have to do is give it to a riding association and then the riding association transfers the money over to the party and there is no real-time disclosure. If you really want to do real-time disclosure, you would have to make it for all methods of contribution, including riding associations.

I understand there is some difficulty with that, because most of the money we get in our ridings is from people

who give us 50 bucks or 100 bucks during an election or post-election. That's where most of our money comes from, and it would be a fair amount of work to get all that done in time under those particular rules. Riding associations don't have full-time staff, as the provincial parties have, to deal with making sure that real-time disclosure can happen, and I understand that—I've been holding this water for a while; I figured it was about time to take a sip. I was actually thinking about a nice little white wine, but that's another story; it would have been very nice.

Anyway, there is still a loophole in this legislation that allows people to give money to political parties without having real-time disclosure. I think the bill is weak in that area, and I think that's something we need to deal with when we get it into committee.

One of the issues in this bill that I support—there is an issue we need to basically work through, because the bill doesn't deal with part of my concern; that is, in the last election the government committed to northerners, as we did, that if either Liberals or New Democrats got elected, we would guarantee there would be at least 11 ridings in northern Ontario when elections happened. I give the government credit: They've held that promise. It's one of the few promises you've kept. You're saying, "Yes, in northern Ontario there will be 11 ridings," and I think that is a good thing.

However, we still need to have some kind of mechanism in order to adjust boundaries based on what happens with the shifting of population. We have some places in northern Ontario where there is an increase or decrease in population. We need to be able to find ways to deal with adjusting the boundaries somewhat so that the constituency size and the constituency populations are evenly distributed. If we don't do that, we could end up in a situation where one particular constituency, let's say Sudbury, could have 20% more constituents than a riding that is more rural, like Algoma-Manitoulin. You need to have some sort of mechanism to make sure that we have a certain amount of equity when it comes to the number of people we represent within our constituencies.

The real thing we have to deal with—I see my good friend the clerk looking at me, and she's going to know what I'm talking about—is how we service these darn ridings. I listen to my southern colleagues—and I have nothing against my southern colleagues—but especially the Hamilton, Toronto, Oshawa, Burlington and Mississauga people will sit here in the afternoon and say, "Oh, there's a really good meeting in my riding that I've been invited to. I think I'm going to go tonight," and off they go to the particular event; or on Saturday, "Oh, I've got to go to three or four different meetings or events in order to cover off the requests made by constituents when it comes to me attending particular events or meetings."

God, I wish I had the ability. I, like Mr. Brown, Mr. Hampton, Mr. Gravelle and Mr. Ramsay, represent a very large geographic riding. My particular riding is larger than France. That's just the reality. I'm a pilot, but I didn't learn how to fly just because I have a larger riding; it's something that I wanted to do. I basically

learned how to fly to be able to get around my constituency. I have seen on one weekend—last weekend I think it was; not this one, the weekend before—it was Attawapiskat one day and Moosonee the next. That's 2,500 kilometres. How do you cover that off? There aren't not even any roads, for God's sakes.

Here's my basic problem—

**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs):** With your plane.

**Mr. Bisson:** My plane, yes. But a member should not have to have a plane to service his or her constituency. That's my issue. That's my point. All I'm saying is that the unfortunate position all of us northern members with large geographic ridings have, and also like the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, is that you get, on a particular Friday or Saturday, 10 or 15 requests to attend meetings with municipal councils, organizations, individuals in your riding, and you've got to say no to 90% of them because that weekend is the Timmins weekend, so I'm not going up to Kap or Hearst. Next weekend is my James Bay weekend, so I'm not going down to Highway 11. Next weekend is my Highway 11 weekend. Well, Timmins and James Bay are going to have to wait three weeks.

People are understanding in constituencies like ours. I have to say that my constituents, as all constituents across the north, are very understanding on the issue and understand at times that they have to wait three weeks for a meeting. But the point is, we have not figured out within these large geographic ridings how we can properly support our constituents.

I will make a couple suggestions on this debate. One is, we need to deal with money. We have to have enough money in our global budgets to be able to properly serve our constituencies. I should have the ability to have a staff person on James Bay with travel money so that, as today, when I got a call from the chief at Kashechewan because of yet another issue stemming out of the flood that both Monte Kwinter and I went to visit, they would be able to get there and help them deal with that particular issue, or if there is a challenge in Attawapiskat having to do with the school closure, he or she would be able to go there, and, I would argue, be an aboriginal person who speaks Cree. But I have no money to do that, because I'm treated like every other member in this assembly, to an extent. Yes, I get a little bit extra. What is it? I think it's about \$30,000 extra because I have a northern constituency compared to a member in Toronto. But I can blow that in charters in half a year. If I can't take my plane on Friday because it's snowing—I'm not IFR-rated and I don't feel like killing myself in a snowstorm—I've got to charter. That's \$6,000 to get to Kashechewan and back. There goes my \$30,000 pretty quickly. Those are the kinds of choices you're having to make as a member. I would argue that we need sufficient budgets in order to deal with having staff in our constituencies so that we can properly service our ridings.

In the riding of Timmins-James Bay, about 50% of the population is in the city of Timmins. There are a lot

of requests on that particular constituency office over the years, and it takes up most of my staff. I have another staff person on Highway 11, but when we inherited the James Bay part of the riding, I had no room in my budget to be able to deal with that. I would argue that you have to deal with global budgets so that you have a sufficient amount of staff and staff travel budgets to properly service your constituency and give them the kind of supportive staff they need, be it an office or computers or whatever they need to be able to do their jobs, and no, not cellphones in the James Bay, because they don't work except for Moosonee and Moose Factory. Black-Berries don't even work there, so let's not even ask for that.

1730

The other thing, I would argue, that you have to do is give the member some ability to travel within the riding. I have a proposal I want to make to the Board of Internal Economy, which I can't talk about in this Legislature, but will anyway; that is, we as northern members should not have to charge our charters to our global budgets. It's crazy. I have to use the extra \$30,000 I get in my constituency budget—

**Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton):** It's \$30,000?

**Mr. Bisson:** An extra \$30,000 is what I get—wow!—and I've got to operate a second constituency office in Kapuskasing with additional staff that costs me \$100,000. So I'm really ahead of this picture. Don't get me going, Norm. Don't tease the bear. He might be a teddy bear, but he gets pretty vicious sometimes.

I should not have to charge my charter travel or my travel on an airline, if I'm taking Air Québec into a community, to my global budget. As with the federal government, that should be allowed to be charged to travel points. We get 64 travel points, as members, to travel in Ontario. I should be able to say, "All right, my travel is going to be to Attawapiskat," and I just use one point there and back. That's how it should be treated, not against my global. Quite frankly, that's what the federal government does.

The other thing we need to take a look at, I think, in order to deal with how we service these large constituencies, is figuring out some way to better utilize technology. We are fast approaching the time when the penetration as far as access to the Internet is getting much better and we need to take a look at technologies through the Internet and Web-based technologies to give access to constituents in remote areas, and telephone access as well. We need to look at how we can use those technologies a little bit better.

What is the basic complaint of northerners? That's the next place I wanted to go. That is, people in northern Ontario, and I would believe in rural Ontario as well, and southwestern and southeastern Ontario, are frustrated because they feel at times that their voices are not heard at Queen's Park. What's interesting is that they don't point the finger at their local representative. For example, I know for a fact that there are a lot of people in Mike

Brown's riding, as in Timiskaming, as in Timmins–James Bay, as in Kenora–Rainy River, who feel disenfranchised from Queen's Park. But they don't point at Mike Brown and say, "It's all Mike Brown's fault." They recognize that Mike Brown, the member from Algoma–Manitoulin, is trying the best he can to represent his constituents in this assembly, and the same thing for Gilles Bisson in Timmins–James Bay or Howard Hampton in Kenora–Rainy River. But they are feeling disenfranchised, and one of the things we need to do is to find a way to basically give people the sense that their voices are being heard here at Queen's Park. One of the ways to do that, I would argue, is through a form of proportional representation that takes that into account.

So I would argue that we need to find ways to give voice to people in rural and northern parts of this province who more and more are feeling estranged and farther away from their provincial government and what happens in this particular assembly. I think that would be well done, if we could do that, in order to really give voice to the people and give them a chance for their voices to be heard here. Again, I just want to say we need to take a look at some of these issues a little bit more seriously, and I would argue we need to do that by committee.

I want to deal with the other part of the legislation, that is, the issue of fixed-date elections. Bravo. I'm one of the members who support that and think it's a good idea. Are there problems in the way that you've drafted it in the legislation? Of course there are. You know as well as I do that the Premier could tomorrow, if this legislation had been passed yesterday, go to the Lieutenant Governor and ask for an election, because it doesn't take that ability away from the Premier. This is a parliamentary system, and under a parliamentary system a House has to be able to rise and fall on a non-confidence motion, as we're seeing in the federal House of Parliament today. So without dealing with those other issues, fixed-date elections is a bit of a funny issue in this legislation. I find myself supporting the concept of a fixed-date election but somewhat critical of the government because they're really not giving you fixed-date elections. If you want to get there, let's find a way to do it that makes some sense.

Why do I support fixed-date elections? Simply this: It takes away the power that the Premier has to basically choose the timing of an election. Let me say, most Premiers have been dead wrong on picking the date of an election. I remember David Peterson. He thought he had it figured out. He said, "We're riding high in the polls and we're going early."

**Mr. Tim Peterson (Mississauga South):** He's still with us.

**Mr. Bisson:** Oh, the other Mr. Peterson. That's your brother, by the way.

**Mr. Peterson:** David's still with us.

**Mr. Bisson:** I remember him. I saw him the other day. He was here.

The point is, most Premiers have not had the results they wanted in trying to pick election dates. So the first

point is, it takes away from the Premier the power to try to fix the election to his or her advantage and his or her political party's advantage.

The other thing, quite frankly, is that it is a way of really distracting attention from the work we need to do as legislators. I remember far too well the lead-up to the last election. God, we were in election mode for what, Norm? It must have been over a year. First we had a leadership process where Ernie Eves was elected leader. I bet \$100 that he was going to go a week after the leadership vote. He wishes he had; he's told me that he wishes he had. I would have won my \$100, and he would have done better.

**Mr. Sterling:** I was with you.

**Mr. Bisson:** I know you were with me. You're an astute politician, I must say, Norm.

We went on for a year and a half before we actually went to the polls. We were basically on election watch. What does that mean? It means that about 20% to 25% of my time in the year and a half leading up to the last election, as with all other members in this assembly, was somewhat focused on the riding association and the ability of that riding to be prepared for the election: Have we fundraised? Do we have the right amount of money in the bank account to run the election? Do we have all the proper spots filled out for who will be part of our election team?

My election team during the last election was around 350 volunteers all told. Some worked harder than others, as far as time was concerned, but they all contributed in some way. You have to make sure that your sign chair is still the sign chair you picked three months ago. Things happen. People get transfers or new jobs, a baby comes; all kinds of things happen, and it changes. So I was constantly getting calls from my election planning committee chair saying: "We've got a hole. So and so, who was our head sign person in Opatatika, got a transfer and is moving out of town. We've got to find somebody else. Do you have a name for me?" I'd have to get on the phone or call somebody in the riding association—

**Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington):** It went on so long that my campaign manager moved to the Cayman Islands.

**Mr. Bisson:** Your campaign manager moved to the Cayman Islands? My lord, I don't want to know what was going on there. I wouldn't admit that. The Cayman Isles is a tax haven.

The point is, we were on election watch for a period of around a year and a half, and it was distracting to the work we do here as members. I think that if it works municipally and it works for school boards to say that there shall be an election every three years and it shall be on a certain date, that is a good thing. I think that's something we should try to aim for. But frankly we need to deal, in the Election Act, with some of the difficulties that are contained in having fixed-date elections; for example, how do you deal with a non-confidence motion in this assembly? It could happen, even though there's a majority. Although it's never happened before,

theoretically—well, it might have happened. It actually happened in Saskatchewan that a majority government lost.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Bisson:** Did it happen here as well? A majority government can actually lose a non-confidence vote. It only happened in Saskatchewan, as far as I know. There was a New Democrat who voted against his own government. It's a big, long story. He basically crossed the floor.

**Mr. Sterling:** It was a minority.

**Mr. Bisson:** In 1977?

The point is that you have to have a mechanism in a Parliamentary system to allow the members of the assembly, by majority, to decide if the government should stand or fall. That is one of the basic things in a parliamentary system.

This brings us to the power of MPPs, and that is where I want to end in the last 10 minutes I've got. Let's be clear here: We play a fairly important role in our constituencies. In our ridings, all of us work hard; I don't care what political party we're from. People in our constituencies look up to us, and we, on all sides of the House, work at resolving problems for our constituents. The reality is, we know that the power resides with the Premier and a couple of paid staff around the Premier. I don't care if the Premier is a Liberal, a Conservative or a New Democrat, the reality is, more and more power is being taken away from the members of this assembly and being concentrated in the Premier's office, and that is wrong. That is not what Parliament is all about. Parliament is about members of this assembly being in charge, members of this assembly saying, "Here's the direction we want on this particular matter of public policy. Let's have a real debate, let's refer the matter to committee and let's come back with a consensus, or at least a majority view, of this assembly about what should happen."

What we've got now—I've seen it; I was in government, and most members of this assembly have been in government. What ends up happening is that the Premier, a couple of key cabinet ministers who say, "Yes, boss. Whatever you say, boss. How high, boss?" and a whole bunch of paid political staff around them who don't have to get re-elected, I must add, and do have pensions, unlike MPPs, and probably get paid more than MPPs in some cases—I'm not sore, I'm not bitter, I'm just making a point—make recommendations to the Premier, and then the Premier makes a decision. Then the Premier walks into the caucus room and says, "Oh, here's where we're going," and members of that particular caucus more or less follow behind, because what are you going to do? You're not going to jump offside as a member of the Liberal caucus and criticize your own; I understand that. At the end of the day if your party is doing badly at the polls, it's going to reflect on your ability to get re-elected in your own riding.

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The other issue is that you try to go along with the majority of what the caucus says. If 60% of your caucus

says, "We are going in that direction," because the Premier has convinced them, you try to be loyal to your caucus. But you and I know that what we have now is less and less power in the hands of the members. It is basically concentrated amongst a few people within the Premier's office, and I think that's wrong. I think we should find a way to empower members to be able to have a real voice. That's one of the things I like about proportional representation: It makes it more important for governments to listen all to members; not only their members, but members of the opposition.

At the end of the day, if there is an issue—for example, my good friend Mr. Colle will remember the issue of the amalgamation of the city of Toronto. The majority of Torontonians and the majority of people within the affected areas of amalgamation were opposed—76% were opposed—to amalgamation, but basically Mr. Colle and others didn't have a say in it because the Premier had decided that this was where he was going and his caucus had to follow suit. As a result, we've amalgamated the city of Toronto, and I would argue, for what? It's more expensive and it is less representative.

**Mr. Colle:** Now they want to change it.

**Mr. Bisson:** Well, now they want to change it. But my point is, what did we really achieve? We could have saved ourselves a lot of time and money if we had given the ability of members of this assembly to have a greater voice in what happens as far as the end result of amalgamation.

Should there have been some forms of amalgamation? I would argue with my good friend Mr. Sterling, and we're on the opposite side of the political spectrum, that there were cases for amalgamation. The city of Timmins amalgamated many years ago because there was a case to be made for South Porcupine, Whitney, Schumacher and Mountjoy to come together as one city called Timmins. At one point maybe in Toronto there was a need to do that in some areas. But at the end of the day I think there would have been a much different result if we had had a better ability for members in this assembly to have a greater influence over what the end result should have been.

I want to take the last few minutes—I actually went through that part of it a lot quicker than I expected, giving me an extra five what they call bonus minutes—to go back to where I come from, which is northern Ontario, to say a couple of things.

It is becoming more and more, I think, apparent to most people who live in northern Ontario that over the years we've had a very difficult time economically. Some of that has started to turn around, in the mining industry specifically. Mining, if you look at the city of Timmins, is doing fairly well compared to about 10 years ago, but we are increasingly in crisis in the forestry industry. We really need our government, here in Ontario, to work with us in northern Ontario and deal with some of the very pressing challenges that we have within industry. One is the whole issue of energy. It was mentioned by my good friend Mr. Miller the other day that KERRA, a

group that was organized out of Kapuskasing, has a legitimate concern. We have a bit of a difference in philosophy about how they get there and how we get to the solution, but the basic issue is, why should Tembec, in Kapuskasing, pay the price of electricity that it does when you've got power dams on the river, not more than 40 miles away, producing electricity at less than a penny a kilowatt hour? It doesn't make any sense. Knowing that basic electricity is a large part of doing business for many, many plants in northern Ontario—because we are talking pulp and paper plants, we're talking mining processes such as Falconbridge and others, where 25% to 30% of the overall cost is electricity—it gets really expensive to operate as the price of electricity goes up. So we need to have a real dialogue with our provincial government to be able to deal with energy issues for northern Ontario and how they affect the citizens and the industry.

The other issue is the allocation of wood. Je veux dire à mes amis au nord de l'Ontario—on sait que, par exemple, ce qui se passe dans la communauté d'Opatatika est vraiment une situation très dangereuse, non seulement parce que ça va fermer la seule industrie à Opatatika, qui est Excel Forest Products, mais c'est aussi la question de ce que ça veut dire comme précédent pour tout le nord de l'Ontario.

Simplement dit, ça a toujours été le cas dans la province de l'Ontario que les forêts sont les forêts de la Couronne. En d'autres mots, si une compagnie comme Tembec ou Domtar ou Abitibi ou n'importe qui veut avoir l'opportunité d'aller chercher les arbres et faire des produits à travers des scieries ou des moulins à papier, elles ont une entente avec les communautés qui va assurer que le bois qui est utilisé dans la communauté est produit et fini dans la communauté d'où il vient.

Mais ce qu'on a présentement, c'est que le gouvernement a accepté, à travers le ministre des Ressources naturelles, de dire, « On n'a plus besoin de faire ça. Si des compagnies veulent transférer leur bois d'une communauté à l'autre, elles peuvent le faire », puis personne ne va rien dire.

Ce qui est important, c'est qu'on comprend que, numéro un, les forêts sont publiques et n'appartiennent pas aux compagnies forestières—elles appartiennent au monde du nord et de la province de l'Ontario—et que les compagnies doivent avoir une responsabilité de s'assurer que le bois qui est pris dans nos forêts est transformé en produits dans nos communautés les plus proches possibles de la forêt. Je pense que c'est important. Sans ça on va avoir, avec le temps, une réduction d'emplois au nord de l'Ontario comme on n'a jamais vue dans le passé.

L'autre affaire dans toute la question des compagnies forestières, c'est qu'on sait qu'il y a des problèmes dans l'industrie, mais ce n'est pas en permettant aux compagnies comme Tembec, Domtar et autres de créer ce qu'on appelle des « supermills » qu'elles seront capables de trouver une solution à leurs problèmes. Les compagnies nous disent, « On a besoin de faire ça parce

qu'on se trouve dans une situation où il y a moins de bois, et on a besoin de se rentabiliser dans la production avec des usines plus grandes.» Écoute, s'il y a un manque de bois, pourquoi transfère-t-on le bois d'une usine qui va fermer à une autre usine? S'il y a un manque de bois, le bois doit rester dans la forêt pour permettre une régénération plus naturelle dans la forêt. Mais ce qu'on fait dans ce cas-ci, c'est qu'on alloue au bois d'être transféré à une autre communauté, et à la fin de la journée ça veut dire qu'on crée le précédent nécessaire pour une compagnie de dire, « On va fermer un moulin dans la ville et transférer le bois à une autre ville », et c'est quelque chose qu'on ne doit pas allouer.

Je dis au gouvernement, à travers ce débat, que je pense qu'il est important que vous réalisiez que vous avez une responsabilité comme gouvernement de vous assurer de la politique de la province, qui a été en place pendant des années, qu'on respecte que les forêts soient les forêts de la communauté et que ces forêts-là n'appartiennent pas aux compagnies forestières.

La semaine passée, j'ai posé ici à l'Assemblée une question au premier ministre, et il a accepté de rencontrer les représentants de la communauté faisant affaire avec cette question. J'espère qu'à un temps cette semaine, on va avoir une date fixée pour cette rencontre mais j'espère que, quand on vient se rencontrer avec le premier ministre, il va avoir l'oreille ouverte et qu'il va être préparé d'entrer dans un dialogue avec nous pour nous permettre de trouver des solutions pour nos communautés. À la fin de la journée, c'est ça qui est le plus important.

Again, I thank members for giving me the opportunity to have this time. I say to the government that there are parts of this bill that I am generally supportive of. I have some questions about how you are going to get there. I look forward to this bill going to the committee, where we are going to be able to deal with these matters much more fully.

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

**Mr. Peterson:** C'est un grand plaisir de me lever aujourd'hui, d'entendre notre ami de Timmins-Baie-James et d'entendre la belle langue, parce que c'est la langue natale de beaucoup d'Ontariens. C'est un grand plaisir de se souvenir que l'Ontario est une province bilingue.

When I went across the province this winter and spring to do the trails consultation, it became obvious that the dynamic of northern Ontario has changed dramatically and that our bill on democratic renewal is very important, because what the fundamental part of this bill says is that we are trying to make everyone equal, each vote counting the same, and that that is the essence of democracy, not who has the deepest pocketbooks.

If you look at the way the economy has changed in northern Ontario, from times when it was dominated by huge mines and huge forest companies that employed a lot of people, what you see now is a huge amount of mechanization and no people. That is part of the depopulation of northern Ontario. Hence, we look at new strategies. We look at strategies of how we can put tourism

into there. We look at strategies of how we can build small enterprises and the service industry. It is part of democratic renewal that we take the emphasis off the big dollars. For the people living in northern Ontario, Toronto seems like just a huge megalopolis, a huge revenue generator, a huge source of wealth, and they're intimidated by it. But this democratic renewal will give them a chance to understand that their vote, although backed by less of an economic force, is equal to the votes in southern Ontario. I think it does a great thing to equalize and to tell the people of northern Ontario how special they are to Ontario.

**1750**

**Mr. Sterling:** I enjoyed the remarks of my friend from the north. I don't think any one of us has an objection to having 11, 12 or whatever number of seats you want in northern Ontario. But what we should have is a process to establish where boundaries are going to be and how many seats there should be. Let's establish an electoral boundaries commission here at the provincial level and strike the boundaries.

If we want an average of 95,000 per riding, which would be the number we would need in order to have 11 ridings legitimately in northern Ontario, let's have it. But that would mean that we would have about 110 seats in the south. I have no objection to having 11, 12 or any number of seats in northern Ontario, but that should not be decided in a government piece of legislation on the basis of an election promise. That's gerrymandering, and we did away with that about 20 or 30 years ago. Twenty or 30 years ago, democratic reform included in it an unbiased electoral boundaries commission to decide where the boundaries should be placed in an election in Ontario.

Mr. Brown was quite wrong in saying that I didn't want 11 ridings in the north. If that is the desire of the government, God bless you. But let's have an electoral boundaries commission decide on where those boundaries should be. You can't do this in a piece of legislation without looking at the population shifts and doing it fairly amongst all people in Ontario, whether they're in the north or in the south. Some of the ridings in the south are larger than the ridings in the north, and they have to be treated the same as the ridings in the north.

**Ms. Churley:** I must say, that seemed to make sense to me. It seems as though everybody is agreeing about the 11 seats up north, but there are some questions around process that are very important.

I want to congratulate my friend Gilles Bisson, who managed to fill up that hour. I could tell he had a lot more to say. He was just beginning.

**Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre):** He could have gone on for days.

**Ms. Churley:** He could have.

I thought he gave a very good presentation, not just on the issue up north and the need for more seats, but a good overview of the democratic deficit we have in this country and this province. It really is. Just look at what's going on with the Liberals in Ottawa now: the scandal, and the years and years of being able to get away with

that. Look at all the reform that's needed, so that governments of every stripe on every level are more transparent in the way they handle the public purse, number one.

I believe that there are some aspects to this bill that are needed. I know that we dragged the government kicking and screaming into real-time disclosure. I remember asking question after question. I remember when I brought my real-time machine in one day, and they've now come forward with that. The problem is that it's cherry-picking. We need to have the whole enchilada here. I must be hungry: cherry-picking, enchilada. We need to be looking at the entire nature of what kind of reform we need. The minister responsible said there will be a process. What we're insisting on is that that process involve the opposition completely, that decisions are made about the secretariat and how people are going to be picked to decide on all of those things. We all have to, on a non-partisan level, deal with the reform of the democratic system here in Ontario.

**Mr. Colle:** I certainly prefer the member from Timmins–James Bay's gourmet taste to the member from Toronto–Danforth's, although there are some great restaurants on the Danforth. But enchiladas are not among my favourites.

Anyway, I would just like to say that this bill doesn't really deal with some of the fundamental, core issues. One of the core issues I find is that you could put the provinces of Saskatchewan, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Nova Scotia into the city of Toronto: again, Saskatchewan with 995,000; Prince Edward Island, 137,000; Newfoundland, 517,000; Nova Scotia, 937,000. We've only got 21 seats here. In those provinces, they've got about 200 members provincially.

The previous government talked about how representation was bad. "Too many elected officials; get rid of them." The public needs good representation. The present system doesn't reflect the public's needs, never mind the geographic needs my friend talked about, which are real. There is also diversity. In the city of Toronto, you can go from street to street and there are totally different, dramatic needs. From the poor in the Jane Street corridor to Lawrence Heights in my riding of Eglinton–Lawrence to St. James Town, wherever you go, dramatic needs aren't being met with our present electoral system. It's really doing a disservice to democracy the way it's structured right now. Unless we start to come to grips with those problems of representation that exist not only in the north but that exist all over, it doesn't do democracy a good turn, the way we are looking at things right now.

This bill, to me, is a small step. Let's take some giant steps. God forbid we should take some chances for better democracy, better representation for a change.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Timmins–James Bay, you have two minutes to reply.

**Mr. Bisson:** I want to thank all my colleagues: the member from Carleton, the member from Danforth, the member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

I want to say to my good friend Mr. Colle that I agree with him. There are some really larger fundamental issues that we need to deal with when it comes to making sure this assembly reflects what Ontario really is. When it comes to geography, population base, women, people of colour, this Legislature does not represent us.

I think one of the ways that we need to do that is we should refer this matter off to a select committee. A select committee should be charged to look at these issues in some detail and then make recommendations to Parliament, or the Legislature in our case, to be able to deal with some of these issues. I think that in that would be a whole bunch of other issues that we would bring in, not only from representation but also the issue of finance.

To my good friend Mr. Sterling, I only point out that it was your party that got rid of electoral boundary commissions. Under your party, we moved to follow the federal boundaries.

**Mr. Sterling:** We took theirs.

**Mr. Bisson:** We took theirs, but the point is that we ended up following the feds, and I never really agreed with that.

**Mr. Sterling:** It was a commission that recommended it.

**Mr. Bisson:** It was a commission, but here is the basic problem as I see it. The municipal government, we'll both agree, is much closer to the public, and they deal with issues on a pretty darned grassroots basis. The province, I would argue, is much closer to the citizens than the federal government. What we did, by going to fewer ridings in the province of Ontario—130 to 103—was to make each of our ridings larger, more people within our ridings, which made it much more difficult for us to deal with the many more issues we deal with at the provincial level. I look at federal members compared to provincial members, and we deal with far more issues on the provincial level than they do federally. I don't believe that our ridings should be the same when it comes to numbers.

I thank members for time in this debate, and I look forward to the committee that will deal with this bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I thank the members for the debate this afternoon. I think it's time that this House adjourned, to be reconvened at 6:45 of the clock.

*The House adjourned at 1759.*

*Evening meeting reported in volume B.*

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