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Thursday 3 November 2005

Jeudi 3 novembre 2005

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Thursday 3 November 2005

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Jeudi 3 novembre 2005

The House met at 1000.

Prayers.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS**

**HEALTH INSURANCE
AMENDMENT ACT (PSA TESTS FOR
PROSTATE CANCER), 2005**

**LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR L'ASSURANCE-SANTÉ
(TEST PSA POUR LE DÉPISTAGE
DU CANCER DE LA PROSTATE)**

Mr. Mauro moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 4, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act /
Projet de loi 4, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-santé.

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

Mr. Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay–Atikokan): I am pleased to rise this morning once again to have an opportunity to debate and move second reading of Bill 4, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act. This is a reintroduction of a private member's bill that I introduced in June of this year to make the PSA test, a blood test for men to find an indication of the potential for the existence of prostate cancer, an insurable service under OHIP.

In June 2005, when I first introduced the legislation, it was a little bit exciting. It was my first private member's bill, but quickly the reality of this institution struck me when I found out about 30 minutes later that that was the last day of the session in the spring and that it was likely that this bill would not be carried forward. So here I find myself again introducing what I feel is a very valid and legitimate piece of legislation that hopefully will end up being passed into law some day.

I'd like to begin by indicating that this test is something that does have a bit of controversy surrounding it. It is not something that is unanimously endorsed by everyone in the medical community. However, it is fair to say, I think, that there are more people in the medical community who do endorse it than who don't, and I think it's also fair to say that much of the resistance to the introduction of this piece of legislation, the PSA test as a

valid test, comes from people in the non-medical community.

Part of the controversy stems, I think, from two pieces: One is that it can sometimes indicate a false negative, and there is a stress situation related to men who may find themselves in this situation; the other is the cost to the health care system. I'm going to leave those two for now; I will get back to those in a little while and speak to them a little later on in my 10 minutes.

There are a couple of things that are worth entering into the record statistically that I think I need to read in, and I'd like to do that for you now.

Prostate cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in Canadian men. At least one in every seven Canadian men is expected to develop the disease in their lifetime, and 27% of them will die of it. In the year 2000 alone, prostate cancer caused the death of over 1,300 men in Ontario.

It's the third leading cause of cancer death among men. The irony, of course, with this statistic is that prostate cancer is one of the most curable of all of the cancers that exist, if it is detected early. That goes to why I feel very strongly about the introduction and the OHIP coverage of this test.

A recent study by University of Connecticut researchers shows that prostate cancer survivors fare relatively well and rarely deem the diagnosis to be a traumatic or life-altering event.

Those mainly at risk of prostate cancer are men 45 or older, those with a family history, and men of African descent. Other risk factors include diets high in fat, calories and red meat.

"PSA" stands for "prostate specific antigen." It is a blood test that measures a substance called prostate specific antigen, a protein produced by prostate cells and by prostate tumours.

As I mentioned earlier, there are also many who are in support of this. The medical practitioners most involved with the treatment of this disease are those who tend to lend the largest support to the insurability of the test. An Ipsos Reid survey shows that the vast majority of Ontario urologists—in fact, about 85% of them—believe that prostate-specific antigen screening tests for prostate cancer help reduce mortality in the general population and should be covered under provincial health insurance plans.

Mr. Aaron Bacher is the chairman of the Man to Man Prostate Cancer Support Group here in the greater Toronto area. I believe this particular support group is the

largest in Ontario, and maybe in Canada. What Mr. Bacher and his group have had to say is this:

“As chairman of the Toronto Man to Man Prostate Cancer Support Group, the largest such group in Canada, we see too many men at our meetings who are the direct result of putting off getting a PSA test done until it was too late. All the men who come to our meetings do so after being diagnosed with prostate cancer, and they come to us looking for answers. We hear about how they didn’t get the test done because it was going to cost them a few dollars, or their GP told them it wasn’t necessary because of the cost or that the test is ‘unreliable.’”

As I’ve mentioned already, we know all about some of the controversy that surrounds the test, but it is still the only test available. According to Mr. Bacher, until something else comes along, it’s all we have to deal with. Every one of the men in their group credits the PSA test for having saved their lives.

One of the things that has changed that I would like to talk about in terms of scientific data coming forward to support the insurability of this test, one of the recent innovations, is something that’s referred to in the medical community as the velocity of change or the rapidity of change. What that would require is for PSA tests to start to be administered by medical practitioners on a regular basis. That would provide a baseline of data which the medical practitioners would have to refer back to when they administer subsequent tests.

One test indicating a high PSA level is not necessarily an indicator of the existence of prostate cancer, although it may be. This is what some of the controversy surrounds. However, if we were to begin using this new model, the rapidity or the velocity of change, we would be able to compare a first PSA testing level to a second and a third PSA testing level. The velocity of change in those readings is a very reliable indicator of the potential existence of prostate cancer in men. Of course, this is very key because, as we know, early detection leads to early cure.

Laurence Klotz is a professor of surgery at the University of Toronto, and he speaks on this issue. He is the head of the prostate cancer group at Sunnybrook and Women’s College Health Sciences Centre. On the issue of this rapidity and velocity of change, he had this to say:

“A rapid rise in PSA has been clearly demonstrated to be associated with aggressive prostate cancer. Furthermore, by the time someone developed advanced prostate cancer, the PSA is almost always very high. The widespread use of PSA testing has resulted in the disease being diagnosed at a stage when it is much more curable. More important, death from prostate cancer has dropped 25% in the past years in North America. This advance test deserves as large a headline as the one casting suspicion on the PSA test.”

1010

There are many reasons why I believe we need to be funding the PSA test and other tests of a like nature. We in this Legislature are all very familiar with the challenges our health care system faces in terms of its very

sustainability. We all know about the challenges it faces from a financial perspective. We all know that our health care budget represents about 40% to 45% of the overall provincial expenditures in this province, somewhere in the order of \$30 billion to \$35 billion out of about \$75 billion or \$80 billion in total, and we all know it’s continuing to increase. In fact, there was an article in the paper just this morning talking about how health care expenditures are expected to increase by an additional 7.5% or 8% this year.

We have seen those increases continuing on a regular basis over the last number of years, and if any of us are interested in the survivability of the system, we need to find ways to manage it better. I would suggest that one of those ways is by the introduction of more preventive tests that will lead to early cures because, as we all know, if we can catch these things early, it is much less expensive to deal with them earlier than later.

By way of example, I will tell you that if the test as it currently exists costs about \$25 or \$30, a radical prostatectomy, once diagnosed in its early stages, would cost the health care system about \$16,000. A radical prostatectomy, or the treatment of the disease after it has spread, would cost in the order of \$30,000. So I think it’s fair to say that one early detection would pay for the cost of approximately 1,000 of these tests.

We all know that in this province we have an aging population, and concurrent with that aging population is going to be an explosion in certain diseases associated with aging. One of them is advanced prostate cancer for men. Others, such as different dementias and things like that—diabetes is a very dangerous one where we expect a large explosion in numbers, as the population ages in Ontario. I would suggest that we may end up in a position where we do not have a choice except to begin to get more proactive in our approach to these diseases as they begin to increase in numbers.

The challenge, of course, for government is that in many cases we are all running around putting out fires. We have so many acute pressures on the health care system that it’s difficult to find the resources to put into preventive measures as we try and deal with the challenges we have. Also, governments have not been historically good at doing things the benefits of which accrue five, 10 or 15 years down the road. I would suggest that we are at a point here where we no longer have a choice, where prevention needs to become a large part of what we do. It is better for the patients, and clearly it will be better for the long-term sustainability of the very system we hold so dear in this province.

The Deputy Speaker: Before we proceed, we have with us in the Speaker’s gallery a delegation from the Hong Kou District People’s Congress of Shanghai, China. Please join me in warmly welcoming our guests.

Applause.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean–Carleton): I’m pleased to rise in support of the bill presented by my colleague from Thunder Bay. At the outset, I want to underline that

I think this should be a non-partisan issue. The previous government didn't take action in this regard and the current government isn't. I think the member opposite is bringing forward this bill to try to push the ball forward, and I commend him for doing that.

The bottom line for me, and the bottom line for many of the people I represent in Nepean–Carleton, is that we believe that in the fight against cancer we need to use all the tools at our disposal, and this is only one of them. I've had a number of constituents over the years come in and speak to me about this issue. I've seen the bureaucratic gobbledygook that I'm sure the member opposite has seen and the explanations on why this can't be done, rather than looking at the case for why it should be done.

There was a very powerful story in Ottawa, one that involved the media. The Registered Nurses Association of Ontario each year recognizes journalists for their contribution to health care reporting, and there was a very personal story about a community leader, about a colleague and friend of the journalist by the name of Carol Anne Meehan, who put a series together on prostate cancer on CJOH television. This had a huge impact, not just on my views but on the number of calls I received in my constituency office.

She put on a series about her colleague and friend Max Keeping. Max Keeping is an anchor at the local newscast and a real community leader, someone who does more than 200 community events per year and who is probably the favourite son of Ottawa. Mr. Keeping went public with his illness in order to inspire others to get tested for this type of cancer, which, as the member opposite said, affects one out of eight Canadian men. The good news is that this type of cancer is curable, but only if detected early. Something that irks Mr. Keeping and something that irks many of us is that this PSA test used to diagnose this cancer is not covered by OHIP, and it only costs an extra \$25. The member opposite spoke about how detecting one case early could literally pay for about 1,000 tests—let alone the human cost, which is something that is quite important.

PSA tests aren't perfect, but they are the best diagnostic tool we have at our disposal. DNA science work is holding out great promise, but in the interim this is certainly the very best diagnostic tool. One of the fundamental inconsistencies in all this is that PSA tests are covered by the taxpayer if they're done in a hospital. How in one silo of our health care system the taxpayers and the government and our publicly funded health care system will pay for it and in another they won't is, quite simply, baffling. The bottom line, if you ask Max Keeping, if you ask anyone who has gone through this, is: Are we going to place our trust in Ontario's doctors to make this decision if they hold it to be a wise one? The bottom line is that men shouldn't be dying from this. It has put a huge pressure on a number of families.

Finally, I'd like to acknowledge that one of the great shames to government—not just to this government but to the previous government—you could see in Cornwall, Ontario. I don't know if our colleague from Cornwall is

here. The Victorian Order of Nurses raised money privately to put on a clinic in Cornwall, Ontario, this past September. They raised money privately, they felt so strongly about this. In this PSA clinic, held at the Cornwall Square shopping centre, some 300 men attended and some 30 tested positive. That really does put the government to shame, whether it's this government or the previous government. That shows that there's a huge amount of support out there and that people are prepared to act on their own.

I will be voting in favour of the bill. I'd like to see it moved through committee on an expeditious basis and for a final vote on third reading.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): It is so much fun to be in the Legislature debating a bill with a fellow northerner, in this case from northwestern Ontario, all the way across on the other side of the part of northern Ontario that I represent.

I want to say up front that we will support this motion. We New Democrats believe that public health means a public health care system, and that a service that is essential for the well-being of people should be a service that is paid for by the public purse through our public health care system. We agree that PSA tests would be a good thing to be covered off publicly.

I've got to say that as an adult male over the age of 45, I've been going every couple of years for the PSA test myself. I figure it's a good idea. We have a family history where some of the males in our family have actually succumbed to prostate cancer, so that's something you have to watch. I don't mind. I can afford to pay the 25 or 50 bucks or whatever it is. But not everybody is as fortunate as me. Not everybody makes a decent salary of \$90,000 plus a year and can afford to do it. I think one of the things we've learned in our health care system is that what you really need to do is to try to make access to health care as easy as possible for the individual, so that they're not discouraged to be tested for something that might be life-threatening. Quite frankly, for the health care system, it probably saves them money in the long run.

1020

Let me make this argument: If someone is not caught early when it comes to the diagnosis of a disease—in this case, prostate cancer—it's much more expensive for the health care system, I would say, to catch this disease when it's further into the line of progression. Obviously, more radical treatment, more radical surgery and more radical approaches need to be taken to deal with the disease. If we're able to get to it a lot earlier, we're in a much better position to manage the disease, save the health care system a lot of money and, more importantly, make it a much easier medical intervention for the person who is being tested. So I support that.

I find it a bit odd that a government member would have to bring a private member's bill forward for this. George Smitherman is a competent Minister of Health; I've said that a number of times. Certainly I think George, at heart, wants to make the health care system

better. But I wonder why it is that a government member has to get a private member's bill to do something that his government should be doing in the first place. I know George feels pretty strongly about this issue as well and I wonder why there has not been more discussion within the Liberal caucus and ultimately at the Liberal cabinet table to say, "How much is this going to cost and is this something that we could afford to do?" So I have to draw a couple of conclusions by way of this debate today: Either that has not happened, which I find a bit sad, or it has happened and the government doesn't want to go there—equally just as sad.

I don't want to rain on the parade of the member for Thunder Bay, but, in part, that's what I'm doing. I would think these kinds of discussions happen within the Liberal caucus when it comes to deciding what should be funded and what direction the government should take on various initiatives. That was certainly the case when I was a member of a government caucus. You would bring those issues to your caucus, you would have a discussion, it would then be referred to one of the cabinet committees to take a look at the issue and then it would be brought back to caucus as a formal report in order to make a decision if the caucus wanted to go in that direction.

I'd be interested in knowing from the member, when he has a chance to wrap up in his last two minutes, where that is. Is the government seriously looking at this and is this an attempt to showcase and move the idea forward, at which point we'd support you wholeheartedly, or should we be somewhat worried? Do you need a little bit more help? Should members of the opposition be standing up here and asking questions of the Minister of Health, helping you out? I know it would be a little bit more difficult for a backbench member of the Liberal government to get up and go after his own minister. If you need that, you don't have to drop me a brown envelope; just come and talk to me. I'd be glad to do it.

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): You'd be too shy to do that.

Mr. Bisson: I'm a very shy member, you've got to know. I am so shy, I shake every time I stand up in the Legislature to ask a question or anything. But if you need help in that way, I'm serious to do it.

In regard to the benefits of the testing, I know there's some controversy on this issue. You have some people in the medical profession who say the PSA tests can give you a false negative or a false positive. In talking to my own family doctor about this particular issue, we've had the discussion about whether you should rely entirely on the PSA test. The answer is no, but the PSA test is certainly one of the tools that is available to the medical community for early detection, if you should have a condition that is starting to develop as far as your prostate. I think men need to take this very seriously and say, "There are things we have to do other than just the PSA test to make sure that we are properly tested." So I would encourage anybody who is watching to go and see your doctor once a year, at the very least. You should get a full

examination, not only for the prostate but for other conditions like blood pressure, which I'm a candidate for. I've always had high blood pressure, since I was about 16 years old. It's certainly a hell of a lot higher since I've been here, but that's a whole other story. So we need to take that seriously, and I would encourage people to do that.

It also brings us to the issue—and I want to do this because I know the member would agree with me on the following point, which is somewhat removed from prostate tests but connected to our health care system, and that is access to health services for people in Ontario. If you're living in Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa, Windsor or some of the bigger centres, you don't think about this; you take it for granted. "I don't feel well; I'll go see my doctor." If the doctor thinks there's something, he'll send you to a clinic or to the hospital and you get a test in a relatively short period of time.

For people living in northwestern or northeastern Ontario, that's not the case. Far too often, people don't have a family doctor. In Kapuskasing, for example, you have a lot of people who don't have family doctors. Right now, the Minister of Health is actually looking at a proposal from the town of Kapuskasing, from the citizens there, to open up a health clinic as a way to alleviate some of the pressure on our current doctors. I certainly hope the government is going to look at that favourably. I know the Minister of Health is looking at that and I encourage him to lend all of his support to the Kapuskasing proposal. If there is a proposal out there that needs approval, I would argue that is the one, because of the situation they have in Kapuskasing, and in the area as well.

My point is that we really do have a problem in northern Ontario when it comes to access to health services. Some of the most basic services sometimes are very difficult to have access to, especially if you don't live in one of the five major regional centres in northern Ontario: Timmins, North Bay, Sudbury, Thunder Bay and Sault Ste. Marie. If you live in one of the smaller, outlying communities, it gets pretty darn difficult. For example, if you live in Hearst and you have to be on dialysis, you can't get dialysis services in Hearst. You have to either drive down two or three times a week to Kapuskasing or you have to go to Timmins. That's not the easiest thing in the world to do at times, especially in the winter months when the weather is not so good.

Imagine living in some of our remote communities on the James Bay or up in northwestern Ontario. Those communities are isolated from health services entirely. They don't even have doctors in their communities. We have physicians who fly in from Weeneebayko hospital and through the James Bay General Hospital. They have an agreement to share doctors. Depending on what community you're in, you're either served by the James Bay General or the Weeneebayko hospital. But you have to bring doctors in by plane on a weekly basis, if you're lucky, to deal with some of the most basic things that we take for granted when it comes to health services.

I want to report to members of this House that there is an initiative in northeastern Ontario that is spurred by this government and the federal government, to which I give total support, and that is the integration of their health care system on the James Bay coast. Currently, the federal government runs part of the health system on the James Bay, through the Weeneebayko General Hospital—good people who do a good job. Pat Chilton, who is the CEO of the hospital, is doing a great job of motivating his team, providing services and running the system efficiently, all within the budget. Then you have Peter Fabricus on the provincial side, at the James Bay General, along with his board, doing an absolutely amazing job of providing services, not only when it comes to acute care services, but services within the community—everything from mental health services and others.

The problem is, there is a disconnect, because you have this federal-provincial system, depending on what community you're in. If you're in the community of Attawapiskat, you're served by James Bay General Hospital, where you have a hospital wing and you have services. If you're in Kashechewan or Peawanuk, you find yourself in the federal system and you have a health clinic. So the attempt is to work toward integrating those two hospitals into one provincial hospital.

I want to say on the record, this is something I wholeheartedly support. I think the government is going completely in the right direction, and a good example of why I think they're going in the right direction is what happened in Kashechewan over the last couple of weeks. The federal government, in my view, is not only disinterested but, quite frankly, doesn't have the capacity to deal with many of the issues that are important to the people of the James Bay and northwestern Ontario. It's not that the federal government is evil; I don't argue that. Sometimes I feel that, but—

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): Incompetent.

Mr. Bisson: Incompetent, I would say is the case. But the problem is that they don't have the depth and capacity in the bureaucracy to do this. Let me give you an example. I try sometimes to equate it this way: Imagine you have two baseball teams, the provincial baseball team, which let's say is the Ministry of Health, and the federal baseball team, which is the federal Department of Health. The provincial government supports hospitals, doctors, community health clinics, mental health, developmentally handicapped children. It has a complete breadth of services that we have established across this province to make sure that we have an integrated health service, so that there are not just independent silos within health services, but people work together. It's like having a baseball team with nine players on the field. You've got a full bench of baseball players sitting on the bench who are just as good as the people out on the field, if not better, and you've got a great management team. You've got the trainers, you've got the doctors, you've got everybody to keep the baseball team going. Federally,

you've got nine players and maybe a manager; that's about it. That would be the analogy. It's not because the federal government is evil; it's just that they don't have the breadth or the depth of bench to provide the kind of support needed for our health care system in aboriginal communities. I think people will be much better served by the province because that's what we do best.

1030

The second point is that in the transfer of the federal hospital over to the province, we need to ensure that the dollars that the federal government now spends on Weeneebayko and other health services on the James Bay come to the province on an annual basis, so that the total sum of money we get to operate services on the James Bay is sufficient to provide full services. It would be a travesty—I would say, a crime—if all of a sudden the federal government says, “All right, we're going to give you some capital dollars to build a hospital somewhere on James Bay, and we're going to get out of the health business.” Well, get out of the health business, but you still have a fiduciary responsibility to First Nations. I would argue that the federal government needs to recognize that and needs to make sure there's an annual allocation to the province to make sure that we have sufficient dollars not just to provide services at Moose Factory or Moosonee or wherever it might be, but that we have services that we offer across James Bay.

Now, a good model is James Bay General Hospital. They operate a hospital that has a number of wings in different communities. Attawapiskat, Moosonee and Fort Albany are all wings of one big hospital. So when you go into Fort Albany or Attawapiskat, you have a physical structure that looks like a hospital, that has emergency services, that has a complement of qualified staff to deal with the health services in those communities, that has ambulances to pick people up in the event of an emergency. But if you go into the federal system, in Kashechewan or Peawanuk, you don't have that. It's not that the people working in the federal health stations are not dedicated workers; they are. But they don't have the kind of support that they need, funding-wise, from the government to allow them to do a full range of services.

For example, what we should end up with at the end in each of our communities, including Moosonee, is a wing of a hospital that has emergency services, acute-care services and also long-term-care services combined into the same facility, so that people, when they're in need of long-term care, don't have to be shipped to Cochrane or Timmins to get long-term-care services. Those services should be available in the community and be coordinated with the health clinics we have currently within those communities so that we're able to provide community health services. I think it's a great model, and I encourage Minister George Smitherman to continue the fine work that he's done and his ministry has done in working forward to bring those services to the people of James Bay.

In the last minute or so that I have on this, I just want to end by saying to our good friend the member from

Thunder Bay–Atikokan that Owen Lindsey died—as you well know, a good friend of ours. I thought you might want to know that. It just came to mind, as we just got the message yesterday. Owen was a long-time member of our party who worked quite hard in Atikokan on behalf of the New Democrats. I know you would know who Owen is, and you'll probably want to send a note. I just thought of that as I'm standing here, because I thought of Atikokan. I thought I'd pass that on to you. We're going to miss Owen for sure.

But I just want to say that we as New Democrats will support you. We think it's important that health services be as accessible as humanly possible to the general public so that people don't think they can't afford or can't go get a test that could be life-saving, but that also in the longer term could save our health care services lots of dollars. I would just ask the member in his summation if he could give us a sense of where his government is at with all of this, and why he chose the strategy of a private member's bill rather than having the government do it as their own initiative. Should I read something out of that? Should I not? I'd be interested to know.

Mr. Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to stand up this morning, Thursday morning, in the House and speak on this bill. First, obviously and without any hesitation, I'm totally in support of the bill, which would amend the Health Insurance Act to cover the cost of screening for prostate cancer. It currently costs around \$25. I also want to thank the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan for continuing with his work in bringing the bill forward. I also want to share with the House that probably for the last five or six months, I've had the pleasure of reading petitions in from my riding. Many men have been in to see me, and even some women have come in and expressed that they feel this should be covered. So I've been pleased to be able to do that.

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men and the second most deadly after lung cancer. Also, because of our aging population, it's the fastest-growing cancer among men. I want to mention the names of some very significant people who have just recently passed away because of this: Jerry Orbach of Law & Order, at the age of 69; Greenpeace founder Bob Hunter, at the age of 63; and Pierre Elliott Trudeau, at the age of 80—all too young.

Like most cancers, prostate cancer, if caught in time, is treatable and curable. You can ask former American Senator Bob Dole, who was fortunate. Prostate cancer, if caught in time, is one of the most treatable cancers. Instead of PSA testing costing the government money, not only can it save lives; it can add millions of dollars to our economy. It's simply a matter of dollars and cents. PSA tests can screen for the presence of increased prostate specific antigens. This test can help identify many men at risk. Presently, six out of 10 provinces cover the test. If all goes well with the bill, we'll be the seventh.

If one quarter of the 2.4 million males over the age of 40 took the test in Ontario, it would cost around \$16 mil-

lion. And yes, that is a lot of money. It costs around \$16,000 for each prostate test, and to treat the disease later it's around \$32,000. So based on those numbers, if we caught one third earlier through PSA testing, the government would actually save the medical system about \$24 million. This type of return on investment is simply a no-brainer. Further, if we're able to cure those who have prostate cancer now, we could actually pump an additional \$68 billion into the Ontario economy over the expected lifetimes of those who have been cured.

Screening may not be perfect, but it can save lives, and it can help the Ontario economy if it's properly implemented. This is certainly an important job for the Honourable Jim Watson, our excellent Minister of Health Promotion. I'm quite sure that the Minister of Health, who certainly has the heart of Ontarians for health care and is constantly working on improving it, and the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Dwight Duncan, would applaud such a pragmatic approach to health care.

In closing, I would like to say that a healthy Ontario is a wealthier Ontario. And I would also urge all my colleagues, on all sides of the House, to support this bill for my colleague Bill Mauro, the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan. Again, I congratulate him for his passion and caring about the health of Ontarians.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm pleased to join in this debate. I certainly will be supporting this bill—as I did, by the way, on June 9, 2005. I believe the member brought essentially the same bill forward at that time.

What does confuse me is why we are here debating this bill again. We shouldn't be here; we should be in committee dealing with the specifics of the bill and ensuring that it moves on to third reading and, ultimately, passage and adoption by the government.

I'm concerned that perhaps this government is not serious about this. If it was, it would have taken the direction of this House in June 2005, when it passed this bill for second reading—it didn't. At the very least, it could have carried this bill on. Instead, it allowed it to die on the order paper, which means the honourable member has to reintroduce the bill again today and take another morning of debate on this.

I will say, for the benefit, and perhaps for the help, of the honourable member, that he should encourage his Minister of Health—and I do so, through this debate—with the commitment that his Premier made during the last election.

I want to read into the record—for the benefit of the honourable member, he can take this and show it to the Premier—a letter from the Retired Teachers of Ontario. It's addressed to Dalton McGuinty, April 8, 2005:

“On behalf of the political action committee of the Retired Teachers of Ontario ... we are seeking an update on the position of your government related to the funding of the prostate specific antigen (PSA) test.

“In November 2002, in your then role as opposition leader, you responded to a similar inquiry ... with the following statement: ‘In light of the fact that physicians are ordering the test because they view it as a medical

necessity, the Ontario Liberals believe it should be made available to patients free of charge.'

"As it has almost been a year and a half since your government was formed, our political action committee is anxious to know when you plan to make the PSA test available, free of charge, so we may share this information with our 55,000 members. We hasten to point out that this is indeed a gender equity matter.

"We look forward to your reply at your earliest convenience."

Signed Helen Biales, president, and James Guerard, chair, political action committee.

1040

I read that into the record because clearly this is another commitment that the Premier made. It has now been more than two years since they have been in office and formed the government, and we still see no action on this. In fact, he's forcing his member to reintroduce a private member's bill that was already passed in this House in the last session.

I concur with my colleague who said earlier, "What is this all about?" Why do we have to go through this process? We either believe this is the right thing to do or we don't. The House has expressed its view that it is. The Premier made his promise more than four years ago that he would. He's been Premier for two years plus, and we still don't have action. I hope this isn't a charade.

I'm supporting—and I know that my colleagues will support—the honourable member in his well-intentioned presentation of this bill for debate again today. I'm with him. We're all with you. Now it's up to the government to act.

There is absolutely no mystery to what has to be done. The Minister of Health simply has to take this forward to cabinet and say, "This is what we're going to do." We don't have to go through committee; we don't have to go through any further debate, any more procedure. I call on the government to respect the honourable member's call for this PSA test to be included under OHIP, and we hope we get on with it.

Mr. McNeely: I was fortunate enough to be with Minister Smitherman yesterday at the CHEO hospital in Ottawa where an announcement was made for the newborn screening laboratory that will be set up there: a \$5-million investment in the technology and, I believe, \$13 million going forward per year for operation.

This is just a great announcement for us, and it's an announcement that ties into this morning: that we're trying to detect diseases early and be able to treat them. So that was a great day for Ottawa and a great day for the province because over 100,000 children in this province will now be treated, I believe, for 27 rare genetic diseases, including 20 inherited metabolic disorders.

We're talking about the same thing this morning, and I'm very pleased to support my colleague from Thunder Bay–Atikokan for this extension of PSA testing to be funded by OHIP.

I have a bit of experience with it because my brother Frank was not tested, was not treated early, and died very

prematurely, at 57 years. That's only 12 years ago. He left a young family. So it's very important that we have these tests.

I went through the tests. I got a family doctor—I just recently changed last spring. I got a positive test back and so went through the other tests. Sure, you're concerned when you get back a positive test, but once you get the good news after further testing that there's no problem, it's certainly good. That is one of the criticisms: that you get these tests back that may be positive but are not indicative of having the disease. But that's one of the little things we have to go through.

When you hear statistics that say that one in seven men is expected to develop this potentially deadly disease in their lifetime, that 1,300 men will die this year because of the disease, it makes you stop and think. Of course, knowing there is a test that can detect prostate cancer before it becomes lethal gives men a sense of security. At least we can all go to the doctor and have a checkup. When I was told the test was going to be \$25, it wasn't difficult for me to say, "Oh, fine, that's good. Let's go ahead." But I guess in my brother's case, and in a lot of cases, you don't have the test because I believe the medical system just says, "Oh, you probably don't need it. Don't spend the \$25." I don't know why we don't go through it, but in a lot of cases the \$25 is the impediment to not having the test. It seems logical that a test can detect prostate cancer early enough to treat it. All men should be having these tests, and OHIP should be covering it.

I understand there are many valid arguments that say the test should not be covered, but I think the arguments we've heard here have all shown that these arguments are not really good enough. So which is worse—not having that test, or getting that test and having those positive results? I can't believe that that is the reason that we should not be going forward with this. It's the best test we have. It's one that's supported by many, many doctors and it would certainly save lives, would save that hardship that comes with prostate cancer.

A study conducted in 2000 shows there would be actually savings to the government. That was mentioned by other people earlier today. That savings has to be looked at. The savings can't be just in dollar terms. If it's almost there that this is a zero cost to the government, then we should be going ahead with it. I'm sure that our minister will be looking at it.

If this bill is adopted, it will certainly save that hesitation. We will see more tests. I think the member presenting this bill has shown that by monitoring the differences in the test results, the indicators are going to be there and the proper treatment will be done at the right time.

Our government has made great strides to ensure that Ontarians get the health care they need. We're very pleased in Ottawa to see that we have two more MRIs. We're getting more knee and joint replacements. We're getting a lot of additional coverage that we never had in the past. Speaking from a perspective of an Ottawa

person, we're very, very pleased. We have an MRI in our own area of Orléans. This is just moving ahead, and I'm sure that this one step to have these tests paid by OHIP would be a great move forward.

Interjection.

Mr. McNeely: That's right. We've made great strides. I don't see the member, but we have made great strides in the last two years in bringing Ottawa into the same level of health services as the rest of the province. So whether it's reducing waiting times for major procedures, introducing family health teams, or making sure people can get the care they need close to home, our government is working toward providing the best health care to all Ontarians. After many years of neglect, we are giving our health care system the boost it needs. This bill is in line with the goals of our health care transformation. I believe it would complement our government's efforts and make a great addition to the host of improvements we are making in health care.

Simply put, PSA tests save lives, PSA tests save money and PSA tests are recommended by doctors.

I appreciate having been given the time to speak on this very important bill, and I urge all members to support it.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): To begin with, I'm going to stand here this morning and say that it's almost disappointing that we're back here. This bill should have been carried forward in the last group of private members' bills, and I compliment the member for bringing the bill forward again. I am in full support of this bill.

I've heard some of the comments from the Liberal members here this morning, and one of the things I haven't heard them say is this: Dalton McGuinty did promise this treatment. He did promise this testing would take place. You heard that from the member from Oak Ridges. What Dalton McGuinty didn't promise to the people of the province of Ontario was the \$2.8-billion health tax. Some \$2.8 billion is what you've raised with that. So it's unacceptable that this is not covered by that today. I think that for men in the province of Ontario who are trying to look after themselves, this cost, this \$25—plus I believe there is a tax on that as well—is something that I believe that Ministry of Health should be covering, particularly in light of the fact we now have another \$2.8 billion to work with. They continue to tell folks how important that \$2.8-billion health premium is to the citizens of the province of Ontario, which averages out to about \$1,000 per family. It's unacceptable that we haven't seen some kind of movement so the government could support its own member.

1050

I also want to say, in my riding I'm fortunate that I have one organization in particular. It's called the Orillia Prostate Cancer Awareness group. It's a bunch of gentlemen—most of them have come into contact with prostate cancer in the past, and they have worked very hard to bring as much awareness to all of the men and women in the community that so they can bring aware-

ness to make sure that people get this testing. I can tell you that under the leadership of Mr. Colin Wackett, they have spent an enormous amount of time trying to bring this awareness to all the folks and make sure they get that testing done. As a matter of fact, they're also working in the Ride for DAD program. I don't know if many of the communities across the province have that, but I know it's been going on for about four or five years. Under the guidance of the police associations across the province—in my area, of course, it's the Ontario Provincial Police Association—they operate the Ride for DAD program. I think last year they had about 400 motorcycles—I believe it was in early May—that did a tour of north Simcoe county, and they raised over \$100,000 for prostate cancer awareness. Some of that money will flow to the cancer care unit at the Royal Victoria Hospital for their future development as well.

I just want to congratulate the member once again for bringing this forward. It is disappointing that your Premier actually did promise this to specific groups and, in fact, today you're spending another hour of very valuable time here to try to send your message. It's important that we support this bill in this House and that the citizens of the province of Ontario support this bill, and of course it's really important that men and young men from across our province take the time to get their PSA test. Hopefully, at some point in the not-too-far future, that fee will be covered by your health card. Thank you very much for this opportunity to say a few words this morning.

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I'm pleased to rise in support of this bill, standing in the name of Mr. Mauro, the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan. I feel rather compelled to speak to the comments just made by the member opposite. He might know that I had a private member's bill that took nine years to pass. His government had the opportunity to pass that bill, but it wasn't, until Minister Takhar took my private member's bill on school bus safety and passed it. Five different Conservative ministers refused to pass that bill. I congratulate our member, Mr. Mauro, from Thunder Bay-Atikokan, who has introduced it twice now, on his tenacity to ensure that people have full access to this PSA test that deals with prostate cancer and to ensure that it will become an insured service—access for all persons.

I think that basically what we're hearing here this morning is not so much a debate but a conversation about the merits of this bill; that's what we're hearing this morning. I hear from all parties that they favour this bill. I think it is commendable that the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan has brought this forward and has a bill that not only helps people within his riding, but even beyond, in the whole province of Ontario.

Not only will this be of benefit to males in our society here in Ontario, but also to their families. This bill has a very wide scope. Yes, it is a bill that deals with a health care issue of men alone, but remember the families of cancer victims. Too sadly, many of us in this House know of someone who has died of cancer of one type or

another. This bill will be of benefit to families and to males in our society.

What this PSA test will do is provide for early detection. It is important that a prostate-specific antigen test be taken. That test can lead to further tests that might save a life, and no doubt would. We should be doing all we can to prevent disease and the spread of disease once it is found. This bill will do that. It will help to save lives. That is the most important part of this whole discussion.

Two others have mentioned, and I want to put on the record, that the baby boomers are moving along in age. I believe there are some three million-plus baby boomers in Ontario, many of them males. They're aging, and age is one of the significant factors in this particular cancer. We must do everything we can to make sure that people have access to this test to save lives.

Prostate cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in Canadian men. At least one in every eight Canadian men is expected to develop the disease in their lifetime—one in eight—and 27% of them may die. In the year 2000 alone, prostate cancer caused the deaths of over 1,300 men in Ontario. Up to 20,000 Canadian men are newly diagnosed every year. Some five million Canadian men are currently in those cancer risk years, the ages between 45 and 70. It is a significant problem. It is a significant cancer among many men.

In New Brunswick, this is covered universally; in Newfoundland and Labrador it is covered universally; in Nova Scotia it is covered universally; and the Northwest Territories, Prince Edward Island, Saskatchewan and the Yukon all cover it universally. We should be doing the same thing in Ontario for our population. This is quite simply the right thing to do. It's the right thing to do. We have agreement here. This has been more a discussion rather than a debate.

I want to thank the member for bringing this forward. I believe this should move to committee swiftly. It should be taken to the committee as soon as possible, and I think it should come back to this House for swift passage. This will give access to all for what has been stated to be a rather cheap test monetarily, but it will save lives. I commend the member for his efforts.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): It's a pleasure to rise once again to speak to the bill brought forward by the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan to amend the Health Insurance Act for PSA testing. I spoke in the last session about this bill and the value it has to everyone in the province of Ontario. I have very specific examples in my riding of Haliburton–Victoria–Brock where I have had gentlemen e-mail me and contact me about the value of PSA testing, and I'd like to thank them for that.

As a former nurse, I'm totally aware of the attention to prevention and early detection that we must do and progress on in this province. We've heard all kinds of stories about cancer survivors where early detection was the vital life-saving factor. I would be extremely disappointed if this government were to delay the progress of this bill again and not realize the potential the bill holds.

I'm very happy to have heard the stories from all sides of the Legislature today on the benefits that this test can have in preventing deaths. We've heard a lot of facts. I know that prevention and early detection and access to doctors are vital for this.

I know there has been some downplaying of the positive role of the PSA test. The prostate specific antigen test uses blood samples. It's an easy test, and it follows the progress of prostate cancer. When PSA levels rise in blood, doctors are then alerted to pursue further tests to detect early if a male has this debilitating disease. Canadian researchers assert that screening men with PSA tests before any symptoms of cancer are evident may reduce the risk of getting metastatic prostate cancer by 35%. I think those statistics are important for all of us.

The present government has delisted many services, but this vital early-prevention test will hopefully not be another casualty of this government. They've got increased revenues from their health tax, and I want to see the speedy passage of the PSA test and that this be brought forward as soon as possible.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Mauro, the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan, has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Mauro: A quick thank you to all the members who have spoken on the legislation: the members from Chatham–Kent–Essex, Ottawa–Orléans, Niagara Falls, Simcoe North, Nepean–Carleton, Oak Ridges, Timmins–James Bay and Haliburton–Victoria–Brock.

There are about three points I'd like to touch on in the quick two minutes I have to wrap on this issue. One is that when I first introduced this legislation in June this year, in the lead up to the introduction of that legislation, I, probably like other members of the Legislature, received a lot of very supportive e-mails, comments and letters on the introduction of this legislation and the hope that the funding of PSA testing would pass. I can tell you that contained in those supportive messages was the fact that many people in Ontario, and even those from outside the province, viewed the non-funding of this test as discriminatory in nature. I can tell you it was not something I had considered when I introduced the legislation, or that compelled me to introduce the legislation. However, there are many groups that find and view this in that context. It's been referenced by others here today.

1100

The second piece is a bit about the controversy of the test that I and others have touched on in terms of trying to provide some balance to the discussion. It's not controversial in many other places; the efficacy of the test is not in question in a lot of places. Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island all support and currently fund PSA testing completely in their provinces. A sixth province, BC, will pay for the test if in fact that test comes back positive. Those people and those provinces are not having a difficulty with the efficacy of this test.

The last thing I would like to say, and that I touched on in my opening remarks in my initial 10 minutes, was on a bit of a macro issue: that we're all here to try and

ensure the sustainability of the system that we have in this province. Many of you have probably read the book by Michael Rachlis; I believe it was called Prescription for Excellence. We have challenges in this system that we're all aware of. One of the ways that we can deal with some of those challenges is by somehow finding the resources and pulling them away from these acute challenges that we deal with on a day-to-day basis, and trying to put some of those resources into preventive measures such as PSA testing for men, this blood test.

HOME FIRE SPRINKLER ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LES EXTINCTEURS AUTOMATIQUES DOMICILIAIRES

Mrs. Jeffrey moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 2, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992 respecting home fire sprinklers / Projet de loi 2, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur le code du bâtiment en ce qui a trait aux extincteurs automatiques domiciliaires.

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

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I rise in the House today in order to present Bill 2. Before I begin my formal remarks, I'd like to acknowledge the attendance this morning of some very special guests, members of the fire service from across Ontario. Thank you for coming.

Every day, these brave men and women put their lives on the line protecting what we value most: our families and our homes. This bill will give these firefighters another tool in their effort to safeguard Ontarians from the danger of fires.

Every 20 minutes, a fire service responds to a fire somewhere in Ontario, ranging from a typical cooking kitchen fire to a full-blown industrial fire. These trained professionals have the equipment, the expertise and the training to meet any challenge. Each year, fire services are called on to respond to over 25,000 fires across Ontario. Professional firefighters have seen first-hand the tragedy families experience when they lose a home or, worse, a loved one. Making residential fire sprinkler systems mandatory in all new residential houses, apartments and condominiums will reduce the number of tragedies.

Last year, a resident of Brampton joined me in the House to show his support for residential sprinklers. In 1999, Mr. Gyamfi lost his daughter in an arson fire in Brampton. He and his family know the terrible pain and devastation fire causes. He chose to come here today again in order to show his support for residential fire sprinklers. Mr. Gyamfi joins us here today in the gallery. Thank you, Mr. Gyamfi.

Our fire service professionals are dedicated people who respond quickly to the call for help. However, even the most well-equipped and quickest-responding team cannot always get to a call in time to save a home or a family. That's where residential fire sprinklers can make

the difference. They can respond to a fire in the early stages and give a family a chance to exit safely while the firefighters are responding to the scene. As many fire professionals know, those precious minutes make the difference. By having sprinklers together with properly functioning smoke alarms, they are 82% more likely to survive a fire relative to having neither.

Some people have questioned the need for mandatory residential fire sprinkler systems. They've argued that the cost will affect home affordability and may cost jobs in the housing sector. I would simply respond that today we spend nearly two thirds of our day in a sprinklered environment, and no one has made an argument that we should not have sprinklers in public places because of costs, or that they cost jobs or cost municipal tax revenues. In our schools, offices, factories, malls, gyms and theatres, we have the benefit of being protected, but in the one place where more incidents of injuries and deaths related to fires occur—our homes—we don't have any sprinkler protection.

This past Sunday evening, the Toronto Fire Service responded to a call at the Fred Victor Mission. A tragic fire cost one person's life, injured five others and left 50 people without a home or their possessions. This three-alarm blaze required 100 firefighters and two dozen trucks. Sadly, this tragedy could have been prevented had a residential fire sprinkler system been installed.

Ontario, unfortunately, has the unenviable distinction of being the only jurisdiction in either Canada or the United States that does not require residential fire sprinklers in high-rise apartments or condominiums. However, we do require them in parking garages and in some lobbies, but not in the units themselves.

Jurisdictions such as Vancouver have a decade of experience with residential fire sprinkler systems. In the 10 years since the city passed a bylaw requiring residential fire sprinklers, there has not been a single accidental fire death in a home equipped with a system. The American experience has confirmed these results. In fact, to my knowledge, there have been no accidental fire deaths occurring in a residence with a properly installed fire sprinkler system in the nearly 200 jurisdictions that require them.

The Ontario public understands the value and importance of fire sprinkler systems. In a poll taken this summer by Polara involving over 1,200 respondents, more than two thirds, 67%, support, making them mandatory in new homes and high-rise dwellings. Nearly three quarters, 74%, of those considering buying a new home also support, this legislation. Clearly, the public gets it.

This summer, the National Fire Protection Association made a historic decision. The NFPA is an international non-profit organization that serves as the world's leading advocate for fire prevention and is an authoritative source on public safety. Their membership totals more than 79,000 individuals from around the world and more than 80 national trade and professional organizations. This group adopted section 13D requiring the mandatory installation of fire sprinkler systems. "The code provision for sprinklers in new one- and two-family dwellings is a

milestone in fire protection,” said James M. Shannon, NFPA president. “It is a significant step in reducing the rate of fire death and injury in the place where people are at most risk for fire—their own homes.”

Fire professionals such as the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs want to see this legislation passed not only to save lives and protect property, but also to reduce the number of deaths and injuries suffered by our firefighters responding to these emergencies. Other organizations, such as the Ontario Municipal Fire Prevention Officers Association, the Canadian Automatic Sprinkler Association, the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, and over 50 municipalities across Ontario, support this effort.

Fires in Ontario are costing our economy hundreds of millions of dollars. More importantly, on average, 100 people lose their lives to fire in Ontario annually.

Unfortunately, in most cases, fires are preventable. Just as we learned the value and importance of smoke alarms in the early 1980s, now is the time to step up to the next level of fire protection. People put entirely too much faith in their smoke alarms. Frequently, they have not been tested and homeowners fail to replace the batteries. One study found that in half the fires involving a fatality, the smoke alarms did not operate because of missing or dead batteries. Smoke alarms do what their name implies: They provide early detection and warning of the smoke from fire. But they take no action on the fire itself. To prevent more deaths and injuries, we need to make meaningful progress in fire protection and safety with an additional intervention. That intervention, already available, is wide-scale installation of fast-response residential fire sprinkler systems.

One key group this proposed legislation stands to protect is individuals who are frequently overlooked, those who need protection the most: our seniors and our disabled. Residential fire sprinklers add a level of protection to seniors and the disabled who choose to live an independent lifestyle. Families who worry about their loved ones forgetting to shut off a stove can now have peace of mind, knowing that their loved ones will have protection that will give them the time to escape safely.

Ontario has a proud record of introducing regulations that protect people from a number of perils. Many of these regulations were adopted with little or no debate because they were the right thing to do.

For example, the Ontario building code regulations, under section 4.1.9, were written to include standards of construction that take into account earthquakes. To my knowledge, no one has died related to an earthquake in Ontario in the past 10 years. Compare this to the over 1,000 deaths and 10,000 injuries attributed to fires during the same time period. We include earthquake protection because we want to protect people and property under a variety of circumstances. It's not an option but a requirement. How can we debate on an issue such as fire safety as an option, when Ontarians are being killed or injured due to preventable fires?

1110

Residential sprinklers save lives, reduce injuries and property damage, and need to be in place today. It's a fire

safety measure whose time has come. Those who want to make Ontario a safer place for themselves and their families should support Bill 2. Shouldn't we be listening and implementing what countless coroners' juries have been recommending for years? Bill 2 simply recognizes something we have known for a long time: sprinklers save lives and property. It's the logical next step, and its time has come. It's the next evolution in building safer and smarter homes. These silent firefighters stand guard 24 hours a day, seven days a week, protecting what we value most: our families and our homes.

In conclusion, I'd like to thank my friend firefighter Brian Maltby. He has been relentless in his determination to see this legislation come to fruition. I know Brian has a dream of a day when firefighters will respond to a fire by running into a house, turning off the water, mopping up the floor and returning safe and sound to their loved ones. Thank you, Brian.

This is a time when we need to demonstrate our commitment to fire safety. We need this bill to pass second reading and to be referred to public hearings so that Ontarians can participate in making this province a national and international leader in fire safety.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I'm pleased to stand today and speak to Bill 2, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992 respecting home fire sprinklers, put forward by the member from Brampton Centre.

I believe this legislation has great intentions. As a 25-year firefighter, I can say that I think all members want to protect our families and our properties, as well as the firefighters who put their lives on the line each day to help protect us. I, too, want to welcome all the firefighters who are in the audience today to hear the presentations.

As with a lot of things, there is a “but.” I don't think that, in this case, enough consideration has really been given to this bill, particularly if we go back. The member introduced Bill 141, which was a similar bill. The only change that was made, from my understanding, is that it now includes that all single dwellings that are going to be built be included in the building code. I think that change is likely larger than the original bill. I don't believe we've had enough consultation and enough discussion with the community that we are asked to protect as to how that should be done or whether it is proper. I believe there is a way of doing that, and that is, the building code needs to be amended. I believe that passing a law to amend the building code to say that any new structure must have a sprinkler system just doesn't cut the mustard. It isn't good enough to not give everyone an opportunity to speak to the issue. As the law now requires, there needs to be a regular review of the building code and I think that's when this should be put forward. As I said, I don't believe the private member's bill, as it presently stands, has had sufficient discussion so we can hear all the pluses and minuses.

Taking shortcuts can end up being more serious for everyone involved, and I believe Bill 2 is a shortcut that would cause more damage than its intended good.

I know the member has done a very good job of putting this together and I want to commend her for it, and she did a good job explaining the positives of the bill. I will focus more on what we see as the problem part of the bill.

The cost of installing fire suppression systems could be prohibitive to builders and homeowners. There have been reports estimating that the cost passed down to a homeowner purchasing a new home with a fire suppression system could be anywhere from \$3,500 to \$4,000 more.

I've also been told that for every \$1,000 increase in the cost of a house, 284 starts will be lost per year, which translates into 1,015 jobs per year, which again can translate into \$20.6 million in government revenue lost per year, and which, going one step further, could find that an estimated \$2.2 million in future realty taxes is lost.

I don't think this decision should be based totally on the financial aspects of it, but I think all those things need to be considered. All those people who will be impacted by those changes need to have a say in what the law will be.

As I said, taking shortcuts has a ripple effect that, even with the best intentions, may not do what they had hoped. I would again suggest that discussions around sprinklers should be part of the building code review.

Incidentally, I've had the opportunity a number of times to be involved in the building code review, and every time I have been involved, sprinklers in residential units has been part of that discussion. The end result at the committees that were studying it has always been that it should not be implemented into the building code, as the pluses and minuses did not balance off.

Another question involves the insurance industry. The cost of insurance for just about everything has gone up, and people are becoming insurance-poor. We have to ask ourselves and the insurance industry whether they are prepared to give families a discount because of the installation of a fire suppression system, or they are going to cover the cost of damages when a fire suppression system isn't properly maintained. Also, will they eventually penalize those in older homes who are not required to install home sprinkler systems? Remember that, according to this bill, only new homes must install the system. Again, if we change the law after that and include other homes, to put them into an existing home becomes very cost-prohibitive.

I know the Ontario home builders remain unconvinced that legislated fire sprinklers are more effective in protecting the health and lives of Ontario homeowners than properly functioning smoke alarms. According to the data collected by the Ontario Office of the Fire Marshal, there was a 25% decline in the number of residential fires in Ontario from 1995 to 2002. The Ontario Home Builders' Association believes this is due in part to improved building techniques and materials, as well as mandatory hardwired smoke alarms. There still does not appear to be any data collected on the age of the house where most of the fatal fires occurred.

Despite technological advances, home sprinkler systems will occasionally fail, causing considerable property damage and costly insurance claims. Will that be recovered in the premiums we all pay for our house insurance, or will the insurance company just refuse to cover the cost of a malfunctioning system? There is anecdotal evidence that homebuyers are not interested in home sprinkler systems.

I read with interest one person's comments on a CBC radio call-in show, where this person says—let me read it. It's kind of difficult. It's transcribed from the radio and I can't read what I heard, but it has been transcribed. The reason I want to read it is because some of the things that were said are not things I would say in the Legislature.

"Please keep up the fight to stop this bill. It is the most asinine thing I have ever heard. People are dying in older homes because they have non-functioning smoke detectors. The people pushing this bill like to throw it out that Vancouver has not had a fire death in 10 years since they implemented this policy. Well, if that's the case, apparently the old houses without the sprinkler systems aren't burning either. We are planning on building a new home in 2007"—again, I want to point out that this is not me speaking; this is what the individual said on the CBC—"and the thought of being forced to install this system makes me sick. The water damage of an accidental discharge makes me wonder if my insurance is going to cover the damages.

"There must be more important things these blankety blanks ... can dither about than this. Please don't let them force this on us. The insurance companies are not supporting this, but are unable to publicly speak out for fear it looks as if they aren't looking after the best interests of the public. The building industry is huge. Band together and stop these fools." That's the end of the presentation on the CBC.

According to the information I received from one leading GTA builder who has offered residential fire sprinklers to 1,069 new homebuyers, not a single buyer has purchased the option. In another example, a prominent builder in Windsor constructed a subdivision with 165 homes, all with residential sprinkler systems included as a standard feature. This builder noted that during the sales process, many purchasers requested a credit toward other upgrades in lieu of the sprinkler system. The purchasers were aware of the benefits of the sprinkler system but they just did not want one.

With building code changes on the horizon, mandatory residential sprinklers could represent the single most expensive change the building industry would face. I believe that if that's what's going to happen, then there's a great need to make sure that our whole communities are involved in that process to make sure that everyone understands what's going in, why it's going in and the benefits that will be derived from it.

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The Ontario home builders wrote a letter to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Honourable John Gerretsen, on December 8, 2004, expressing their

concerns and asking for clarification of the government's official position. That wasn't on Bill 2. It was on Bill 141, so it wasn't quite the same; it didn't include the single residential units. The member from Brampton Centre introduced Bill 141. The Ontario Home Builders' Association received a response on January 24, 2005, indicating that the position expressed in Bill 141 was not that of the current government, so I'm to take from that that the government does not support this bill going further.

I believe the same as the member opposite. In this case, since the re-seating, obviously she's not opposite; she's on the same side now. But I believe, as the member does, that we have to do what we can to keep families and those who protect us safe. But I also believe that there needs to be a lot more discussion before something as important as this becomes law. Cutting corners and fast-tracking are not the answer.

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I'm pleased to rise today to speak to what I think is a very important initiative. I want to commend the member for Brampton Centre, Linda Jeffrey, for bringing this forward again. She's very determined to make sure that we deal with this issue because it's an issue that I think all of us are very passionate about. In fact, our caucus is so passionate about it—I can only speak for three minutes; don't let that be any indication of how strongly I feel about this, because a number of members want to speak in support of this bill. I look forward to putting my three minutes' worth in.

I'm not new to this issue. Back in my days at the city of Toronto as chair of the community services committee, I joined then-Fire Chief Alan Speed in launching our war on fire. One of the significant recommendations in that initiative was an effort to bring about mandatory sprinkler systems. I see that Chief Speed is here with us today, and I'd like to acknowledge his many years of working toward seeing this initiative go through, as well as many years of working on other initiatives that have saved numerous lives, not only in the city of Toronto and Ontario but probably throughout North America. He really has done fantastic work and continues to, and I thank him for that.

In my own community of Toronto, since amalgamation, we've lost 140 residents to fires. A hundred people, on average, die each year as a result of fires across the province. These people have families, they have friends; they're people who could have been saved otherwise with initiatives such as mandatory sprinkler systems.

There are concerns that have been raised about damage that may be created by sprinkler systems if they go off. I think people have to start dealing with the facts here. It's not like in the movies, where you see hundreds of sprinklers going off. These are very sensitive pieces of technology where, when there is a fire, they only go off over that one area where the fire is and, generally speaking, only one or two of them would go off in that area in a highly concentrated way. In fact, in terms of accident-

ally going off, it hardly ever happens. I think it's one in 16 million sprinklers that will be defective, which is really never. It really is a bogus argument to suggest that these sprinkler systems are going to go off and create all kinds of damage.

I also have noticed that joining us today is Fire Chief Bill Stewart, the fire chief for the city of Toronto. I know Chief Stewart is passionate about saving lives. That's why he's dedicated his entire life to fighting fires. He has said to me on more than a few occasions that there's nothing we can do to save lives more effectively than a mandatory sprinkler program in the province of Ontario in new housing. I agree with him.

When it comes to experts on these things, there's nobody I respect more than Chiefs Alan Speed and Bill Stewart. I agree with them. They're suggesting we move forward on this initiative, and I certainly share with them my support for their efforts in the past and the present and the efforts of our colleague here in bringing forward what I think will be a very important piece of legislation.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I too am pleased to join in the debate regarding the bill brought forward by the member from Brampton Centre, Bill 2, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992 respecting home sprinklers.

There is no question that fire has many tragic consequences, including injury, property damage, loss and sometimes even death. As lawmakers, I think we all stand united in our desire to find ways to reduce deaths from fire. The question we are looking at today, though, is whether mandatory sprinklers in new residential construction is the best route to follow. The member from Oxford has articulated quite well some of the concerns that are out there.

We know that smoke alarms save lives. We know that new homes are built in a much safer way than older homes because of changing building code requirements. The number of deaths attributable to fire in one- and two-family homes is on the decline. We know that sprinklers can save property, but do we know that we need them in new homes as a way to save lives?

Looking at some statistics compiled by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp., we can see that there are some groups that seem to have a higher risk level for fire-related deaths. First Nation communities, rooming houses, rural communities and mobile homes all have higher risk levels. The bill would not really change their circumstances or their risks. Perhaps part of the risk faced by these people could be reduced by studying ways to improve smoke detector usage in existing older homes and rooming houses.

This bill calls for the use of sprinkler systems in new homes. This is a costly plan that will add to the purchase price, making it that much more difficult for people to afford to buy new homes. It will mean lost jobs in the housing sector as well. We don't have the figures to show us whether fire deaths have been occurring in older or new homes, yet we are contemplating a plan that might be directed at the wrong target: new homes. If the bill

were narrower in scope and did not include new house construction, I would have an easier time supporting it.

Before I finish my comments—and I know some other members of my party would like to speak—I'd like to take a moment to remind people on both sides of the House of the important role that firefighters play in our lives today and to thank all the firefighters who are present here today in the Legislature.

As pointed out by my colleague from Waterloo–Wellington yesterday, having firefighters available to respond to a blaze is surely the best protection we have in our communities. I know first-hand about the impact this has had on our rural communities, and I fully support his efforts. My own riding has been hit hard, and local fire services have lost the help and assistance of over 15 volunteers in the city of Kawartha Lakes alone. Double-hatter firefighters play a vital role in small communities across the province, and the current union action to curtail the legitimate volunteer activities of their membership has had a significant impact on fire services. We need the expertise these volunteers bring, and we value their willingness to use their skills to protect their neighbours. Having a firefighter available to respond to a fire is the best protection of all.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I stand in support of this bill, as I did last year—was it last year or two years ago?

I want to commend the member from Brampton Centre. She is a bulldog, and I say that from East York, because the symbol of East York is a bulldog: tenacious and unrelenting and just won't give up and is loyal to the end. That was the symbol of East York, and I think it should also be the symbol for the member from Brampton Centre.

She has seized upon an idea whose time has truly come and perhaps should have come before. I don't know why this did not pass the last time. It certainly had all-party support in this Legislature. But unfortunately, like so many private members' bills, it died on the order paper with prorogation.

This is the second time, and she's taken the opportunity over this last period of time, between the debate on the first attempt and today, to actually improve the bill. The bill is a much better bill today even than it was then, because it now includes condominiums and apartments. It has expanded to the full range of new development that may take place in Ontario.

Many people have already spoken, and I think the statistics speak for themselves. This is going to go into new homes, and I commend that all of the new homes in this province should be as safe as they possibly can be.

There was a time, not that many years ago, when people started to notice that a great many of the cars that were on the highway were not particularly safe. Through crash tests and other tests that the automotive industry and various levels of government did, it was determined which cars were not as safe as others. Certainly what has happened is that those cars which were deemed to be unsafe are no longer on the road. When people go out to

buy a car today, they look at how safe that car is likely to be in terms of seat belts, air bags or crash test worthiness. They look at those kinds of things.

1130

People who are buying a house are no different. They want to buy a house, a home, a place where they're going to live, a condominium, an apartment that is totally safe. We have an obligation as a provincial government to do exactly the kinds of things we did around automobiles all those many years ago. Certainly today, no one would go out and buy a car, no one would market a car and no one would be allowed to sell a car that was unsafe. But today in the province of Ontario, we are the last jurisdiction in North America that does not allow for sprinklering of properties and new properties. That seems to me to be kind of bizarre. If we are going to save hundreds of lives and deem it our duty to do so on the roads of this province—and it's a good duty and it's something we need to do—why are we going to say that losing your life in a fire is any less important, any less relevant? If we can save one life, never mind hundreds of lives, by doing this, surely it is something we should do.

There are those who will balk at the cost. How much is this going to cost on a new home? One per cent of the price? I doubt that. Half a per cent? Sure, it's going to cost a little bit of money, but it costs money if you want the proper goods and services to be produced. I will tell every person who balks at that cost or every person who speaks against the \$1,000, \$2,000, \$5,000 or whatever it is that it costs to install the system in their particular unit that on the day a fire starts in that unit, they are going to think that that was the best investment they could possibly ever have made in their lives. They are going to know they did the right thing. Not only they, but their friends and neighbours, if they live in an apartment or a condominium, are going to be thankful that even if the fire did not originate with them, that will make it virtually impossible for the fire to spread to them.

So I want to commend the member from Brampton Centre. I want to say that she has done the right thing.

I also want to commend the men and women in uniform here today, those who have come down to support this bill and who in fact support our communities each and every day. There is a large contingent here from my city of Toronto—I think even some who lived and worked in the former borough of East York all those years ago when I was mayor. I have nothing but the highest admiration for the men and women who risk their lives every day. I ask members to think about the risk to the lives of these people. When they get to a house after four or five minutes, six minutes, it's just about the time of the flashpoint. Without a sprinkler, that fire is going to be more advanced, it's going to be hotter, and it's going to be more dangerous to all of you. With a sprinkler, it's going to be less advanced, less hot and less dangerous to all of you.

Firefighting is a dangerous profession. I want to know that we in this province are doing our bit to help them, to make sure they have a better chance of fighting the fire

and saving lives, but also a better chance of returning home to their loved ones each and every day. It is time for this fire safety bill to be passed.

I would be remiss, and I would not be the opportunist that I am, if I did not talk about my own bill that also died on the order paper last year, because I think it is a companion piece. It's something that I think maybe could be, in committee, incorporated into this bill, or, if the government sees fit and wants to bring forward an omnibus bill dealing with fire as a result of what is being said, then the government could do that as well.

Last year I introduced a piece which was not for new homes. It's not somewhere new to go, but it was something to deal with older homes, because in this province we have many buildings that are 50 years old, 60 years old, even some that are more than 100 years of age, and they do not have adequate fire standards in them. I know it would be cost-prohibitive to take the apartments, the condominiums and the homes that are more than 50 years old and force people to start making major renovations to put in sprinklers. I know that. But my bill was very simple. It was to make sure that in apartment buildings two things happened. Number one is that all of the apartments were co-linked so that when the alarm went off in one apartment, people in another apartment down the hall would be notified that an alarm had been sounded and that there would be a pull system to ensure that the alarm would be sounded throughout the building, so that people would not suddenly discover a fire that was well advanced in one unit coming in and really doing damage to them. That was the first provision.

The second one is to me such a no-brainer. I cannot believe we are still one of the only jurisdictions in North America that allows wooden fire escapes. I want you to think about that: We allow wooden fire escapes in this province. That means, for a person fleeing for their life in a rooming house, a home or an apartment building, the only avenue of escape is down the fire escape, and the fire escape itself is on fire. In this province, we allow that.

My bill would have given the construction industry and the people who own apartments, homes and rooming houses where there are multiple people living in a unit, time to put in a non-combustible fire escape, be that cement, metal or something that would not burn. Quite frankly, we cannot cut off an avenue that someone has to escape. We have to give a person who is at risk every opportunity to get out. We have to give the firefighters, as well, every opportunity to get in.

In the fire in question which did this—and I have the coroner's report here. It's the Report on the Inquest into the Deaths of Linda Elderkin and Paul Benson, and it's dated October 2001. It was prepared by the Office of the Chief Coroner in Toronto. It was a fire that took place in my own riding of Beaches—East York on Queen Street in the Beach. Those two people died, and the coroner's jury came to the conclusion that two things were wrong: (1) there wasn't an interconnected; and (2) the only avenue

they had of escape was down a burning fire escape, and the firefighters could not get up that same burning fire escape to get to them to rescue them.

I'm suggesting that there is a lot that needs to be done in Ontario; there is an awful lot that needs to be done. This bill is a good start for new homes. I am suggesting that when the time comes—and I intend to reintroduce my bill because it too died on the order paper with pro-rogation—that we include Bill 2, or perhaps have it included, if this is going to be fast-tracked—because my turn won't come up until 2007—at the time that we go to committee. It is simply not acceptable that people in Ontario are at some kind of risk.

My own bill was passed by all members here in the Legislature. It got, I think, a couple of lines in the Toronto Sun here in Toronto, and I think that's all that the press in Ontario covered on that particular bill. It was front-page news, though, in the Vancouver Sun. It was front-page news that Ontario was considering having a bill to stop wooden fire escapes. But they had it on the front page because they were mocking us. They were saying that they couldn't believe that a place like Ontario allowed wooden fire escapes, which have been banned in British Columbia for half a century; that Ontario still has a private member's bill and still allows wooden fire escapes.

I say that because everyone is watching. We are the last jurisdiction in North America that does not have a sprinkling system in individual residences. Yes, we have them in halls and, yes, we have them sometimes in the family rooms of major condominiums or in the party rooms. We have them in a couple of places like that, but we don't have them where the majority of fires start. We don't have, quite frankly, adequate legislation dealing with safety when it comes to older buildings.

I commend the member, I commend the firefighters, and I commend everyone who has spoken in favour of this bill. I'm sure that this is going to pass unanimously here today. But the real question will not be whether this bill passes in this Legislature today on second reading; it will be what happens to it after today. All too often, what happens with private members' bills is that everybody's happy and we all walk out of here and then it goes to committee, and the committee never calls the bill. It never goes to public hearings. It never gets an opportunity to be reintroduced at third reading. Someone at third reading will stand up and generally say no when it's asked if it is going to proceed unanimously, or, in the alternative, some kind of deal will be made between the House leaders about which bills are allowed to go forward and which ones are not allowed to go forward, and the whole thing ends up dying.

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The member from Brampton Centre, as I said at the beginning, is to be commended, because she's not willing to let the concept over which she has fought so long and so hard die. I want to assure the House that I am not about to let my bill die, either. When my turn comes up, as it will in the early spring of 2007, I intend to put the

same bill back before this Legislature. I know that it may or may not pass again on that occasion, and it may or may not be referred to committee. But I would hope that the idea needs to go beyond this. It needs to go to cabinet. The cabinet and House leader need to understand that this legislator is committed to saving lives. We know that lives can be saved. Just the same way that we know that seat belts save lives in cars, we will know that sprinklers will save lives in new condominiums, apartments and homes. We need to impress upon them that this is not a partisan issue. This is an issue that, if the government saw fit to do it in their own bill, would probably pass without debate, or certainly with no more debate than we're giving here today. It is a bill that would be very easy for the cabinet to bring forward. It would be a bill that would not engender any kind of hostility in this House and would probably pass within an absolute modicum of time.

That is where I think we're coming from here on this. I am asking the government—when I say “the government,” I mean not just the Liberal Party but the executive council—to have the same commitment to fire safety and saving lives that the members who are here and who have spoken today have on this issue. Clearly, this is a responsibility which cannot be shirked by us. It is a responsibility that we must take seriously.

The firefighters are giving up their very valuable time. There are giving of their expertise. They have told us how little this is going to cost. They have told us how it's going to save lives. The insurance industry has even told us that the sprinkler system can cut the average cost down to \$1,000 from \$15,000 for fire damage. Even they have to be happy. The homeowners who pay the insurance are going to, in the end, save money on this.

I don't see that there is anything wrong with this bill. I am asking that everyone vote for it today, but more importantly, I'm asking for all members in this House, when you see a member of the executive council—cabinet—tell them that this bill is one that needs to be rushed through.

Mr. Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): It's always a pleasure to speak after my good friend and colleague from Beaches—East York. Michael Prue is always passionate about fire safety.

I want to congratulate the member from Brampton Centre, Linda Jeffrey, for two things: certainly for Bill 2, which I'm going to speak on, but as well for her recent appointment as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. It's well-deserved. Congratulations.

It's a shame that the public can't see the entirety of this House. It is truly impressive to see all the representatives we have from across Ontario who are here on behalf of the bill, many of them dressed in their uniforms. In the two years that I've been here as a new MPP, I think this is one of the most impressive days I have seen. I thank all of you for taking the time to come out to support Linda's bill.

I want to recognize some people from my area who have taken the time to come out here: Fire Chiefs Ken Eden and Jo Zambito from Niagara-on-the-Lake. Thank you for coming out. I know there is a fire chief from the town of Fort Erie, Jim Douglas, here as well, so thank you.

One individual who was not able to attend but who certainly wanted to be here was our fire chief from the city of Niagara Falls, Patrick Burke, whom we are fortunate to have and who I know is respected throughout all of Ontario as a fire chief. I want to read Patrick's—we affectionately call him Pat—remarks into Hansard today. Pat has indicated to me that he would like to say to the House and to everyone across Ontario that he knows “the issue of residential sprinklers will be discussed in the House today.

“As chief of the Niagara Falls Fire Department, I can advise you that I fully support residential sprinkler legislation. Sprinklers have saved many lives and much damage over the years by extinguishing fires in their early stage, or by holding fires in check until the arrival of the fire department. A prime example of the effectiveness of sprinklers is the city of Vancouver, where a residential sprinkler bylaw significantly contributed to the fact that there were zero fire deaths in Vancouver in the year 2004. This is an amazing statistic given the size and complexity of that city. We have had recent examples in Richmond, BC, and Toronto where sprinklers may have made the difference in preventing three deaths.

“I hope that you will support the legislation being proposed. It will enhance the safety of many Ontario citizens.”

Again, it's from our chief, Patrick Burke, Niagara Falls.

This is a wonderful bill. I am confident and I always remain positive. I've been here two years, and there are days you sometimes think that it's a slow House, that it's difficult to get things through, but I remain positive that this bill is going to get through, that it's going to be supported. I hear the opposition has concerns over it. I'm sure we'll bring them in line to share with them that lives are more important than dollars and cents, and that will take this bill forward. So thank you. I'm pleased to have had the opportunity to speak.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I appreciate the opportunity to speak today on Bill 2, which, as everyone obviously knows, was Bill 141 in the past, with some changes.

I know there has been quite a bit of debate and stats on all sides of this issue, and although I'm not really buying into either side of it, what I'm looking at is that what I will try to bring forward will be somewhat different. Firefighters, as everybody here has agreed, have a very honourable tradition. They work hard in our communities and do a great job. I know they're the first ones to respond. I think some of the other areas that could be focused on are the 1710 and 1720 issues that were brought forward because I see a large number of concerns in this area.

If you look at the public sector, they always seem to jump on things that are very beneficial to society and something that society buys into. That's why you see the guy from Canadian Tire pushing the smoke alarms and everything else. But where's the guy from Canadian Tire pushing home sprinkler systems? I don't see the demand there. I don't see the public buying into this as something they really feel is necessary in their community and their homes. Quite frankly, how can you put anything of value on somebody's life when these sorts of things come forward? By the same token, I grew up with a lot of firefighters. A lot of firefighters were my friends before I became elected and a lot more firefighters are my friends now since being elected, but I don't know one that has a home sprinkler system in their house right now. That speaks a lot for it on its own, when you're looking at this issue.

There are a lot of areas of concern that I look at. I have a lot of rural residents, such as up at my father's property. Where he lives, he's got power outages for three and four days. I know the member from last time on Bill 141, Mr. Bisson, spoke on this issue and talked about a community that lost the entire school because of a malfunction—it froze and broke. What are you going to do in communities where there's no hydro and no pressurized water, things like that?

I certainly hope that if this issue comes to committee we get a full opportunity, that we can hear from insurance people, because I believe in the end it will cost more to have it in place than it is at the start. I think it should be given the opportunity at that time.

1150

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It certainly is a pleasure to join in the debate and to be able to extend my welcome to the men and women in our fire services who put their lives on the line every day.

Other speakers before me have said that this simply is a bill whose time has come. I agree with that wholeheartedly. It's important to be clear about this bill: We're not talking about going back and having to retrofit older homes. What we're saying is that every home in Ontario that is built from this point on, should this bill pass, would have a fire sprinkler system in it.

I think you have to ask, whom do you take your advice from on fire protection? I take it from the men and women who have shown up today in uniform who practise that on a daily basis. They are the people we should be taking advice from. They are the people who are providing us with the advice that this would be a tremendous move forward, were we able to do that.

If you didn't want to take advice from those people, there are some other people who have joined us in the gallery today. There are some young people here. If you said to those young people, "Were you to start to build a new house today, what would be some of the most important things you would put in that house?" I think that surely those young people would agree with us that a device that would protect against the spread of fire in a

house would be something that would be very high on their priority list.

I think that from the very old to the very experienced to the very young in our society, most people, from a common sense perspective, would agree that this is a bill whose time has come and that we need to find a way to make it happen.

The member from Brampton certainly deserves credit for bringing the bill back. I think she has alluded to the fact and spoken to the fact that she has made some improvements to the bill in order to gain even more support.

It is a very sensible approach to what is a very serious problem, and it applies to new housing only. When you compare some of the types of appliances that are offered today in new homes, things like dishwashers and microwaves and granite counters and landscape lighting and lawn sprinklers, why would you not start to install fire protection? It just seems to make sense to me, and I think it's going to make sense to a lot of members in this House.

Take a look at the experience of the city of Vancouver, and take a look at the experience of over 200 North American jurisdictions that have decided that fire sprinklers are the way to go. Ontario citizens, I believe, deserve the same protection, which would be afforded under this bill, were it to pass, that currently other members of North American society enjoy.

Of 100 deaths in Ontario in 2003, 87% of those deaths took place in people's homes; not in their businesses, not in vehicles, but right in the place where they're supposed to feel the safest, right in their own homes.

I want to tell you about a situation that maybe drives the point home a little bit and maybe helps us all to understand what types of decisions people who are employed professionally in our fire services have to deal with on a daily basis. It is an incident that took place in Oakville in 1998.

On August 15, the fire department in Oakville received a call at 4:01 from a lady who said, "I have a fire in my house," and then the line went dead. By 4:05, the trucks were on the scene. The police officer who had attended could hear the people in the house. The fire protection personnel who were there were unable to rescue the people from the house, even though they knew, when they were on the perimeter of the scene, that there were people who were still alive in that house. By the time 4:18 came along, they had two bodies on the front lawn. By the time 4:28 came along, they had two more bodies. They were able to perform CPR and revive each one of those individuals, three children and a mother, and they sent them to local hospitals. They all died within 36 hours. They didn't die from fire; they died from the effects of smoke inhalation.

It seems to me that what the member from Brampton is presenting to us today is a way to prevent that type of circumstance from ever happening again. It deserves the support, I think, of every member of this House.

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I also applaud the member for Brampton Centre for this

bill. I'm pleased to see representatives from the fire services and others here today.

In an earlier life at Loyalist College I taught night courses to individuals from fire services. They were a very tough crowd to teach, because they weren't there in the evening to get a credit or to get an evening away from home; they were passionate about what they were doing. Their questions were sometimes very difficult and challenging, but they were passionate about it, and I have a great deal of admiration.

What I have learned in life, folks, is that everything costs too much. I remember when we were talking about putting seat belts in cars, and that they cost too much. It was absolutely ridiculous to consider that and to make people put it on. How many lives have been saved by seat belts in this world? I don't know; thousands, maybe a million. When they came up with the concept of air bags, they were way too much money. There's no way, and it would be unfair to the public to have to pay for air bags. How many lives have they saved?

I remember when smoke detectors first came out, and they were way too much money for the number of lives they were going to save. There was opposition from various groups saying, "Smoke detectors are too much money." Builders said, "We don't want to have to bear the cost and pass it on to the public, because if we add a smoke detector, they won't be able to afford the house." How many lives have smoke detectors saved? We'll never know.

Now we're at another milestone in history, one which says we have the opportunity to do something that will save people's lives. I'm somewhat surprised at some of the discussion. If you think that these sprinklers cause water damage, you go into a house that's had a full-fledged blaze and see the water damage. I suspect, for a house that may be short of water in a rural area, then they're short of water for a full-fledged fire, and it takes an awful lot less water with a sprinkler system than it does to bring in the trucks and put it out.

These are not high-tech systems; these are relatively simple, relatively maintenance-free. You don't have to be awake; you don't have to hear them go off; you don't even have to be in the home for them to activate and save your house. Smoke detectors—we have the problem of batteries. Whenever I cook, ours goes off and it's tempting to pull that battery out, and I have to remember that at my age I won't remember to put it back in, so we'll just leave that battery in there and put up with the noise for a few minutes. My wife is hearing impaired. She has difficulty hearing the smoke detectors go off, but she wouldn't have difficulty with a sprinkler.

Here is the last thing: The worst thing you'll ever have in life is to live with "what if." If you've ever lost a loved one, you will spend the rest of your life, if the circumstances were preventable, saying, "What if?" I know people who say, "What if? What if I'd gotten to the hospital sooner? What if I'd had the battery in the smoke detector? What if I'd done this or done that?" If putting this system in your home or building avoids you having

to live every day the rest of your life with, "What if I'd had a sprinkler system in the home?" then it's worth every penny. If it saves one life in Ontario, then this bill has served its purpose and it's worth the money.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Brampton Centre, you have two minutes to reply.

Mrs. Jeffrey: I'd like to thank the members from Scarborough Centre, Niagara Falls, Oakville, Prince Edward-Hastings, Oxford, Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, Beaches-East York and Oshawa. What an interesting group of speakers they were this morning.

I wanted to sum up, in the short time I have available, to focus on three messages. What I'd like people to think about this morning after this debate is: This bill is designed to protect what we value the most. We have a collective responsibility to protect the health and safety of all Ontarians. We know that sprinklers complement the early-warning capability of smoke alarms by adding fire suppression. We need to encourage and educate consumers about residential fires. Our future depends on it. We need to embrace this proven technology to protect all Ontarians.

Last year we lost over 100 people. These people were our mothers, our fathers and our children. Over time, we've lost heroes in our community: firefighters. We need to ensure that the risk for future and current firefighters is minimized.

I'd like to invite all members of the House to come out and visit the Toronto Fire Services sprinkler trailer which is outside in front of the Legislature today for an hour. Come out and see how effective and how quick-acting they are. It's a wonderful little demonstration tool that we have the loan of this afternoon.

The best time to include residential sprinklers in the building code would have been 25 years ago; the second-best time for this Legislature to make a decision that would protect all Ontarians is today. I would appreciate your support of this bill.

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

HEALTH INSURANCE
AMENDMENT ACT (PSA TESTS FOR
PROSTATE CANCER), 2005
LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR L'ASSURANCE-SANTÉ
(TEST PSA POUR LE DÉPISTAGE
DU CANCER DE LA PROSTATE)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We shall first deal with ballot item number 5, standing in the name of Mr. Mauro.

Mr. Mauro has moved second reading of Bill 4, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will call in the members for a vote on this after we deal with the next item.

HOME FIRE SPRINKLER ACT, 2005
LOI DE 2005 SUR LES EXTINCTEURS
AUTOMATIQUES DOMICILIAIRES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We will now deal with ballot item number 6, standing in the name of Mrs. Jeffrey.

Mrs. Jeffrey has moved second reading of Bill 2, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992 respecting home fire sprinklers. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will call in the members for this. Call in the members. I remind them that this will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1159 to 1204.

HEALTH INSURANCE
AMENDMENT ACT (PSA TESTS FOR
PROSTATE CANCER), 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR L'ASSURANCE-SANTÉ
(TEST PSA POUR LE DÉPISTAGE
DU CANCER DE LA PROSTATE)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Mauro has moved second reading of Bill 4. All those in favour, please stand.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Jeffrey, Linda	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Baird, John R.	Klees, Frank	Parsons, Ernie
Bartolucci, Rick	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Prue, Michael
Bryant, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Qaadri, Shafiq
Colle, Mike	Levac, Dave	Racco, Mario G.
Craitor, Kim	Mauro, Bill	Scott, Laurie
Duguid, Brad	McMeekin, Ted	Smith, Monique
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McNeely, Phil	Tascona, Joseph N.
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Van Bommel, Maria
Hoy, Pat	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John
Hudak, Tim	Mitchell, Carol	Zimmer, David

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please stand.

Nays

Arnott, Ted

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 33; the nays are 1.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion passed.

Pursuant to standing order 96, this bill will be referred to the committee of the whole—

Mr. Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay–Atikokan): The standing committee on justice policy.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Mauro has asked that the bill be referred to the standing committee on justice policy.

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean–Carleton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: We're having a vote here.

Agreed? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please rise.

All those opposed, please rise.

The majority has voted in favour.

It will be referred to the standing committee on justice policy.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Given the strong support for this bill, I would ask that we give unanimous consent to have third reading of this bill immediately so that the government can deal with it.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. We can give unanimous consent to order the bill for third reading, but we cannot give it passage here.

Agreed? I heard a no.

The doors will now be open for 30 seconds before we take the vote on the next issue.

HOME FIRE SPRINKLER ACT, 2005
LOI DE 2005 SUR LES EXTINCTEURS
AUTOMATIQUES DOMICILIAIRES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mrs. Jeffrey has moved second reading of Bill 2. All those in favour, please rise.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Jeffrey, Linda	Parsons, Ernie
Arthurs, Wayne	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Prue, Michael
Bartolucci, Rick	Leal, Jeff	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bryant, Michael	Levac, Dave	Racco, Mario G.
Colle, Mike	Mauro, Bill	Smith, Monique
Craitor, Kim	McMeekin, Ted	Van Bommel, Maria
Duguid, Brad	McNeely, Phil	Wilkinson, John
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Milloy, John	Zimmer, David
Hoy, Pat	Mitchell, Carol	

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please rise.

Nays

Baird, John R.	Klees, Frank	Scott, Laurie
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Tascona, Joseph N.
Hudak, Tim	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 26; the nays are 8.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to have this bill ordered for third reading.

The Deputy Speaker: Agreed? I heard a no.

Pursuant to standing order 96, this bill is referred to the committee of the whole House—

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): Mr. Speaker, could I have it referred to the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly, please.

The Deputy Speaker: Mrs. Jeffrey has asked that the bill be referred to the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly. Agreed? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please stand.

All those opposed, please stand.

A majority being in favour, it is referred to the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly.

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

The House recessed from 1212 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

VETERANS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It's truly an honour for me to be here today and to introduce some folks who are in the Speaker's gallery. We have with us five veterans of World War II, all from the riding of Simcoe North and all great people in their communities: Bernie Levesque, Bruce Gilbert, Roy Shakell, William Smith and Vern Sweeting, who is here with his son, Tom Sweeting, who happens to be the special budget adviser at the Ministry of Finance. We also have with us today Deputy Mayor Jim Downer of the town of Midland. Jim also has a connection with Queen's Park: Jim's uncle, Reverend Wally Downer, was a member here for over 30 years.

I also want to point out today, with Jim in attendance from the town of Midland, that the town of Midland initiated a movement throughout the province of Ontario, and indeed throughout the country, to allow veterans who have veterans' licence plates—those are the plates with the poppies on them—to have free parking in municipalities. A number of municipalities across our province, and I believe across our country now, are initiating this movement.

Although there will be more time later on for our tribute to veterans, it's really special that I am able to enjoy this afternoon with these folks. They're great members of our community, and it's an honour for me to have them here with me today.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): On this exciting day when we are talking about conservation, I'm pleased to stand here and tell you about the great initiative underway at the University of Ottawa biology building. This 56,000-square-foot research and teaching facility is a great example of how exceptionally energy-efficient buildings can be. After looking at the myriad of ways that energy efficiency can be incorporated into

building design, the design team devised four distinct innovations: first, high-performance window glazing, extra-wide thermal breaks and an added layer of insulation; second, a cooling system that dehumidifies air at the central unit and circulates this air throughout; third, growth chambers that enable the recovery of waste heat; and fourth, fume hoods that are energy-efficient, functional and safe.

The University of Ottawa biology building will consume a remarkable 73% less energy than a traditionally equipped building. This translates into \$270,000 of estimated annual cost savings. To accompany this unique building design, a courtyard classroom will also be developed, recreating a boreal forest and wetland environment to further the hands-on learning of students at the University of Ottawa. This building is an example of how energy efficiency and conservation should be incorporated into the design and planning of our universities. I wish to congratulate the University of Ottawa for their wonderful conservation methods.

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph–Wellington): The people of Guelph are proud that they were pioneers in recycling as the first municipality to introduce a roadside blue box program. Today we are proud to lead the energy conservation movement. Guelph Hydro is leading the way by generating electricity from the methane reserves from the Eastview landfill. Both the University of Guelph and the Upper Grand District School Board have embarked on projects which will reduce energy consumption. The Upper Grand District School Board hosted a conference last April titled Energy W.I.S.E. (We're Into Saving Energy), with keynote speaker Dr. David Suzuki. The board recognizes the importance of educating their staff, students and the community about energy conservation and about changing behaviour toward conservation.

That is why I am proud that our government, through the Ministry of Education, is putting the study of environmental issues such as conservation right in the curriculum in every grade. For example, grade 7 students learn the importance of renewable and non-renewable resources. In grade 12, there are two courses on environment and resource management that are devoted to conservation.

It is our students who will work for change in the future. Our government is ensuring that they are well prepared for that responsibility.

BY-ELECTION IN SCARBOROUGH–ROUGE RIVER

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Dalton McGuinty is missing in action again: That's what the good people of Scarborough–Rouge River are saying as they prepare for a by-election on November 25.

John Tory has been front and centre with the PC Party candidate, Cynthia Lai, who is working hard to become the MPP for the Scarborough–Rouge River riding. John Tory and the PC caucus are proud of Cynthia Lai's can-

didacy—a successful business person, the first Chinese female president of the Toronto Real Estate Board, and an active community leader.

Cynthia Lai is also proud of John Tory, who has a reputation of integrity and honesty, and Cynthia Lai takes every opportunity to introduce John Tory to her constituents and to speak about his leadership qualities.

Not so the Liberal candidate, who to date has done everything possible to hide the fact that he is aligning himself with the prince of broken promises: not one picture or reference to his leader, Dalton McGuinty, in his literature; no sign or mention of this promise-breaker on his Web site. Could it be that the Liberal candidate wants to hide the very leader who used his authority to crown him as candidate and wants to separate himself from the McGuinty legacy of broken promises?

Cynthia Lai, the PC candidate in Scarborough–Rouge River, was democratically elected as candidate and stands proudly with John Tory in her fight for safer communities, lower energy costs and improved quality of life for the constituents of Scarborough–Rouge River. She'll serve her constituents and our province well as the next MPP for Scarborough–Rouge River.

RIDESHARE

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Each year, 28 volunteer drivers from Sudbury's RideShare program provide 13,000 rides to low-income or isolated families who have no other means of getting their children to medical appointments, therapy or daycare programs. The main source of this funding for the program has been through the Ontario Early Years challenge fund, and that funding is due to end in March 2006. If other financing isn't found, 65% of RideShare's clients—some 230 families—will lose this vital transportation support altogether.

The MacNeil family might be one of these. They and 27 other families need RideShare to transport their autistic and special-needs children to therapy. Three times a week, Paula uses RideShare to get her four-year-old daughter to her IBI treatment in Copper Cliff. In fact, three of the four children who access IBI treatment in Copper Cliff rely on RideShare to get them there and home again. This has created a strong bond between these autistic children, their parents and their drivers. More importantly, RideShare has made it possible for them to receive the IBI treatment that they so desperately need.

RideShare is a valuable community service which needs to be maintained and enhanced. For the sake of these autistic children, other special needs children and other families who need transportation to medical appointments, therapy and child care, I urge this government to find a source of funding for RideShare.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): As winter and colder weather come closer, we want to ensure that Ontarians do everything they can do to conserve energy. Our government has taken a leadership role in providing low-income Ontarians with resources to do just that.

We are piloting a Conserving Homes project in approximately 100 homes in the city of Brantford. This pilot project will be providing both education and energy efficiency measures to low-income residents in my riding. The Conserving Homes program is run through a partnership between Brantford Power and Share the Warmth. Some funding for the program is coming from the Ministry of Energy.

In December of 2004, the Ontario Energy Board approved Brantford Power's conservation and demand management plan, which included the development of low-income energy efficiency programs in co-operation with Share the Warmth. In its decision approving this plan, the OEB made special note of this co-operative program and encouraged other local electricity distribution companies to adopt it. Congratulations to Brantford Power.

We know how important it is to combine conservation with energy efficiency measures to make the best use of energy resources available in Ontario. Our government has worked and is continuing to work toward the best uses of energy in this province.

The co-operation between the city of Brantford, Share the Warmth and the provincial government is something that I'm very proud of, and I know we all should be. I particularly want to thank the CEO of Brantford Power, George Mychailenko, his staff and the board members for their contribution toward this wonderful project that is helping those who need it the most.

1340

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Members' statements?

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): Today is a great day. It's a great day because the McGuinty government and our new Minister of Energy and conservation is taking further action to counter the 13 lost years of energy policy that we suffered under the previous Tory and NDP governments.

I want to set the record straight. I know the leader of the third party likes to talk about conservation, but I think the members of this House should be reminded of his record when he sat at the cabinet table. His record was to make a short-term decision to cancel every real conservation program in the province. The NDP cancelled every real conservation program. If those conservation measures hadn't been cancelled, we'd see generation savings of 5,200 megawatts today. That's roughly the equivalent of being able to take every unit at Darlington and Pickering offline.

As for the Tories, their record is equally invisible. Everyone knows that there were no conservation initiatives attempted under the Harris-Eves government, and

things have not changed. We've heard Mr. Tory talk about coal, but what we haven't heard him talk about is "conservation," "renewables," "green," "smart meters," "demand management," "energy efficiency" or "energy efficient"—we haven't heard those words. The fact that we haven't heard that conversation coming from the other side of the House means we know where his priorities lie.

While we're talking about records, I'd like to extend a warm thank you to John Baird, who devoted an entire column in today's Ottawa Citizen toward explaining how good the deal is that the McGuinty government recently signed with Bruce Power to bring on-line another 1,500 megawatts. In his own words, the member for Nepean-Carleton said, "It just"—

The Speaker: Thank you.

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): I have to tell you that I was truly shocked and very, very disappointed to learn yesterday that the federal Tory party is taking all steps necessary to throw a wrench into plans to boost the flow of federal dollars to expand Ontario's immigrant settlement programs.

Our government is working hard, in partnership with the federal government, to ensure that new Canadians get the best possible start here in Ontario. Harper's Tories, meanwhile, can't see the value in those investments, which will ensure that immigrants are able to integrate and contribute to our society as quickly as possible.

Ontario is the only province not to have an immigration agreement with the federal government, and it is time to close that gap.

Sadly, this division between the federal Tories and the government, federally, spills over into provincial politics here. I know that the member for Nepean-Carleton and the member for Whitby-Ajax are both working very hard to join their federal cousins on Parliament Hill after the next federal election, so I am urging them today to get on side here and lobby their federal counterparts to stop the antics which are causing unnecessary hardship for new Canadians here in Ontario.

Stephen Harper says he wants to stand up for Canada. This government happens to believe that standing up for Canada means standing up for Ontario, and also standing up for new Canadians. That's something that the Tories have to remember.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I want to bring to members' attention—we had Charles Beer, the member from York North in the 34th and 35th Parliament. He came to visit.

Oh, there he is. He's behind the post.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): On Tuesday, November 1, 2005, the member for Waterloo-Wellington raised a point of order respecting the appropriateness of a statement made by the member for Guelph-Wellington on Monday, October 31, 2005, during members' statements. The member for Guelph-Wellington also spoke to the point of order.

Let me begin by saying that such points can only be effectively dealt with if they are raised at the time of the alleged transgression. It is not possible for the Speaker to intervene after the fact in order to stop the statement or allow responses from the opposition.

Additionally, there appears to be some disagreement as to which ministry is the subject of the statement made by the member for Guelph-Wellington. For these reasons, I will refrain from ruling specifically on the case at hand.

However, I would like to take this opportunity to remind all members and in particular those that are parliamentary assistants that members' statements are not intended to be used for parliamentary assistants to make statements that ought to be reserved for statements by the ministry. I am confident that continued care will be taken to avoid doing so.

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just wonder if perhaps we could revert back to members' statements. We seem to have missed one on this side. I'm not sure whose fault it was, but we always do three statements in each party.

The Speaker: You are absolutely correct. I was in error. I made a mistake, and there is one more statement. I'm sure we have consent to do the remaining member's statement. Agreed.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS (continued)

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): I thank the House.

This week, the Environmental Commissioner released his annual report. In that report, he took your government to task for your lack of a clear plan to deal with greenhouse gases. Despite all of your announcements about what a wonderful job you're doing in reducing greenhouse gases and protecting the environment, the Environmental Commissioner has seen through your rhetoric and exposed your lack of a plan to respond to climate change. You have no targets in place. You have no plan in place. You cannot even decide on a lead ministry to deal with this.

There was still more embarrassing news for your government in the report: pages and pages of examples of where your government is putting the natural environment at risk.

Your greenbelt growth scheme came under fire from the Environmental Commissioner. He pointed to your lack of a plan to properly deal with the number of people who will be settling in the area. The Environmental Commissioner is worried about the impact this will have on the natural environment. In his remarks, the Environmental Commissioner warned of the impact that population growth will have on issues like transportation, waste disposal and water taking. We know that your greenbelt plans were based on political science, not real science, and now the Environmental Commissioner has confirmed it. There is no leadership being shown by this government.

Your failure to act has forced the Environmental Commissioner to join the chorus of voices asking you to develop a plan to deal with the tonnes of waste coming from the GTA. Every problem that is out there now will be magnified because of the growth projected for this area. In short, he's asking you to develop a plan. Is it true you don't have a plan? Do you even have a plan to have a plan?

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I'm sure all members would like to join me in thanking our group of pages. This is their last day. They have performed admirably in our service, and I'm sure we would all like to express our appreciation.

Applause.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FREDERICK BANTING HOMESTEAD PRESERVATION ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 PRÉSERVANT LA PROPRIÉTÉ FAMILIALE DE FREDERICK BANTING

Mr. Wilson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 20, An Act to ensure the preservation of the Frederick Banting homestead / Projet de loi 20, Loi visant à assurer la préservation de la propriété familiale de Frederick Banting.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may have a brief statement.

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): If passed, the new Frederick Banting Homestead Preservation Act, 2005, would impose a restrictive covenant on the property that prevents a person from altering or demolishing any building or structure located on that property. It also restricts the use of the property to use as an educational and interpretive centre, such as a camp for diabetic youth operated on a non-profit basis, agricultural uses, or uses authorized by the Minister of Culture.

1350

ENERGY CONSERVATION RESPONSIBILITY ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ EN MATIÈRE DE CONSERVATION DE L'ÉNERGIE

Mrs. Cansfield moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 21, An Act to enact the Energy Conservation Leadership Act, 2005 and to amend the Electricity Act, 1998, the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and the Conservation Authorities Act / Projet de loi 21, Loi édictant la Loi de 2005 sur le leadership en matière de conservation de l'énergie et apportant des modifications à la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité, à la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et à la Loi sur les offices de protection de la nature.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The minister may have a brief statement.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): I will leave my statement for ministerial statements.

DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES SERVICES AUX PERSONNES AYANT UNE DÉFICIENCE INTELLECTUELLE

Mr. Dunlop moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 22, An Act to amend the Developmental Services Act / Projet de loi 22, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may have a brief statement.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): The bill amends the Developmental Services Act to require the minister, under the act, to operate and maintain the present facilities for persons with developmental disability under the following names: Huronia Regional Centre of Excellence at Orillia, the Rideau Regional Centre of Excellence at Smiths Falls, and Southwestern Regional Centre of Excellence at Cedar Springs. The bill prevents the minister from establishing any further facilities. Under the bill, the minister has to ensure that residential facilities receive the services and assistance that are necessary for their needs.

CELEBRATION OF HELLENIC HERITAGE ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LA FÊTE DU PATRIMOINE HELLÉNIQUE

Mr. Duguid moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 23, An Act to proclaim a day and a month to celebrate Hellenic heritage in Ontario / Projet de loi 23, Loi proclamant un jour et un mois de fête du patrimoine hellénique en Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may have a brief statement.

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): This is a bill that was originally brought forward by the member from Hamilton Mountain, and I had the pleasure of bringing it forward in the last legislative sitting. It had unanimous support of all three parties.

The bill proclaims March 25 in each year as Hellenic Heritage Day and the month of March in each year as Hellenic History and Heritage Month.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Caplan has asked for unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding private members' public business. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(g), notice for ballot item 7 be waived.

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

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): This afternoon, I introduced the Energy Conservation Responsibility Act, 2005, for first reading. This legislation, if passed, will be an important step toward creating a culture of conservation in Ontario. Since 2003, our government has taken decisive action to create this culture of conservation in the province. This includes, but is not limited to, the following: passing Bill 100, the Electricity Restructuring Act, 2004, which implemented the recommendations of the energy supply and conservation task force; creating the conservation bureau within the Ontario Power Authority; appointing Ontario's first chief conservation officer; enabling Ontario's local electricity distribution companies to invest more than \$160 million for energy conservation measures across Ontario; through the Ontario Realty Corp., reducing electricity

demand on the Ontario Realty Corp.-managed buildings by as much as 7.8%, well within reach of the 10% target by 2007; and creating a net metering program that allows farmers, small businesses and consumers to reduce their use of electricity from the grid.

This represents just a fraction of what the government has done with respect to energy conservation. In addition to these measures, the government also created the conservation action team, made up of 12 parliamentary assistants, which I had the pleasure of chairing.

I want to take a moment to recognize and thank all the members of the action team for their hard work and their dedication, and to thank the hundreds of people and organizations that we met with as we developed our report. The report has laid the groundwork for future action by this government and the conservation bureau, and I am pleased that the work of the action team will continue.

When it comes to energy conservation, our government has achieved much over a very short time, and we will go even further in the future. In addition to our own efforts, I want to recognize the leadership that has been taken by non-governmental organizations and the broader public sector, including many of Ontario's municipalities, universities, colleges, schools and hospitals. In particular, I'd like to recognize the following in the members' gallery today: Dr. David Suzuki is on his way—the chair of the David Suzuki Foundation, who is one of our country's leading scientists, broadcasters and educators—and when he does arrive, Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you formally introduce him to all—and is the leading thinker on energy issues dealing with sustainability and conservation; Dr. Gary Polonsky, president of the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, which is a leader in energy conservation through a variety of measures, including a state-of-the-art heat pump system; Theresa Sauren, project manager, Reduce the Juice—Reduce the Juice is an innovative energy conservation program that was led by students that is raising awareness around energy conservation and the goal of reducing energy use by 5%—from Shelburne; and in the gallery today there are many other leaders from the broader public sector and the conservation community that are leading this effort as well. I thank all of them for coming today, for their collective work is an example from which we all can learn.

1400

The legislation that I've introduced today recognizes and builds upon the foundations that we as a government have already established. And it builds on the important work that has been undertaken by leaders in the broader public sector and in the NGO, or non-governmental organization, conservation community.

This bill, if passed, would remove additional barriers to conservation that exist and would make conservation a key element in public sector planning and operations. Under the bill, ministries, agencies and broader public sector organizations would be required to prepare energy conservation strategies on a regular basis and report on

energy consumption, proposed conservation measures and progress on achieving results. As servants of the public, we collectively need to ensure that we are doing all that we can when it comes to energy conservation, and this bill will help by giving us the tools to carry out the job.

This bill also includes proposed legislation that will, if passed, facilitate the installation of 800,000 smart meters by 2007 and in all Ontario homes and businesses by 2010. Smart metering is an innovative technology that will help Ontario consumers manage their energy use, encourage energy conservation and save money. Combined with a pricing structure that reflects the true cost of power production at certain times of the day and year, smart metering would allow customers to make informed decisions about their electricity use. This will allow Ontario consumers to save money and to reduce the strain on the power system at peak times.

In addition to this legislation, I am also pleased to announce that the ministry has directed the Ontario Power Authority to carry out additional programs that could reduce electricity use by as much as 200 megawatts, or enough power for 125,000 homes. The directives include: a low-income and social housing program built upon the ministry's successful pilots on energy conservation and demand-side management with various organizations; an appliance exchange program that will encourage electricity consumers to replace energy-inefficient appliances such as refrigerators, dishwashers and freezers; and a conservation outreach and education program targeting residential consumers and small and medium-sized enterprises that would promote energy-efficient lighting technologies and efficient lighting design.

As well, the government will be taking additional action in the near future on a number of fronts, including: making low-cost funding available to Ontario's municipalities and universities for energy efficiency projects through the Ontario Strategic Infrastructure Financing Authority; consulting stakeholders on regulatory amendments to the Ontario Building Code to increase energy efficiencies in buildings; and connecting Ontario government buildings and the main Legislative Building to the deep-lake cooling project, which will substantially reduce our electricity use during the summer period.

All of these examples demonstrate our government's commitment and our progress as we work toward building a conservation culture in this province. We will continue removing the barriers to conservation and energy efficiency, and we will continue promoting new technologies and new ideas. And we will continue to provide the vision and the leadership to build a new, sustainable energy future for Ontario.

CRIME PREVENTION WEEK

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I rise today to mark the upcoming Crime Prevention Week, 2005. Ontario is a

safe place, but we can make it even safer. Crime Prevention Week offers us a great opportunity to showcase all we can accomplish when we work together to prevent crime.

This year, crime prevention week runs from November 6 to November 12. I'd like to take a moment to remind Ontarians that crime prevention is everyone's responsibility. The police can't do it alone. While my ministry provides police services with the tools they need to do their jobs effectively, business and the public have an important role to play as well. That's why this year's theme, "Your Family, Your Community: Keep Them Safe!" is very relevant.

Local partnerships between police and the community are very effective in reducing the opportunity for crime and making Ontario safer. Activities organized by communities and police services during Crime Prevention Week feature local community partnerships and help promote personal and public safety through prevention, preparedness, response and recovery.

Our government supports crime prevention initiatives throughout Ontario and believes that fostering co-operation between the community and police is key to achieving our goal to make Ontario safer and more prosperous.

I also want to commend the work done by police officers in their communities and in schools, and with children, seniors and local businesses to foster crime prevention. This is extremely important work. It's the dedication and commitment of police officers and members of the community that do make a difference. Parents, families and teachers also have a role to play, and public education is key to our efforts. If every one of us did our part, the impact would be huge. Crime Prevention Week is a good opportunity to discuss this topic.

My ministry works in collaboration with the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police to promote crime prevention. Working with the association and our other partners allows us to support effective crime prevention initiatives. In 2004-05, our safer communities grant program distributed \$655,000 to 42 crime prevention community projects. These projects help improve the safety of many of our communities by focusing local attention on such topics as youth crime, hate crimes, crimes against seniors and Internet luring.

In Toronto, our government continues to support community programs created to deter youth from joining gangs and offering them positive alternatives. Our government provided \$500,000 again this year for the Jobs for Youth program in Toronto. Since its creation in 2004, the project has helped hundreds of at-risk youth from six neighbourhoods in the city to find summer employment for five weeks. Our government believes that helping at-risk youth find summer employment gives them important opportunities for a brighter future and helps make Toronto stronger, safer and more prosperous.

Also in Toronto, we provide funding for the public education and crime eradication, or PEACE, project. Launched by the Toronto Police Service, project PEACE specifically targets the problem of guns and gangs in the

city. Our government provided over \$270,000 to support this initiative, which has public education, crime prevention and increased enforcement components. Project PEACE will help steer young people away from gangs, help those already involved with them leave those gangs, and help remove guns from our streets with a gun amnesty program.

On a broader scale, the McGuinty government's Safer Communities-1,000 Officers Partnership will also significantly foster crime prevention in Ontario. Half of the 1,000 new police officers hired during our mandate will be assigned to community policing duties that have an important crime prevention aspect to them, such as street patrols, traffic enforcement, school visits and working with youth.

I'm happy to say that police services will know, in the very near future, the allocation of the new officers we will be funding. These new officers will help communities across Ontario build on the success of local crime prevention efforts. In many places, including Waterloo, Hamilton and Durham region, local crime prevention programs have been hailed as examples of the effectiveness of partnerships between police and the community.

Crime Prevention Week offers all Ontarians the opportunity to make a difference and to support local groups and volunteers that often work unnoticed during the whole year to make their communities safer.

Keeping our families and our communities safe is not only the work of the police. Crime Prevention Week 2005 and its theme—Your Family, Your Community: Keep Them Safe!—are not just reminders that it's up to all of us to do our part. It's also a good opportunity to thank those volunteers and groups that work together to make us safer. To them and to the police officers across Ontario who risk their lives to keep us safe, the McGuinty government expresses its gratitude.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Response?

1410

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): I'm pleased to respond to the statement by the Minister of Energy today.

For two years they've been talking smart meters. We've heard about them a thousand times. Today we actually get a bill, but, as is the case with most McGuinty government announcements, little by way of details. When asked this morning what the cost of these smart meters was going to be, basically the minister responded, "Well, I have no idea, but we'll give you a price when we roll them out." So people are being told again, "We're the McGuinty government. Trust us." They've bought that line once too often; they're not going to buy it any more.

What is the cost going to be to apartments that have to be retrofitted? People aren't going to be running downstairs to the meter room to see if the washing machine is

saving them some money at 3 o'clock in the morning. They're going to have to have some work done to get these meters into their apartments. Some of these apartments are on bulk metering today. What's going to be done about that and who's going to bear the cost? The minister hasn't talked about any of those details. She doesn't want to talk about them.

Some 800,000 by 2007—where are they going to be?

When asked about the success of their pilot projects, the minister couldn't respond to that either. They really don't have any empirical data about how these pilot projects have been working, but here they roll out the meters because, "You know what? It's Thursday. It's time for a new McGuinty announcement. The papers are going out in the morning. We've got to have something to hand out to the press."

People across the province of Ontario are asking themselves, "Will this initiative actually save us money, or is it just another game on the part of the McGuinty government that has no energy plan for the province of Ontario?" That's what they keep asking us. Where's the price of electricity going in this province under this government? They remember that other promise—you know, the one about 4.3 until 2006. I know they haven't forgotten it. This government's forgotten about it; the people haven't forgotten about it.

We know that in the province of Ontario the biggest concern—and we understand that conservation is very, very important and has to be a significant part of any energy plan. The problem is, this government has no energy plan to make it a part of.

CRIME PREVENTION WEEK

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to respond to Minister Kwinter's statement on Crime Prevention Week.

We're 25 months into the McGuinty government and, so far, what have they really done? They've passed one bill, one community safety piece of legislation. But what they haven't told us today in the minister's statement is about the \$300 million that the justice ministries are being asked to trim from their budgets—\$300 million. That's crime prevention money that you're asked—

Interjections.

Mr. Dunlop: If this government cares so much about crime prevention today, let's talk about the parole board. They're trying to save \$2.1 million on the parole board, but it's going to cost federal taxpayers—and that's everybody—\$10 million to run it. Of course, you all know the rate of release in that particular area. About 60% of the people are released by the National Parole Board, and yet we're doing our very best to get rid of the provincial parole system here in Ontario.

The 1,000 cops—can you believe that? Again he announced it today, 1,000 cops. It was part of your mandate. It was part of the government's mandate. They were supposed to do it over the term, and they've done nothing. Seven times they've made this announcement.

My former assistant, Ms. Kwiecinski, can help me with that. Is that not right, Ms. Kwiecinski: seven times, 1,000 police officers? If you had actually started to implement the program, we could have had a third of those police officers on the street by now, but we don't.

Interjections.

Mr. Dunlop: No, you don't have them. The bottom line is, you've made the announcement over and over and over and you've not provided the police services.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Please stop the clock. The member for Simcoe North is getting way too much assistance. He has the floor. When the government ministers were making their announcements, it was quiet. I think the member for Simcoe North deserves the same.

Mr. Dunlop: It's nice, on Crime Prevention Week, to make a fancy statement, but you actually have to do something to help community safety. You actually have to do something, and we haven't seen it. We have seen no action; they've been missing in action. They haven't even made negotiations with their federal counterparts, those other folks who are soft on crime. We've seen nothing in this country or in this province in the last two years that would indicate this government cares about law and order in this province.

I say again, let's actually see some action. Let's forget about slashing \$300 million out of the justice ministries. Let's get the cops on the streets now, and let's protect our streets and keep our communities safe through law and order.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I must respond to the Minister of Energy, who yet again today held another photo op, but I was left at the photo op looking for the details. We're now into the third year of the McGuinty government, and all we have from the McGuinty government in the way of an energy efficiency strategy is a statement that something might happen.

I want to contrast this with something that was laid out for the government over 18 months ago by the Pembina Institute and the Canadian Environmental Law Association in their report on energy efficiency. I just want to read a few of the things:

"The government of Ontario should adopt minimum energy efficiency standards under the Energy Efficiency Act equivalent to the energy efficiency levels required for Energy Star labelling for all major electricity-using devices." After three years, has the McGuinty government done that? No.

"The provincial building code should be amended to require R2000, Canadian building improvement program ... or equivalent energy efficiency performance." Three years into the McGuinty environment, have they done that? No. Now they might go and consult about the building code.

"The Planning Act should be amended to permit municipalities to make energy efficiency design requirements a condition of planning and site approvals for new developments." Has the McGuinty government done that after three years? No.

"The most energy-efficient technologies in all sectors and end uses should be labelled through the Energy Star program or, if not included in Energy Star, through a provincial labelling system." After three years, has the McGuinty government done that? No.

"The government of Ontario should establish a partnership with utilities, financial institutions, energy service companies, municipalities, and other stakeholders to offer a series of financing mechanisms to assist electricity consumers in all sectors to finance the adoption of energy-efficient products and technologies." After three years, has the McGuinty government done that? No, they haven't.

"The government of Ontario should enter into an agreement with the federal government" on:

—"Grants for high-efficiency home energy retrofits and new R2000 homes." Have they done that? No.

—"Grants toward the additional cost of new high-efficiency commercial buildings and commercial building retrofits." After three years, have they done that? No.

—"Sales tax rebates for all Energy Star products in all sectors and small-scale renewable energy power sources." Have they done that after three years? In fact, what they did is they rescinded the tax rebates on those things.

—"Business tax credits for industrial energy efficiency equipment and cogeneration systems.

"These incentives should focus initially on technologies where the largest reductions can be achieved at the lowest cost." Has the McGuinty government done that after three years? No.

This is from the province of Manitoba. A resident in Manitoba today can get a \$5,000 low-interest loan to refit their home and put in insulation. They can use this money to put in energy-efficient windows. They can use this money to buy energy-efficient appliances. They can reduce their electricity consumption by 35% today. They're not facing an electricity shortage. Has the McGuinty government done this after three years? No.

From Quebec, another province that is not short of electricity: Quebec engaged in a strategy to start retrofitting literally dozens of apartment buildings in downtown Montreal this summer. Why? Because, like apartment buildings in Ontario that were built in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, they don't have very good insulation. They had electric heat that was not very efficient. Quebec is retrofitting those apartment buildings to get electricity consumption down. Has the McGuinty government done that after three years? No.

What we had today was an announcement that was heavy on photo ops, but after three years, what we've seen from the McGuinty government is a \$6.5-billion deal for a nuclear fixer-upper. That's your energy policy. The rest has been window dressing.

1420

CRIME PREVENTION WEEK

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I'm grateful for the brief period of time that I have to join with others in this House in saluting our police officers in the course of Crime Prevention Week. I say to this Solicitor General that perhaps he should have talked to his Attorney General, whose fetish for ensuring that every traffic ticket in this province is adequately prosecuted in fact conflicts with his abandonment of our criminal courts, where Askov withdrawals are occurring at an unprecedented rate.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent for all parties to speak for up to five minutes to recognize Remembrance Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Caplan has asked for unanimous consent to speak to Remembrance Day—up to five minutes for each recognized party. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): I'm honoured to make a statement on behalf of the government to mark Veterans' Week next week, which ends with Remembrance Day. Each year we pause and reflect on the high price that was paid by our veterans for the peace and freedom we enjoy today. They put their lives at risk, and more than 110,000 Canadians died to protect our way of life.

That price was paid by Canadian men and women, many of whom were in their teens. I personally reflect back that when I was in my teens, I never had to worry about going off to war or living in fear of being killed. I reflect back on very carefree days. Perhaps I worried about an exam or a baseball game that might be rained out. I never spent more than a few days away from home—and you think of the young people who spent two and three years in a battle zone. I travelled through Europe, but it was with a backpack on a carefree holiday. I didn't fight my way through Europe, living in fear for my life. Like most of our generation and the generations that followed, I have lived in peace and relative prosperity because of the sacrifices that were made by these courageous men and women. In all, more than a million and a half Canadians have served in the two world wars and the Korean War and, as I said earlier, 110,000 paid the ultimate price.

This year, we will honour the memory of those who died with two minutes of silence on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, the moment when the guns fell silent in the First World War. Those brave Canadian soldiers, sailors, air crew, merchant navy and others put the welfare of their country and community first.

Last year, I went with my 10-year-old grandson to our local Legion on Remembrance Day. Sometimes it takes looking at the world through the eyes of a young person to really see what we take for granted. I remember that we were sitting and talking with veterans, and he started talking about the medals. He pointed at them and asked the veterans, "What was that for? What was that for?" The veterans would say, "That was for this campaign. That was for this service. That was for this act of bravery." I've been to numerous events, I've seen hundreds of veterans wearing their medals, but I don't think I've ever really stopped and thought about the sacrifices that each of those medals represented until I heard my grandson talk about it.

There were two female veterans sitting there. He said, "What did you do during the war?" They were with the British Armed Forces. They were the people who tracked bombers coming across into Britain and measured where they were coming from and where they were going. I reflected on that, and I thought, "I've never gone to sleep—ever—worrying if something was going to happen to my house tonight, like a bomb." It took a simple question from a child to really bring home the message of what our veterans sacrificed to protect our freedom.

This year, as we all know, commemorates the Year of the Veteran. I'm proud that the Legislature, your office, Mr. Speaker, and all the parties strongly support the veterans' memorial that we will begin building very shortly on the grounds of the Legislature—the first time, as you know, Mr. Speaker, I think in 65 years that we've had on the grounds a new memorial. This summer we announced the design, and many of the members here were at that.

In Ontario, veterans have a special licence plate that allows us to recognize them. We partnered with the Dominion Institute on our Memory Project that will record, I think, over 500 of our veterans' memories of their experiences so that we'll never lose that memory. We will always have that at our disposal.

On behalf of the government, I thank once again our veterans. I'd like to close with the final lines from something that I think all of us hear every year at Remembrance Day services, and that's the lines from Lieutenant Colonel Dr. John McCrae's poem, *In Flanders Fields*. He says, as we all remember:

Take up our quarrel with the foe:

To you from failing hands we throw

The torch; be yours to hold it high.

If ye break faith with us who die

We shall not sleep, though poppies grow

In Flanders fields.

Let us resolve to keep faith with those who sacrificed their lives and their dreams to save our freedom and to give the future we enjoy today. Let us never forget.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): It is my privilege to speak on behalf of the Progressive Conservative Party. Like most members of this Legislature, I will

be attending Remembrance Day observances in my riding over the course of the next week.

This year, of course, is the Year of the Veteran, and that has no doubt contributed to a heightened sense of awareness and caring about Remembrance Day and about what it is all about. But I don't think the simple declaration of a richly deserved honour such as a Year of the Veteran really lies behind this increased interest, nor do I think it is attributable to the fact that it is the 85th anniversary of the official end of World War I and the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II that lies behind this. Indeed, I don't believe it is explained by the fact that we have fewer and fewer veterans of those wars whom we are still able to honour in their lifetimes. A number are here in your gallery today, sir.

Although I'm sure that all of these things contribute to this heightened awareness, I think there's more to it than that. I think that the toll taken by current wars, perhaps the unfathomable loss of life we've seen this year from natural disasters, these things have given us a greater appreciation for two things, and both of them, I would suggest, are incredibly important.

The first is the very fragile nature of life itself, and while we now see that more vividly than ever before, whether through pictures of conflict going on today or pictures of natural disasters, we are more graphically reminded. I think it brings home to us the scale of the sacrifice that thousands and thousands of Canadian families made—and the minister made reference to this just a moment ago—so that we could live the lives that we lead and, yes, so that we could have the debates that we have right here in this place, among many, many blessings that those people made possible for us.

That is the second thing that I think we have a growing appreciation for: namely, the priceless nature of the freedoms that we have today in a world where many still do not, and of the need that this creates for all of us to do whatever we can to enhance and promote freedom and democracy.

This heightened appreciation of these two things is good and I think it has manifested itself in many ways. In the town of Mount Forest in my constituency, students, teachers and families from the community banded together to support the naming of a school as the Victoria Cross Public School, as Mount Forest had two of only 94 people ever awarded the Victoria Cross in Canada. Each classroom in the school—a lot of the work on this was done by students, and they came and showed me some of their work earlier this year—is dedicated to a living veteran, and there is a huge outreach program involving the students, the teachers and the whole community and the veterans who live in that community.

Many members probably face the same challenges I do, representing a sprawling rural constituency, relating to the number of services one could attend, many of them scheduled, of course, at the same hour on the same one or two days of this week and next. It isn't possible to be at all of those. When I called people to ask them if they would lay the provincial wreath on my behalf—and it's

my first year as a member of provincial Parliament—I found, as many members of the Legislature probably have before, that what I thought was a favour that I was asking of them, to go and do this on my behalf, was in fact an honour that they saw being bestowed upon them. Indeed, when you think about it for a minute, it is a great honour being bestowed upon them, as it is upon us, to have the privilege of going and presenting those wreaths so that we can remember.

1430

So, in the presence of the veterans here today, to those who are watching on television and to the families and memories of those no longer with us, I join my colleagues on all sides of this House in saying a simple but heartfelt word of thanks. It hardly seems adequate, but perhaps this heightened sense of awareness of the sacrifices made, perhaps the greater recognition of freedoms won and preserved are an even better way in which we can all express our gratitude.

Last Sunday, together with the Minister of Community Safety, I and hundreds of other people had the privilege of attending the groundbreaking for the Jewish veterans' war memorial in Earl Bales Park here in Toronto. I want to repeat the closing words from the short statement I was privileged to make on that occasion. Referring to the magnificent monument to be built, I said it was our responsibility to ensure that it stands as a reminder of the need for all of us, every day, to be constantly vigilant against discrimination and war and terrorism so that our children won't have to erect monuments like this in future years; so that those children, while they will not have forgotten the history that brought us here and the sacrifices which made it possible, will instead be gathering on Sunday mornings or any other morning of the week, yes, to remember, but also to celebrate and embrace our differences which do so much to contribute to the strength of our magnificent Canadian citizenship that these veterans did so much to make sure we have today.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): On behalf of New Democrats, I am pleased to be able to say to those veterans who are here and to veterans across Ontario once again how much we appreciate the sacrifice they made. As my colleagues have pointed out, it seems that as time goes on, much of Ontario becomes more and more cognizant of the sacrifices that were made. One of the things that strike me when I attend Remembrance Day ceremonies is that the turnout seems to be growing, not shrinking; that more and more people are coming out. People are coming out because it was their father, it was their grandfather, it was their mother, it was an uncle; it was someone—the father or grandfather of a friend of theirs. I think it speaks well for Canadians that we recognize at this time, as my colleague Mr. Tory has said, 60 years after the end of the second war, the incredible sacrifice that was made.

What strikes me at this time of year—I have a rural constituency, and virtually every small municipality has a Remembrance Day ceremony—when you go to some of

these small villages where there are maybe 800 people and you read the names on the cenotaph, you realize that almost every young man and many young women in that community must have joined Canada's armed forces in the second war and in the first war. When you look at the size of the population, and then you look at the long list of names and at the list of names of those who did not come back, you recognize that this was not the sacrifice of a few; this was not the giving of some, but literally of whole communities.

A few years ago, one of the First Nations in my community established their memorial. What struck me when I attended the ceremony was the number of young people who had obviously heard the call. It wasn't from one First Nation; it was from several. The First Nations at that time didn't even have a road connecting them to Ontario's highway system. These were young people who literally would have come out of the bush in canoes in order to take part in what they saw as their public duty.

We owe it as well to recognize that those people who served and then came back have continued to make an incredible contribution to our society. These are the people, for example, who led the fight for a Canada pension plan; these are the people who led the fight to establish a medicare system.

Besides having served in the war, these were also, many of them, the children of the Depression, who when they came back, especially from the second war, said, "We are not going to allow what happened before the war to happen again. We're not going to allow people to live in abject poverty at the same time we see some living with incredible wealth."

These are the people who in many ways have led the struggle for the kind of Ontario and the kind of Canada that those of us who are my age have been able to enjoy: post-secondary education that was affordable, the expansion of the community college system, the expansion of the university system.

But I think of it in a more personal way. As a young boy growing up, like most Canadian boys I wanted to play hockey. My first hockey coach was a veteran. My second hockey coach was a veteran. Later on, when I got to be a teenager and started to look around, I recognized that virtually all the referees, all the coaches, all the convenors, the managers—the people who made the minor hockey system run—were veterans.

I wondered why some of them sometimes walked with a shuffle and why some of them would say, "I'd love to get out on the ice but I can't." It was later on that I understood why some of them could not. They were not physically able to do so any more, having suffered a wound in the war. But they were dedicated to making sure that kids like me had opportunities they never had.

When they were 17 and 18, they were looking to go to war, not looking to go to university, not looking to play hockey, not looking to enjoy many other things we've enjoyed. For that and all of their sacrifices, we owe them an enduring thank you.

The Speaker: I would ask all members and guests to rise for a period of silence in remembrance.

The House observed a moment's silence.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I have a brief announcement: Mr. Giacomo Mancini, member of Parliament from Italy, leading a delegation of mayors and members of council from Italy to Canada, is here with us. Would you please welcome them.

ORAL QUESTIONS

WATER QUALITY

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Acting Premier. We learned in the past day that Emergency Management Ontario notified officials in your government, including those who—I'll quote from the EMO spokesperson—"needed to be notified" in the Premier's office, about the health emergency on the Kashechewan reserve on October 15, fully 10 days before your government took action. My question is simply this. Both the Premier and the Minister of Natural Resources claimed they knew nothing of the health emergency until October 24, 10 days later. There now appears to be a huge discrepancy. Can the minister inform the House who in the Premier's office received that notice on October 15 from the Emergency Management Ontario office, who else did that person inform, and if the Premier wasn't in fact notified on October 15, why not?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): The minister responsible for aboriginal affairs.

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): What I can tell the member is the chronology we have discussed. Chief Friday issued an emergency declaration on October 15, and that day the Ministry of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada announced they were flying in 1,500 18-litre bottles of water each and every day. The next day, INAC reported that the water plant had been fixed, and on October 17, Health Canada reported there was no longer E. coli in the water. On October 22 and 23, a medical delegation visited the community at the request of Chief Friday and did an evaluation. Chief Friday and Dr. Trussler came to Queen's Park, met with the Premier and myself and presented their evidence, and within that meeting we declared the emergency.

1440

Mr. Tory: Again to the Acting Premier: I want to quote from section 4 of the 1992 emergency planning agreement between Ontario's First Nations and the province of Ontario. It says, "When an emergency occurs at a First Nation community ... the chief of the First

Nation council may declare an emergency. If the chief ... requires additional emergency assistance, such assistance may be requested from Ontario.”

That language is consistent with Ontario's Emergency Management Act, and indeed was the same process used by the Kashechewan reserve to notify Emergency Management Ontario fully 10 days before your government took action. The chronology you gave us a moment ago said nothing about what I asked you about, which is that Emergency Management Ontario says it received the notice, I guess, on October 15, and they said they told the people in the Premier's office who “needed to be notified” about this.

My question again is, why did it take your government so long to act, given that you were informed about this 10 days before, and what was going on in the government during the period between October 15 and October 24, when you knew about this and you had received this notice?

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: I'd hate to have to repeat the chronology I just gave him in answer to the previous question, but the point of that chronology is that the federal government reacted on the same day to start to alleviate the water problem. It was a water problem; there was nothing life-threatening at that particular time that the water being brought in couldn't alleviate. That was happening, and the source of the problem, the water plant, was being addressed; so all the problems were being addressed immediately after that.

Mr. Tory: The fact is that the notice in question, dated October 13, sent on the 15th and transmitted to the Premier's office, according to Emergency Management Ontario, said right here that it was resolved by the First Nation's council resolution that people should be “med-evaced out for immediate treatment and that Emergency Management Ontario ... officials be brought in,” etc. to address the water contamination. That's exactly what it said here on a document dated October 13, transmitted on the 15th and across to the Premier's office on the 15th.

When the mayor of Cobourg declared an emergency at 3:45 p.m. on April 25 this year, the province had a representative on the ground 15 minutes before the declaration was made public. When Peterborough was hit by a flood last July, the Minister of Community Safety was on site that afternoon, after a state of emergency had been declared by the mayor of Peterborough at 7 a.m. that morning.

That is how the process is supposed to work. Why did it take 10 days in this case, 10 days after the emergency management office and the Premier's office knew? Why did it take 10 days?

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: I remind the member that the declaration order was declared on the 15th, while on the 17th, test results by Health Canada indicated there was no longer E. coli in the water. Also on the 17th, Health Canada's chief medical officer of health told the community members that there was no risk to public safety. What happened after that, once the E. coli was dealt with, was the high level of chlorine. It took the next few days

to realize that this was causing aggravation of skin ailments. That's the information we had on Monday and Tuesday last week, and the Premier and I acted on that.

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question to the Acting Premier concerns an issue that affects families across Ontario. In Peterborough, Fisher-Cast Global announced last month that employees have been told that between 30 and 40 of their workers will be laid off. Port Hope's largest employer, Collins and Aikman, laid off 70 full-time workers. Further down the road, in Cornwall, over 1,500 jobs have been lost in recent months, including 553 people at the Domtar plant and more than 60 employees at Spartech Plastics, which closed this fall.

It has become very clear, including up to the minute of your economic statement in the last couple of days, where there was not a word on this, that you have no plan to give these people any sense of hope or future opportunity for themselves or for their families. What do you have to say, two days after your economic statement which said nothing, to these families that have been affected by these layoffs and that continue, in different communities, to be affected by these layoffs?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I will reiterate, just in one month alone, September of this year, 17,300 net new jobs have been created in Ontario; since taking office, 193,000 net new jobs. The unemployment rate is at its lowest rate since July 2001.

We have a new Toyota plant that's being built in Ontario—the first time we've seen a new auto plant in Ontario in some 20 years; the Ford Motor Co., a \$1-billion investment in Oakville, in part due to this government's program; General Motors, the \$2.5-billion Beacon project.

We're most proud of the fact that we are investing in our economic advantages: health care, education and the skills of our people. As long as there's one unemployed person who wants work, this government will continue to strive to create those jobs, to work with the private sector, to work with the productive workers of this economy, to ensure that Ontario continues to lead the world in all sectors of its economy.

Mr. Tory: Again to the Acting Premier: Kingston and Brockville in eastern Ontario were hit just last month when Beautyrock, Inc. closed two call centres, throwing 200 people out of work. The Saputo cheese factory in Harrowsmith, outside of Kingston, announced two weeks ago that the factory is closing, impacting all 89 employees. But of course, as we all know, it's not just these factories and workplaces that are closing. Harrowsmith and neighbouring Verona have lost two churches, a discount store, convenience stores, a restaurant and an antique store in recent times because of plant closures such as this and the ripple effect it has across these communities.

Minister, what precisely is your plan to help the over 300 families in Kingston, Brockville, Harrowsmith and Verona to address this loss of jobs and the 42,000 other jobs lost across Ontario in manufacturing so far this year?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: We intend to create the climate for growth that we need in this economy to do the things like—for instance, just last week, De Beers said they're moving ahead in the next phase of new diamond mines in northern Ontario, a potential \$1-billion investment that will create 600 construction jobs, 375 jobs during production, contributing \$6.7 billion to the economy; the new research and development facility at the University of Windsor in conjunction with Navistar; GlaxoSmith-Kline, a \$23-million expansion, 75 new jobs; Auto-modular Corp. building a new plant in Oakville, 400 new jobs; Minacs Worldwide opening a new call centre in Chatham, 300 new jobs; RioCan and Trinity Development Group, \$151 million. The list goes on and on.

This government has created a climate for investment and growth. All the numbers are up. As long as one citizen in this province wants a job and is looking hard for it, his or her government will stand behind them and continue to create the climate for investment that we have in the two years since we've taken office.

Mr. Tory: My colleague from Simcoe–Grey has asked for a simple meeting between the Premier and community and business leaders from Collingwood and nearby communities to address the 1,000 actual and potential job losses in his riding this year alone. The Premier has refused this request, and you didn't respond favourably to it when asked the other day either.

My colleague from Lanark–Carleton proposed that an eastern Ontario economic development fund be created to provide financial assistance to help local economies in rural areas and some of these smaller urban municipalities. While you supported this initiative at second reading, it died with your new session. Will you commit today, on behalf of the Premier, to implement this economic fund for communities across eastern Ontario, to sit down with the Premier and have a meeting with these people in Simcoe–Grey to discuss the devastating layoffs they're experiencing in their community? Will you give those commitments?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: The Premier and I continue to meet with interested citizens across the province, as do my colleagues. No government has committed more to economic development than this government.

I've got to tell you, I'm a little tired of hearing about empathy from the Leader of the Opposition. When he was at Rogers, let's just look at the numbers: in 2002, 187 layoffs; in 2001, 170 layoffs; in 2003, 175 layoffs. And what did he say? What was his empathetic response at the time? "It's a sign of the times. Most businesses today are finding that they have to reduce their costs and that includes ... people costs."

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We don't think that's empathetic, just like his party cut welfare benefits, just like you refused to raise the minimum wage, things that we've done. This party has

empathy for working people and working families. This party has created the climate of investment growth that your party ignored. This economy continues to grow, and grow in a way that we can all be proud of the working men and women—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I remember what you guys used to say when you were over here.

The Speaker: The Minister of Community and Social Services. Order.

New question.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the minister responsible for aboriginal issues. Minister, Emergency Management Ontario says that on October 15 they received a fax from the Kashechewan chief and band council. The fax declared a state of emergency. The EMO officials say that they communicated the information in this fax to the Premier's office and to other people in the government who needed to know about the request for a state of emergency.

On October 25, CBC Television asked you, as minister, "When did you know?" You, Minister, looked into the television camera and said, "We only became aware of this on Monday," the 24th.

Minister, how could the First Nation let the Premier's office know and Emergency Management Ontario know on October 15, and you look into the television and say, "We only learned about this on October 24"?

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): As the member knows, on the same day that the emergency declaration was made by the First Nation, INAC had responded immediately by flying in 1,500 18-litre bottles of water each day. On the very next day, INAC reported that the water plant had been fixed, and on October 17, Health Canada reported that there was no longer E. coli in the water.

On the 22nd and 23rd, a medical delegation, at the request of Chief Friday, visited the community and did an evaluation. Chief Friday and Doctor Trussler came to Queen's Park, met with the Premier and myself, and presented their evidence. Within an hour of that meeting—during that meeting—we made the declaration provincially.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, it's not about INAC in Ottawa. It's not about what someone else may have done. It was the fact that the First Nation, according to the law, notified the McGuinty government on October 15 that they considered it a state of emergency. You had some legal requirements to fulfill on the 15th. Not only did you not fulfill those legal requirements, but you looked into

the television camera 10 days later and said, "We didn't know about this until October 24."

Minister, how could the First Nation notify government departments, those government departments notify the Premier's office, and then you look into the camera and tell Ontarians, "I didn't know about this until October 24"? That's the question.

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: I think the member is confused about what the cause of the original emergency was. That was the presence of E. coli in the water. That was corrected within two days. But a second situation, a secondary situation, developed, caused by the treatment for the E. coli, and that was too much chlorine in the water. That was aggravating skin lesions, skin infections, exacerbating them, and it is that medical evidence that was brought to us on the Monday and the Tuesday that made very apparent to the Premier and myself that there needed to be a medical evacuation.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, perhaps you're the one who's confused. Two years ago, the Ontario Clean Water Agency issued a report that said Kashechewan's water supply is "a Walkerton in waiting." A year ago, your Minister of Health went to Kashechewan and they showed the Minister of Health the difficulties with their water. What did he say? He said he didn't see an urgent situation. Six months ago, your Minister of Community Safety went there and he was shown it; the meeting reports show that. On October 15, you received a very specific notification of an emergency situation. You looked into the camera on October 25 and said, "I didn't know about this until yesterday."

Minister, what does the First Nation have to do to get your attention: come down here and show the media the photographs before the McGuinty government finally pays attention to an emergency situation dealing with tainted water?

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: It might have helped if, the week before, the local member and the leader of the third party had mentioned Kashechewan in this House. I never heard that mentioned, and until the delegation came down, that's when we found out about it.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Energy. It's the first time I've ever heard a minister of the crown—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Your new question is for the minister responsible for aboriginal affairs?

Mr. Hampton: My question to the Minister of Energy is this: New Democrats believe in conservation and energy efficiency. We have heard, though, over the last two weeks the McGuinty government announce a \$6.5-billion deal for private, expensive, unreliable and unpredictable nuclear power. Now, with your photo op today, can you tell the people of Ontario, after investing \$6.5

billion in a nuclear deal, how much you're actually going to invest, in dollar terms, in energy efficiency?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): I find it amazing that the member from Kenora–Rainy River, who cancelled every conservation program—

Interjections.

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield:—every one—actually was reading from a document from people who are so supportive of conservation. However, I guess that's another challenge.

We know that, putting together our legislation with the work that is being done by local distribution companies around this province, the people who actually work with communities, the potential saving on the smart metering alone is \$600 million. That is just one small part of a very large puzzle around energy conservation. We are committed to work with and find those energy savings. We had over 50 projects that we participated in.

Mr. Hampton: That was a relatively simple question. We know you're going to put at least \$6.5 billion into a nuclear fixer-upper. After two and a half years, the McGuinty government should know how much you're going to invest in energy efficiency.

By the way, I want to read a quote for you. This was by—I'll tell you who it was later. It says, "We are struggling under the weight of a recession, and the NDP's government policy of energy conservation is going to cause hydro rates to increase." This was an opponent of energy conservation. His name: Dalton McGuinty.

I want to ask you again, why not try a province-wide building retrofit program to reduce electricity consumption and save people money? Manitoba is already doing it, Quebec is already doing it, although they're not in electricity shortage situations—

The Speaker: The question has been asked.

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: There's no question that we are going to maximize what we have. We are going to build new generation and we are going to create a culture of conservation in this province. We have a lot of people who are willing and prepared to help us do that. We are going to promote the energy conservation planning. We are going to demonstrate that leadership, as we have. Actually, in reference to an earlier comment, if the member from Kenora–Rainy River had spoken with me, I could have let him know that there have been nine new products added, four changes to levels, and 15 increases to energy efficiency in appliances in this province. We're moving and we're changing in spite of the member from Kenora–Rainy River.

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Mr. Hampton: About the only thing the public's noticed from the McGuinty government in terms of energy efficiency so far is that you cancelled the tax credits in terms of people who want to buy energy-efficient appliances.

Again, I want to ask you: You're going to put \$6.5 billion into a nuclear fixer-upper. Could you tell people, after two and a half years into the McGuinty government, how much money you are going to put into a plan which

would allow lower- and modest-income people who want to get rid of the energy-inefficient fridge or the energy-inefficient freezer to buy energy-efficient appliances and reduce their electricity consumption? If you can tell us about the \$6.5 billion for a nuclear fixer-upper, surely you should be able to tell us how much you're prepared to invest to finance energy-efficient appliances.

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: What I will say is thank you to all of the people who have come today who are participating in energy conservation initiatives in every one of their local utilities. I say to all the new technologies, to all the changes that are happening in colleges and universities, to all those people who come forward to work with us to make a difference on behalf of all Ontarians, thank you, because you're the people making a difference today.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): My question is for the Minister of Energy. Last week, Paul Bradley of your Ontario Power Authority announced the selection of a 900-megawatt project in Brampton through Sithe power. He said that this is to compensate for an unfortunate earlier decision, when a cheaper but less useful plant was selected. The less useful but cheaper selection was Eastern Power's successful bid in Mississauga.

Minister, what does this say to the greater community looking for confidence in the electricity sector when you can much-ballyhoo the awarding of a contract one month and, a few short months later, be saying, "Well, it's a bad thing, so we're doing something else"? You gave the contract. Was it that bad? Explain.

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I say to the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, obviously we believe in consultation, due process and good diligence. The RFP process was at arm's length from the government.

But do let me tell you about a few things. Site plan approval: St. Clair Power; Greenfield South; GTAA; Loblaw, 10 megawatts; Erie farms, under construction; Kingsbridge wind farm, under construction; Melancthon, under construction; Prince Wind, under construction. Would you like me to go on? There are more.

Interjection: Go on.

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: Goreway project, underway; cogen, 1,000 megawatts out there; we just put 200 megawatts on with Manitoba, to work toward 1,500 and 3,000; discussions on an east-west grid.

We are moving forward. We listen to the people as well. We work with our municipalities. We believe in the EA process—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Yakabuski: This Sunday night, Desperate Housewives will be pre-empted by desperate ministers. They just jump from one thing to another. She talks about due diligence and the process. How do you award a contract to Sithe power, then, to replace your earlier mistake, without again going through an RFP process? You just seem to hand the contract now, to make up for your earlier mistake, to the second bidder, without

engaging other people who may be interested in bidding for this project. What it says is that you're terribly desperate. You're in a hurry to do something, but you're subverting the process, Minister.

This is a government that is in disarray. What we need to know today is, can you tell us the details of this deal? Is it as bad as the last? It says that the other plant was cheaper. How much more is power going to cost under your new deal? The people of Ontario have a right to know what it's costing them for your mixed-up energy policy.

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: Maybe if the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke had one of those energy forums we've been giving to the rest of the members—actually we've only had one energy forum for the third party and that was the member for Toronto–Danforth—we could work together on the issues of conservation and the challenges for all Ontarians. I'd be more than happy to have you come over and discuss with me, at any time, all of your questions. All you need to do is just pick up the telephone.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Education. There are 39,000 students on a waiting list for special education in Ontario. This is a terrible situation, just on the face of it. Yesterday, in estimates, we asked why you were capping special education funding for newly enrolled students. You said you were not, yet this is a document from your director of education, finance branch, to directors of education, and it says that "funding for net new needs" for special education in 2005-06 is "capped at \$40 million." Capped, Minister. Now you say it's not capped, but your officials are sending out very clear memoranda saying it is capped. Who is telling the truth?

Hon. Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): I think the member opposite would want to let the people of Ontario know that our government increased funding for special needs by \$165 million in our first year. In addition, last year we increased it another \$55 million. In fact, every single claim put forward by every single board in this province was provided for. That's the first time any government has done that in 20 years in this province. So what I would say to the member opposite is that we have a track record with the boards and, more importantly, with the families and the children in this province of covering all those high needs that other governments sought to avoid.

Yesterday, in estimates, I welcomed the interjection from the critic for the honourable member's party and made the undertaking that we will correct the impression created by that memo. We will continue to do what we have done to a degree greater than any other government, which is to make sure that special-needs students—students with special needs—have a place in the classrooms and schools of this province as good and as effective as any other student in this province.

Mr. Hampton: I heard a lot of words, but I don't think I heard an answer. There are 39,000 children who are on a waiting list for special education. Here's the memo that was issued last week. It says that you have capped funding for special education. Here is the memo from Nancy Naylor, assistant deputy minister. What does it say? It says that "funding for net new needs" for special education is "capped at \$40 million." Minister, who is telling the truth? You say funding for special education isn't capped. Two of your bureaucrats are sending out notices to school boards saying it is capped. Who is telling the truth?

Hon. Mr. Kennedy: We know we don't take that word lightly in this House. I want to say to the member opposite, you're certainly not presenting the facts. There are not 39,000 people waiting for special needs in this province. Thankfully, because of a 65% increase in funding for students with high special needs, we are actually providing services ahead of assessments. We're providing help to students even before they are designated special needs. So that is not the case in this province.

As I acknowledged in estimates yesterday, there was information provided in error. I, as minister, will always take responsibility for that. As I added yesterday to the critic, and the member also knows full well—he wouldn't, I'm sure, be raising issues today to create concern and consternation that are not grounded in reality for those students in this province. I accept and acknowledge and take responsibility for that error. I've also undertaken to remedy it.

I can tell you that we have, through other means, provided the correct information to boards. The boards have provided, in fact—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

1510

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. The media is reporting today that the federal Conservatives voted to block funding for immigration support programs and, as such, could jeopardize long-awaited fair funding that you and the Premier have fought for for a long time on behalf of Ontario newcomers.

Ontario's newcomers deserve better than that from the Tories. The people of Ontario deserve better than that. Minister, what are the consequences of the Conservatives in Ottawa blocking this funding?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I want to thank the member from Scarborough Centre for that question. What happened in Ottawa the other day is unconscionable. The federal Conservatives blocked a bill, blocked money that would have gone, not to the government, but would have gone to the community-based organizations all across this province that help our newcomers with English-as-a-second-language skills. They're basically holding the immigrants of this province and the newcomers hostage. That is

unacceptable. That is something that we will not tolerate, and the people all across this province are going to make sure that that vote gets changed. The Conservatives did the wrong thing, and they had better own up to it.

Mr. Duguid: Maybe the Leader of the Opposition will pick up the phone and give his cousins in Ottawa a call and help us out on this.

Minister, there are non-profit agencies in my community of—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I'm having great difficulty hearing the member for Scarborough Centre. He needs to be able to ask his question.

Mr. Duguid: There are non-profit agencies in my community of Scarborough and in many north of my community in places like Malvern that provide invaluable services to newcomers in Ontario by providing them help to integrate successfully into our province. These organizations provide an invaluable service to our newcomers, and they need to access this federal funding. Minister, what does this action by the Conservatives in Ottawa mean to community-based organizations that serve the 125,000 newcomers who are welcomed to Ontario every year and for the future of the Canada-Ontario immigration agreement?

Hon. Mr. Colle: What the Conservatives did yesterday means that organizations like Flemingdon Neighbourhood Services, the Jamaican Canadian Association, the Jane/Finch Community and Family Centre, the Jewish Immigrant Aid Services of Canada, the Catholic Immigration Centre of Ottawa, the London Cross Cultural Learner Centre—Mr. Harper and the Tories, and we've even got two members who sit on that side who are part of their election team, have basically said that Ontario's newcomers don't deserve fair funding.

This is something we've fought for for 20 years, that for the first time we will ensure that our newcomers get what newcomers in Quebec get. Instead, what happens is that the Conservatives, with their friends here in the House, say that they don't want fair funding for Ontario. It's about time the Conservatives stood up for the people of Ontario, did the right thing and said, "Get that money to the people."

Interjections.

The Speaker: I know it's Thursday, but we need to remember that we need to have respect for all members of the Legislature.

Interjection.

The Speaker: The Minister of Citizenship, you'll come to order. New question.

EARLTON/TIMISKAMING REGIONAL AIRPORT

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a question for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Minister, Earlton/Timiskaming Regional Airport is facing imminent closure. The township has been trying to get both the provincial and federal government to help.

Earlton airport is minutes away from the largest oriented strandboard plant in the world, owned by Grant Forest Products. The airport is the kind of infrastructure that national companies look for to encourage them to locate and stay in communities. Minister, what is your government going to do to ensure that Earlton/Timiskaming Regional Airport stays open?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): The member knows full well that, at any time, the municipalities have every opportunity to make an application to the northern Ontario heritage fund if in fact the project applies. We continue to ensure that we help develop economic growth in northern Ontario through a refocused northern Ontario heritage fund that has indeed created 2,721 jobs to date.

Mr. Miller: Well, so far, your answer won't be much comfort to the people in the Timiskaming-Earlton area.

Minister, you are a northern representative and a cabinet minister. Northern communities are relying on you. Mac Hamilton, chair of the airport municipal services board, says, and I quote from the Timiskaming Speaker: "It is not acceptable to expect northerners to get into their cars and drive in the dead of winter two hours or so to a hospital with a very sick person in the car. Lives will be lost as a result of this facility closing—no doubt."

There are over 400 air ambulance calls a year out of Earlton airport. The airport supports economic development. James Brand of Grant Forest Products says, "We are definitely disturbed corporately by the potential closing of this airport"—as if the forestry sector doesn't have enough problems.

This Saturday, November 5, there's an emergency meeting. Will you make a commitment today to help these communities keep their airport and attend that emergency meeting on November 5?

Hon. Mr. Bartolucci: There's absolutely no question that we on this side of the House believe in economic growth in northern Ontario. That's why we refocused the northern Ontario heritage fund. To date, we have invested \$117 million in 443 projects, which has generated an additional \$397 million of investment in northern Ontario and created in excess of 2,000 jobs.

With regard to the meeting the member speaks about, the Minister of Natural Resources, the member for the area, will be at that meeting.

PATHOLOGIST

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Acting Premier. Acting Premier, 10 people are in prison or under some form of constraint based on the testimony of pathologist Charles Smith. In fact, every case that Smith has ever testified in is now under review. We already know that Charles Smith's work has led completely innocent people to spend years in jail. Will the McGuinty government call a full public inquiry into what went wrong and how this could have happened?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): The Attorney General.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): On November 1, the chief coroner's office announced that there would be a review of 44 cases, and these cases will be prioritized. They will be reviewed by four external pathologists: the former chief medical examiner for Nova Scotia and Alberta, two professors of forensic pathology from the University of Sheffield, England, and the state pathologist for Northern Ireland. They are going to be reviewing the totality of the cases. If at any point in their review they have any information that they feel should be brought to the attention of the Ministry of the Attorney General, they will do so immediately, and we will be in a position to act quickly.

Mr. Hampton: The individual cases should be reviewed, but that doesn't answer the question. What was going on in your legal system, Ontario's legal system, that could be so twisted into obviously bad results?

I'll give you one example. Louise Reynolds was accused in 1997 of killing her seven-year-old daughter on the basis of an opinion provided by Smith. She spent two years in pre-trial custody, plus time in a halfway house, and was forced to put up her other daughter for adoption before prosecutors withdrew the charge in 2001. She's just one of the people whose lives were ripped apart by Dr. Smith, and there are many others.

Yes, all the individual cases need to be reviewed, but we need a public inquiry to figure out how this could have gone on in so many cases. What is systematically at fault within your ministry and within the criminal justice system that so many lives could be destroyed by this person? Will you do that?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: When the person asking the question was the Attorney General and he was asked about matters that were before the court, matters that were being reviewed by the federal justice minister or matters that were before the chief coroner, he said that we can't rush to judgment. He said that we have to let due process run its course. I understand that he has come to some conclusions on these matters, but I'll tell you, I'm going to take the word of the chief coroner and the advice and the review of expert pathologists, and we're going to wait for the process to follow through its course. Along the way we are going to act, in the event that we get some evidence that in fact we should be acting. We are going to follow the chief coroner, not CSI Queen's Park, Mr. Hampton.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The Attorney General. The member for Nickel Belt.

1520

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Just last Friday I met with my local Northumberland

Federation of Agriculture executive. I normally meet with them on a regular basis to keep me abreast of issues that affect them on their farms. I really appreciate it, and I want to thank them for doing that every two or three months. It's time well spent. We talk about a number of issues that are facing them in the everyday farming industry.

One of the questions that comes up over and over again is that conservation is very important to their families, to their farms and to the entire province. As you know, Madam Minister, farms are very energy-intensive, and with rising costs, farmers are looking for ways to cut their energy uses. Could you tell me how your ministry is helping farmers identify savings and conserve energy in their farm businesses?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): It's an excellent question from the member for Northumberland, who has always, I believe, demonstrated a very eager will to work with the agriculture community in his riding.

I'm happy to report to all members of the Legislature that at the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs we work, along with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and Hydro One, to assist farmers and producers with energy audits on their properties. We also have contributed to the design and development of an energy efficiency program for customers of Ag Energy Co-op. This is a \$650,000 program, and it's based on proven tactics for developing an operational culture of conservation that is based on education, outreach and demonstration. Also, we're involved in on-farm conservation, advice on equipment retrofits, and energy demand and consumption management.

Mr. Rinaldi: As you know, Minister, the use of energy is a major part of many farm operations, especially those with value-added processing, which we encourage them to do. Today's agribusiness must rely on the processing side to make business viable. Unfortunately, many of these processes are energy-intensive, especially in the food sector. Minister, can you tell me how your ministry is assisting our farmers and the farms in Northumberland county in finding ways and opportunities in these areas?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: We have held energy sessions at the Canadian Greenhouse Conference in October of this year, and we have assisted with the organization of a green energy session for these producers in May 2006. Also, our government has made the commitment to renewable energy projects, which include on-farm assessment of biodigesters and the installation of wind-generating equipment for the production of electricity. Most recently, we've passed regulations on net metering.

I was just reading the Ontario Farmer this morning, where they have a front-page article: "Metering Boosts Power Projects." It indicates the Ontario government is making it easier for homeowners, farmers and other businesses to generate their own power and send any surplus energy back to the hydro grid. The government

passed a regulation that allows for what is known as the net metering practice, which will allow for more small-scale energy producing, and the government has streamlined procedures to make accessing the grid more possible. So obviously we are working with the agricultural community and they are obviously pleased with the efforts that we're making.

LESLIE M. FROST CENTRE

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): My question is to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. On Monday of this week, October 31, you met with representatives of the Frost Centre working committee. In July of this year, they delivered a report to Minister Phillips and thanked him for his support of their work, and they wanted to meet with the new minister responsible to discuss the recommendations.

On July 13, 2004, your government closed the Frost Centre with no warning, no consultation, and it has sat vacant ever since. The Frost Centre was an Amethyst Award-winning environmental education centre, and the closure of the centre shocked people not just in the community but across the province.

In response to the huge outcry at the closure of the Frost, your government established the Frost working committee. Minister, they need you to do your job. They have done a tremendous job, and they need to know from you: When are you going to produce the guidelines for the request for proposal for the future of the Frost Centre?

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I want to thank the member for the question. Of course, I want to recognize the very fine work that was done by the Frost Centre working committee. It truly was a community effort, a group of people who came together. I know that my colleague from Peterborough, Jeff Leal, and my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka also worked to participate to make sure that was very successful.

On July 15, my colleague the Minister of Government Services received the recommendations. We've already accepted and in fact executed one of the recommendations, which was to allow and to enter into a contract with Algonquin Highlands for access to the boat launch facility. If that has not been signed, that will be signed within days, an agreement to allow that kind of access.

We are continuing to work, and in my meeting I did follow up with the two members from the Frost Centre working committee on putting together the request for proposal to go out, as recommended in their report, as soon as possible.

Ms. Scott: I do appreciate the support from all sides of the Legislature on the development of the future of the Frost Centre.

The minister still has not answered the question. The buildings are sitting vacant, and the longer they sit, they more they deteriorate. The committee wants to stay involved and has offered their assistance, and there is a

lot of assistance within the community and the province for this, but the people who want to make the request for proposals want to act soon. They're wasting time and money. They're anxious for the guidelines to be produced. I would ask again if we could get some type of close time frame within this year for the request for proposals to go out, and then a timeline that might be involved for when the acceptance would be notified. As I said, we don't want to get into two years of vacant buildings at the Frost Centre.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: The committee worked very diligently and in fact gave their report. Within days of receiving the report, we began to act upon the recommendations. I don't think we could move faster than we did. I can tell you that the members of the committee who did meet with me on Monday were incredibly pleased that we are proceeding with the request for proposal. We will be taking on the technical specifications as outlined by the committee members, putting that in and making sure that we have a fair opportunity, as laid out by the Frost Centre working committee: the kinds of terms and conditions around ownership, around usage, around all of those terms and conditions, as well as the need to bring the systems and the buildings into a state of repair.

We have not put a specific date around that, although I have committed to make absolute best efforts to make that as short as possible so that we could turn around and, if there is the interest with another partner out in the community—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches—East York): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Madam Minister, today a whole bunch of people came here from the Ontario public service to lobby you and other MPPs. They were joined by the parents and guardians of those who are in group homes and regional centres. They have told the MPPs and you that there are 6,000 people on the waiting list for community services, most of whom have aging parents who are no longer able to care for them. They have told you that you have exacerbated the problems by removing 1,000 high-needs individuals from long-term homes. They have told you the agencies have less staff. They have told you the police are more and more being called in. They have told you that you are precipitating a crisis in their lives.

My question to you: Why are you forcing poor, vulnerable people from their homes in the midst of injunctions, court challenges and other legal challenges when you have no plan to provide the necessary support for their transition?

1530

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I hope some of those I met with as well are here

in the House today. I want to say a very special welcome to people who work in the developmental services sector. Let me say that these are extremely committed individuals. People who work in developmental services do it because they want to be there, because they have a skill set that is very much required, and we want to retain that.

The people I met with in my office for a couple of hours this morning—we had a great conversation. We talked about the historic investments this government has made in the last two years alone. I will start by reminding the member opposite that since we became the government we have made virtually \$200 million more available than the previous governments. I also acknowledge—you would be interested—that your party, when you were the government, and the opposition party when they were the government too have increased funding in this sector since the mid-1980s. I acknowledged that as well.

Mr. Prue: Madam Minister, significant investment in this sector is essential, yet the clients are being displaced from their homes as we speak. They are being displaced from the homes they have known all of their lives. Their families have been forced to fight you in court. You are like a bulldozer to them, flattening their lives.

Madam Minister, many of them have asked—and I'm going ask you directly. They are looking for your help, not what you are doing. They remember the Sandra Pupatello who used to be on this side of the House, who fought for the poor and the vulnerable. Now they're seeing a Sandra Pupatello on that side of the House who does not stand up for those same people. They need your help. When can they expect the Sandra Pupatello of old?

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Before I ask for a response, I want to remind members that we refer to people in this place by their title, Minister, or by their riding, not by their given names.

Minister.

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: The member opposite needs to be clear in the House today. If he is suggesting that we don't close the institutions, he needs to say so, because there were people here today to talk to us about being opposed to the closure of institutions. Let me make it perfectly clear: Every government since the mid-1980s has closed institutions, including the NDP government. So please be clear with people, when they are talking to you, about your record as well.

I am in favour of closing institutions. I make no bones about this. I have also said, not just today for people coming to Queen's Park but repeatedly, regardless of the community I am in, that we are working diligently to make sure resources are available for people who need them in developmental services. We are working long and hard to be certain that there is more and more funding in special services at home, in people who live independently in the community, for specialized services for those people who need extra special care because of a medical condition—

The Speaker: Thank you.

SMART METERS

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton–Kent–Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, I was happy to hear as you introduced your new bill today that it has something in it for smart metering.

The municipality of Chatham-Kent, which makes up part of my riding, has been running a pilot program for smart meter technology and is working with a Vancouver-based company to test a two-way, real-time wireless network. This technology will enable municipalities to retrofit existing metres so that they can reuse those meters rather than throwing them away. The cost of this technology is proposed to be at least 50% less than having to buy new meters. Hugh Bridgen, who is the manager of stations and metering at Chatham-Kent Hydro, and is with us today in the gallery, has told us that the calls are overwhelming for this kind of metering.

Minister, how are you using the experiences of other projects—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): There is a question. Minister.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): I would like to thank the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, not only for her support of the Chatham–Kent project, but also for her support in the agricultural community. She has been steadfast and tenacious on many issues.

To say the least, I've been absolutely delighted with the project at Chatham–Kent. They have been very innovative in their approach, as many others have in the smart metering. I'll give you some examples. There's Middleton, Woodstock, Wasaga, Oakville, Cambridge, North Dumfries—and I think maybe some special recognition to Newmarket. Newmarket Hydro, actually, is involving Enbridge for gas and the town of Newmarket for water metering. I can tell you that all of that intellectual capital that comes from these incredible people who work in the local distribution companies will not go amiss. I'm actually going to ask my parliamentary assistant to take over the job I had as parliamentary assistant to ensure this continues.

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): To the minister: The smart meter is very important because it's going to educate us on how to conserve, and of course, by conserving energy, we are going to provide additional energy to the industry, which will become potentially more beneficial and more economical, and in the best interests of Ontarians.

Minister, in my riding of Thornhill there is an industry that I visited in April 2004 that produces smart meters. What kind of economic benefit can my constituents and those across Ontario expect from the implementation of smart meter legislation?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: Thank you to the member from Thornhill for his question, who also has been unwavering in his support of conservation.

The economic benefits of this billion-dollar investment will actually be tremendous. We can expect addi-

tional manufacturing in the province. As a matter of fact, as you heard just recently, we had DMI, who has moved from Fargo, North Dakota, to Fort Erie with a new wind turbine plant: 100 jobs. In addition to the smart metering, it will provide a platform for employment. There's a good example: Just this morning Electric City Corp. announced that it has entered into an agreement with Enersource Hydro Mississauga to develop its industry-leading automatic power curtailment system. I saw this program working. It is phenomenal. It's actually a quarter-million dollar investment by Enersource in the energy-saver global commander units, resulting in extraordinary electricity—

The Speaker: Thank you.

MORTGAGE BROKERS

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford): My question is for the Minister of Finance. Minister, a bullish real estate market and a sharp upsurge in mortgage fraud and identity theft are creating landmines for lawyers, lenders and consumers. A recent article in the Canadian Lawyer states that there are no security measures to cover personal security packages for Terraviva accounts that allow access to Ontario's e-registration system.

When is the government going to revise the Mortgage Brokers Act, which hasn't been revised in 20 years, to close the loopholes for fraudulent activity and restore confidence in the land registry system?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I'm glad to hear a Tory acknowledge there's growth in housing, growth in housing sales and the economy is doing well. Finally, a Tory who knows what he's talking about—sometimes, sometimes.

Now, let me tell you, in eight years, when he was in government, they didn't do anything, despite repeated requests. My predecessor, Mr. Sorbara, began a consultation on that very statute. I have the benefit of the work he's already done as I assume this portfolio, and I can show the member that as our economy grows, as our housing grows and as the boom continues, this government is doing something you failed to do in eight years: to look seriously at the Mortgage Brokers Act. I can say to the member that we will be addressing that question in the very near future, in a way that you failed to do in eight long, painful years in this province.

Mr. Tascona: Minister, Ontario accounted for almost one half of the mortgage approvals in 2004 in Canada. The Mortgage Brokers Act, which has not been revised for over 20 years, needs increased standards, including mandatory errors and omissions insurance and full disclosure for consumers. However, bank mortgage activity is not covered by the Mortgage Brokers Act. Minister, what steps will you take to ensure a level playing field for mortgage brokers so that consumers are not at the mercy of banks for mortgage approvals?

1540

Hon. Mr. Duncan: We're doing something that was kind of foreign to their government. We've been consulting the industry. They never did that in eight years. That consultation took over a year, I think, in 2004. The former parliamentary assistant tells me that.

I can assure the member opposite that this government will act in a way that their government never acted. It's too bad he didn't ask this question in 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003. We're moving, and we're going to do what's in the best interests of consumers and mortgage brokers, for the people of Ontario, something you failed to do in eight long and painful years.

PETITIONS

FINANCIAL STANDARDS INDUSTRY

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

“Whereas Bill 213, Justice Statute Law Amendment Act, 2002, enacted the Limitations Act, 2002, which provides for a reduction in the legal limitation period, from six to two years;

“Whereas the two-year limitation period in effect from January 1, 2004, is not long enough for investors seeking restitution after suffering serious financial damages due to the wrongdoing of the financial services industry; and

“Whereas the Attorney General's position is that the plaintiff investor interests do not need further protection;

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

“That the provincial government immediately pass and implement an amendment to the Limitations Act, 2002, to provide an exemption for claims by victims of financial services industry wrongdoing so that no time limitation period applies to such claims.”

I support the petition and sign it.

CONSTRUCTION WORKERS

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

“Whereas the previous Conservative government eliminated many of the rights of union workers that took many years to gain;

“Whereas the McGuinty government passed into law the Labour Relations Statute Law Amendment Act, 2005, that is bringing back card-based certification for construction workers;

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

“To support the McGuinty government's commitment to restoring peace and protecting workers' rights in the construction industry.”

I agree with this petition. I affix my signature to it, and I give it to page Mandy Min.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

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

“Whereas without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

“Whereas quality supports are dependent upon the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

“Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community.”

I affix my name in full support.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to introduce this petition on behalf of my riding of Niagara Falls, signed by many people, including Don and Irene Hallett. The petition reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government of Ontario's health insurance plan covers treatments for one form of macular degeneration (wet) there are other forms of macular degeneration (dry) that are not covered.

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

“There are thousands of Ontarians who suffer from macular degeneration resulting in loss of sight if treatment is not pursued. Treatment costs for this disease are astronomical for most” individuals “and add a financial burden to their lives. Their only alternative is loss of sight. We believe the government of Ontario should cover treatment for all forms of macular degeneration through the Ontario health insurance program.”

I'm pleased to put my signature on this petition.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition signed by a great number of my residents, and it comes from Community Living Tillsonburg.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

“Whereas quality supports are dependent upon the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

“Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community.”

I affix my signature, as I totally agree with it.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition sent to me from a group of residents in Brampton, Caledon and Maple, Ontario. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly. It deals with the contributions of newcomers to Canada, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

“Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

“Whereas Ontario, its businesses, its people and its institutions badly need the professional, managerial and technical skills that many newcomers to Canada have and want to use;

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

“That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the other institutions and agencies of and within the government of Ontario, undertake specific and proactive measures to work with the bodies regulating access to Ontario's professions, trades and other occupations in order that newcomers to Canada gain fair, timely and cost-effective access to certification and other measures that facilitate the entry, or re-entry, of skilled workers and professionals trained outside Canada into the Canadian workforce.”

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition. I will affix my signature and ask page Mandy Min to carry it for me.

LESLIE M. FROST CENTRE

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock):

“Recommendations for the Frost Centre

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the McGuinty government announced the closure of the Leslie M. Frost Natural Resources Centre in July 2004 with no public consultation; and

“Whereas public outrage over the closure of the Frost Centre caused the government to appoint a working committee of local residents to examine options for the future of the property; and

“Whereas the working committee has completed their consultations and has prepared recommendations for the provincial government that include a procedure to follow during the request for proposals process; and

“Whereas the Frost Centre has been an important educational resource for the community, and continued use of the facility for educational purposes has widespread support;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

“The Dalton McGuinty Liberals should retain public ownership of the Frost Centre lands and follow the recommendations of the working committee regarding the request for proposals process.”

This is signed by many people from my riding and from Ontario, and I want to hand it to page Kiki Kirkpatrick from Millbrook/South Cavan Public School in my riding.

MANDATORY RETIREMENT

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads:

“End Mandatory Retirement

“Whereas existing legislation in Ontario enforcing mandatory retirement discriminates against healthy and able Ontario men and women on the basis that they are older than age 65; and

“Whereas the provinces of Alberta, Manitoba, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, Yukon and the Northwest Territories have ended mandatory retirement in various forms; and

“Whereas ending mandatory retirement will enable many principal family income earners, especially among families of new Canadians and those headed by single mothers, to maintain their careers, earn incomes, support their families and contribute to society; and

“Whereas Ontario faces a labour shortage in the coming years as skilled knowledge workers and tradespeople approach retirement age, and Ontario companies do not wish to lose their investment in the skills and experience of their most senior people;

“Be it therefore resolved that the government of Ontario should abolish mandatory retirement in the province of Ontario through the swift passage of Bill

211, an Act to amend the Human Rights Code to end mandatory retirement.”

I agree with this petition, and I affix my signature to it and give it to page Trevor to be delivered.

1550

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

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

“Whereas the current government has eliminated OHIP coverage for chiropractic services; and

“Whereas the current government has eliminated and reduced OHIP coverage for optometry services; and

“Whereas the current government has eliminated and reduced OHIP coverage for physiotherapy services; and

“Whereas the current government has refused to fund treatment for autistic children even after the courts and human rights commission ruled it should; and

“Whereas the current government has now decided to fund sex change operations even though the Canada Health Act deems it not an essential health service;

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

“That the government of Ontario does not fund sex change operations and reinstates funding for delisted health services.”

I affix my name and fully support it.

IMMIGRANTS’ SKILLS

Mr. Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): I’m pleased to introduce this petition on behalf of my riding of Niagara Falls. It’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

“Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

“Whereas Ontario, its businesses, its people and its institutions badly need the professional, managerial and technical skills that many newcomers to Canada have and want to use;

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

“That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the other institutions and agencies of and within the government of Ontario, undertake specific and proactive measures to work with the bodies regulating access to Ontario’s professions, trades and other occupations in order that newcomers to Canada gain fair, timely and cost-effective

access to certification and other measures that facilitate the entry, or re-entry, of skilled workers and professionals trained outside Canada into the Canadian workforce.”

I’m pleased to sign this petition.

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

“Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

“Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

“Whereas Ontario, its businesses, its people and its institutions badly need the professional, managerial and technical skills that many newcomers to Canada have and want to use;

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

“That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the other institutions and agencies of and within the government of Ontario, undertake specific and proactive measures to work with the bodies regulating access to Ontario’s professions, trades and other occupations in order that newcomers to Canada gain fair, timely and cost-effective access to certification and other measures that facilitate the entry, or re-entry, of skilled workers and professionals trained outside Canada into the Canadian workforce.”

I put my signature as well to support this petition.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

“Whereas quality supports are dependent upon the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

“Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to

receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community.”

I am pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): The Chair recognizes the member from Mississauga West.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): It's good to have the last word during petition time.

I'm pleased to support my seatmate, the member from Niagara Falls, with this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the government of Ontario's health insurance plan covers treatments for one form of macular degeneration (wet) there are other forms of macular degeneration (dry) that are not covered.

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

“There are thousands of Ontarians who suffer from macular degeneration resulting in loss of sight if treatment is not pursued. Treatment costs for this disease are astronomical for most constituents and add a financial burden to their lives. Their only alternative is loss of sight. We believe the government of Ontario should cover treatment for all forms of macular degeneration through the Ontario health insurance program.”

I am pleased to affix my signature in support of this petition, and ask page Frances to carry it to the table for me.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES SERVICES À L'ENFANCE ET À LA FAMILLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 2, 2005, on the motion for second reading of Bill 210, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act and make complementary amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 210, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille et apportant des modifications complémentaires à d'autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): It's time for questions and comments. The Chair recognizes the member from Mississauga West.

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): This is not a contentious bill; it is one that enjoys widespread support throughout the House.

The objects of the bill are fairly simple. We know that children are more likely to thrive when they're part of a permanent, nurturing family. Bill 210 is all about making it easier for children who really do need protection to

find a loving and caring home. When children are in a loving and caring home, they're more likely to be better adjusted as people, to grow up into more stable and adaptive adults, and to form strong relationships. They do better in school. Bill 210 allows for the expansion of family-based care options, and that means that more children have the opportunity for a happy childhood and for long-term success.

Why was this bill introduced? Very simply, the current system is just too rigid. What we need to have here in Ontario is a system that meets the needs of the child; meets the needs where the rules fit the child, instead of the child fitting the rules.

The Child and Family Services Statute Law Amendment Act, 2005, makes it easier for children in need of protection to find a permanent home. How does it do this? Very simply, it makes adoption more flexible. It allows more children to be adopted while still maintaining ties to their birth family and to the community from which they arose. It makes it easier for relatives, which includes grandparents, to provide permanent homes for those children and youth who need a permanent home. We all know how valuable our roots are to us and how fondly we remember those roots as we grow up. This bill is about having a child be able to remember the roots that they grew up in, instead of going from one to another to another home.

Finally, this bill creates more legal options beyond traditional adoptions so children and youth in care can be placed in a permanent home. I thank you for the time.

1600

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I look forward to participating in the debate more fully, but I did want to just make the comment that it is rare that we have legislation in the House that I believe all three parties will be supporting.

We have concern regarding some of the specifics of this legislation, which is why we are encouraging the government to have fulsome committee hearings on this legislation. We need to hear from stakeholders. We need to hear from families, from foster parents, as to what their experience is, what the problems are within the current system. We need to hear as well from children who have experienced this process. I'm hoping that when we go to committee, we will in fact accommodate a setting where we have that kind of information available to us so that we can improve on the bill before us and ensure that it is indeed practical.

The other comment I want to make is that it's easy to make legislation; the challenge is in its implementation and, more important, the resources that the government puts behind that implementation. This government is very good at making announcements, introducing new legislation, but unfortunately very short in terms of providing those resources to ensure that the objective and the goal that was pronounced can in fact be realized. So we'll be watching very carefully to see how this government responds to that important need for resourcing this piece of legislation.

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): I, too, will be speaking at further length to this bill later, but I agree that many of the issues were discussed when this bill was debated before, and indeed the three parties support this bill.

I was fortunate enough to go to the announcement. The member for Hamilton Mountain was the minister in charge at the time and I still wonder why she was removed from that ministry, because I actually want to compliment her. I believe the former minister of children's issues tried very hard, behind the scenes, with her own government to do more for children with autism. She's a member who is a team player and did it behind the scenes. I think she worked hard for the children of this province and was unable to get any further. I believe that's why she was removed. There's no proof of that, but I think it's very sad that a minister who wanted to do more for children—and I believe was making some advancements, despite Liberal broken promises—was removed from that portfolio.

I was at the announcement, and I know that the previous minister worked very hard. I was fortunate enough that day to hear young people and their foster parents or adoptive parents talk about the difference it makes to young people to have that consistency in their lives, to be able to go and live with a family and become adopted and become part of that family, that it means absolutely everything to have that kind of security. So I think this is an important bill in that sense.

I will speak later about some of the issues we're hearing about and some of the problems with this piece of legislation, but also some of the things that are not in the bill that we believe should have been put in. Further consultation is needed. So again, I'll speak more in a little bit on this.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): This is one of those very interesting bills. It's one that I can find great support for, yet I would like to know more about how it's going to operate.

The basic purpose of this bill would ease and help many children in the province to find some kind of solid relationship in a family environment, and those things are very important. As a community, as a society, we should do everything we can to ensure that those kinds of things come together.

I understand that we are dealing with approximately 9,000 children who are in the permanent care of the children's aid society. These children cannot be adopted until they sever all relationships with their family. In some cases, that can be a difficult and in fact a very sad occasion. Maintaining relationships with a family can prepare someone for any eventuality that may happen in the future. Situations that currently exist in the family which make living at home impossible may change. As those things change, the flexibility of the children's aid society would be a very important part of this bill.

However, the government seems to lack a lot of detail in the overall planning of this bill and how it tends to protect vulnerable children. This summer and early fall

we've been informed by the newspapers of that terrible, terrible case where a young child was actually starved to death. Making sure that those things don't happen in this province is very, very important and falls on the shoulders of all people in this House.

The Acting Speaker: It is time for a response. The Chair recognizes the member for Brant.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): I appreciate the opportunity to do the wrap-up, as it's called, on the speech that I gave last night. I want to thank the members from Mississauga West, Oak Ridges, Toronto–Danforth and Halton for their input.

One of the things I want to come back to is what I chose as a theme last night, and that was, let's make sure we understand that this is an evolution and that successive governments have tried to do their best in order to protect our children. I gave credit to each and every member in this House in a passionate way—maybe I was too over the top, because some people misinterpreted what I said as criticizing an individual member for not doing that. Nothing could be further from the impression that I tried to leave, and that was that there is not a single person in this House who has not put the needs of children front and centre whenever we've dealt with issues of this nature. So I complimented and I continue to compliment all members for trying to do that.

The other point I wanted to make was that quite clearly the member from Oak Ridges tried to imply that in some way they were the ones who said that we have to go to committee. It was first said immediately by the minister—immediately by the minister—that she wanted this to go to committee to receive the expert advice that's necessary. I want to make sure the members understand clearly that that has been identified and it must be done and it will be done. We have identified that and we've said that it must be done.

Further, to the member from Halton, it's unfortunate—we have to make sure we understand that when any one government is in the rule of the day, things are going to happen in every single aspect of the province of Ontario. No one sets out to create the problems we've heard in the newspaper, specifically about what's been going on with individuals in the care of the CAS. No one government would ever set out to cause those problems. We must get out of the mindset that we can lay blame at the feet of somebody if there's not culpability to that. Let's work toward making our kids safer in Ontario.

I appreciate the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Klees: To the member from Brant, I want to reassure him that I wasn't in any way suggesting that the government wasn't willing to have committee hearings; my emphasis was on the scope of those hearings. All too often, we hear that there are going to be committee hearings and then we're limited to one day, or we're limited to half a day, or we're limited to committee hearings here at Queen's Park and we don't have the appropriate travel time to ensure that we make it possible for people throughout this huge province of ours to have

their input. That was the reason for my emphasis on these committee hearings.

Also, I find it interesting that the member protests so strongly that we shouldn't be blaming a particular government for anything that goes wrong. Goodness, all people have to do is look at Hansard, and people who watch these proceedings with any regularity know that with every question that's ever asked of any minister, it is always the previous government or governments that they blame. They're now reaching back 15 years to blame the former NDP government or the former Tory government for their inability to keep their own promises.

1610

Ms. Churley: Even Peterson.

Mr. Klees: Today they reach back to Peterson. I agree with the member from Brant that governments should assume responsibility for their actions. They are the government. Whatever happens on their watch is their responsibility and it would be nice, it would be proper for this government to begin to assume that responsibility, to realize that they have been there, that they have sat around the cabinet table. The prince of broken promises has been the leader of this province now for more than two years. This is what he looks at when he opens the newspapers in the morning today. This is the province and these issues are his. He has to assume responsibility. That's all we were saying.

I want to speak to the bill before us. I've been in this Legislature now for almost 12 years—1995, that's 10 years. It seems longer than that, but 10 years. The issue of child welfare is one that we have dealt with many times. I'm actually proud of the history of our government in terms of putting resources into child welfare and behind children's aid society work. From 1995 on, until 2003, funding on child protection was increased by some 185% over that period of time, to beyond \$1 billion.

The amount of training that was done: The previous government recognized the importance of ensuring that we have people in the field who are involved on the front lines with children and their protection and have responsibility for them, and that they're appropriately trained. Over that same period of time, some 7,700 children's aid society workers were trained, and upgraded in their training, for work they do on the front lines. Some 1,800 more child protection workers were hired over that same period of time. In retrospect, we look back over the last 10 years and we take great pride in the emphasis the previous government put on children in this province.

The bill before us seeks to improve on the current situation. I'll be the first one to say that things are not perfect, and that there's a lot of room for improvement. That's why I commend the government for bringing this bill forward. I don't feel the same way about many other pieces of legislation this government brings forward, but certainly on this one we find some common ground. I'm prepared to endorse that.

I have some concerns, though, and this is where I believe that when we get into committee we can begin to

look at some of these details. One of the areas that concerns me specifically is the resources. I believe the number now is about \$70 million that children's aid societies are in deficit in this province today. I have visits from representatives of the York region and Simcoe children's aid societies in my office on occasion, and I hear about their struggles. I say to the minister that I think what would be prudent is that before we take on additional responsibility for implementing yet an additional layer of legislation and regulation, we look at what we're doing today and ensure that we're properly resourced so that we can deal with the issues we have today. We're not doing that. Your government is not doing that. There isn't enough money available to the children's aid societies to be able to pay their workers, to retain their workers so that the work that needs to be done on the front lines can be done efficiently and effectively.

In the short time I have available to me I want to emphasize this in terms of the responsibility that I believe the ministry has, the minister has and government has in terms of not only resourcing through financial support of these agencies but ensuring that the people working on the front lines are the best we can possibly have and are properly supervised, that there is a level of accountability in place in these agencies so that we can avoid the tragedy we have been reading about in the newspapers over the last number of months.

For the purpose of emphasis as we consider this legislation, I want to refer to circumstances that are unconscionable. I won't go into any details but I will read this. It was in the *Globe and Mail* this past Monday. When I read things like this, it just brings home how important the work is that the minister has and the work that the government has yet to do to ensure that our children are properly protected. I know she has the same concern as I do and as other members have in this Legislature. I'll just read it into the record:

"Ms. Reed, a young woman from Acton, Ont., was the driving force behind the memorial"—this is the memorial for the young child who died of starvation, Jeffrey Baldwin. "The little boy who so infrequently felt the sun on his face was remembered on a golden late-fall day in a city park near the house where on Nov. 30, 2002, he died of starvation."

The woman goes on to say—it says, "... the Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto" who is being held "accountable for its failures in the case." I'm not going to prejudge what is happening in the courts today, but any one of us who has been following this story will certainly know that there were at least three different occasions where serious errors in judgment were made by the Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto in terms of the placement of these children and allowing them to be under the care of people who were previously criminally convicted. Yet these children were exposed to them under the care, the responsibility, of the children's aid society.

As we consider this, on the one hand, as the minister indicated when she introduced the bill, the purpose of

Bill 210 is to make adoptions more flexible, to take away, hopefully, some of the red tape that's involved today that makes it difficult for some of these adoptions to take place, and so children are left in limbo. They don't know where they are, and they have a difficult time being able to find their stability and security because they belong nowhere. I support that in principle. My concern, in doing that, is that we not liberalize this process so much that we lose sight of the accountability mechanisms that are so important, the research that needs to be done, the background checks that need to be done to ensure that those people who are considering the adoptions are in fact legitimately capable of being good parents.

1620

I support the minister's initiative for kinship support. No one would support in a stronger way than I— if there are grandparents or if there are siblings in a family, does it not make sense that if those grandparents are willing to step in and assume a parenting role, they should be allowed to do that, and that rather than government standing in the way and creating hurdles for that to take place, there should be a facilitation of that? But again, there is the responsibility, because in the case that I refer to, it was grandparents who were guilty in the final analysis of allowing this tragedy to happen. So we in this place have a responsibility, as we consider the legislation before us, to ensure that those safeguards are in place.

I want to also read into the record a letter I received in my constituency office not too long ago. This again is my concern: that we ensure we always keep in mind that it's the best interests of the child and the best interests of the parents that we always have in mind and that we don't allow bureaucracy or the regulations to get so much in the way that we don't do what is right for the child as a priority.

This is a young girl aged 13, and she says to me in her letter, "I am desperately asking your help so that I can come out from hiding and to return to my home and family and to go back to school where I belong.

"I am currently in hiding because the CAS has threatened and abused me and my family." She goes on to say the children's aid society "has obtained an apprehension warrant for me ... without any information being given to the judge from me or my family. The chances are very good that they lied to the justice of the peace so that they could force me back into CAS control where they could silence me."

I'll close the quotation there. This is a very disturbing letter. The point I want to make here is that there is a role for agencies such as the children's aid society to step in and be the protector of the very innocent children in our society. We know that abuse happens. What we can't do is allow a bureaucracy to develop and things to become so regulatorily burdensome that we lose sight of the very people the legislation or the regulations are intended to help.

With regard to this young woman in my constituency, it's a struggle for me as a member of provincial Parliament because she comes to me and appeals to me to help

her, and the very agency that government is paying to support and protect her I now have to question. I have to do my due diligence to ensure that the right thing is being done here.

Again, as we consider this legislation before us, I want to ask the minister to be very vigilant in terms of ensuring that the appropriate safeguards are in place and that we do what has to be done for the benefit of these children.

In the closing moments I have available to me, I want to shift focus to another group of children in this province who I believe are being neglected and who I believe this government has turned its back on. I have done a great deal of work over the last number of months with parents of autistic children. Along with my colleague Julia Munro, I travelled to Michigan and we visited a school there in Marysville. This is a school that, quite frankly, I think we should be looking at in this province as an example of what can be done for children with multiple disabilities and challenges.

It is shameful that the Premier of this province, while he was seeking office, promised these parents in no uncertain terms that if he was elected as Premier, he would extend services to autistic children beyond the age of six. He has failed to do that. He has now been the Premier for more than two years and he still has not delivered on that promise. In fact, he is challenging a court decision that has ordered the government to provide those services. Rather than keeping his promise and using that court order to justify the additional cost it may place on the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Community and Social Services, instead of doing that, he has instructed his Attorney General to appeal that decision—unconscionable.

So while, on the one hand, we have the minister with responsibility for children's services coming forward with legislation in support of children, we have the Premier, on the other hand, breaking a promise to autistic children and their parents on something that can be done tomorrow in terms of extending services. We have autistic children on waiting lists, waiting for simply one opportunity, and that is to be treated fairly and equally in the same way as children who don't have the same disability.

If there's anything we should be doing in this province, it's demonstrating that we don't treat people differently, regardless of disability, regardless of colour, regardless of sex and regardless of race. Surely that is what we can be proud of as Ontarians. In this case, on behalf of those autistic children, this Premier and this government are failing; they're failing to live up to that standard that we, as Ontarians, have come to know.

I trust they will consider doing the right thing in the interests of fairness and equality.

The Acting Speaker: It is time for questions and comments.

Ms. Churley: I am pleased to follow up and make some comments on the remarks made by the member for Oak Ridges. I must say that, overall, I think we all like

the tone of this debate because we're talking, as the member said, about our precious children. It is true that although we criticize each other from time to time about not doing enough and about doing things better and differently, it is, as the member said, the one area—I think all members are saying—where we can come together and say that we are in full support of doing everything we can to improve the lives of children in this province, particularly children who, through no fault of their own, because of difficult family situations or whatever, end up in situations where they need the care of the children's aid. That is why this bill before us today is so important. As the member pointed out—and I will speak to it. I know our critic spoke to it in our lead on this, the member for Hamilton—west?

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): East.

Ms. Churley: East. Thank you. She's going to kill me. But I didn't say "Hamilton Mountain."

It's been promised that there will be hearings on this and there will be further consultation. The main criticism we've heard about this bill comes from aboriginal groups who want to be consulted further, and others who feel that there should be more added to the scope of this bill. I recognize that one bill can't always open up a whole act and do everything. As the minister knows, once you start opening up an act that has flaws and needs some changes, we need to look at everything we can possibly do while that act is being opened up, because who knows when it will be again. So I'll be speaking to some of those issues in a few minutes.

1630

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I appreciate the comments that have been made by the members for Oak Ridges and Toronto–Danforth. In particular to the member for Oak Ridges, I want to remind him that Martin McNamara, who is the executive director of the York Region Children's Aid Society, said that this bill will help take child protection and safety to the next level. I am sure he is quite familiar with the children in question.

The goal of this bill is to put the needs of children first, and it's a very honourable goal. It's also making adoption more flexible for children and less difficult for the prospective adoptive parents. As we know, there have been a number of occasions where members of a family have had difficulty adopting the children of their families. Therefore, certainly, the bill deserves significant support because of the objective of the bill.

We should also underline that the minister has added a budget increase of about 10%, or \$95 million, to last year's budgeted figure. Again, this is certainly a strong commitment to children. I don't have to remind members that on the education side for children, we have added significant money to add a significant number of teachers to the education system so that our children will have a better education.

In addition to that, I personally had the pleasure of making an announcement in regard to additional funding that this government has provided to schools to make

sure that food is available in some of the schools where there are some extra challenges, where parents unfortunately, for whatever reason, are not able to take care of their kids early in the morning. So this government has worked significantly for children, and Bill 210 is a continuation of that.

Mr. Chudleigh: The member for Oak Ridges raises an interesting point about the autism promises. I had occasion last week to have lunch with a couple who had an autistic child. The child looked about seven or eight years old. They were from California. Actually, they were married and their child was born in Botswana, South Africa, but they moved to the United States because of care for their child. This child was in a school in California. There were seven children in his class and there were six teachers or assistant teachers in that class. It was almost a one-to-one ratio that this child was receiving, and each of those teachers had a specialty that they applied to this child. I would think that is an extremely expensive system but one that would be very helpful for that young person to go through and receive the very best of care and treatment. He would probably be as good a citizen of the United States as he could possibly be in the future.

This whole bill becomes very personal to me. When I was very young, my parents passed away early and I was a ward of the court for about six months. During that period of time, there was a great deal of difficulty—I was shielded from a lot of this, of course—as to where I would live and with whom I would live and whether or not those people were acceptable. As it turned out, I was able to live with a maiden aunt, someone who had never been married before. She inherited two teenaged boys at the ripe old age of 49. I'm sure that wasn't something that she expected in her life, but I can tell you we had a wonderful time growing up in our later teenaged years, with my aunt being more like one of us than a parent at that time. She did a marvellous job.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I listened to the member from Oak Ridges and, as always, he's quite articulate in what he has to say.

Mr. Delaney: The member is always articulate.

Mr. Prue: Yes; I think, "He's always articulate," is more correct.

Of all of his comments, what seized me most was his discussion of the government's insistence on taking the parents of children with autism to court. I have to tell you, I continue to be shocked at the actions of this government in terms of what was said when they were in opposition and what was said during the time of the election about what they were going to do for autistic children, and now to find that those selfsame families are being forced to go through the court system.

On Halloween night, as I was giving out some candies, one of my neighbours came by with her son. Her son has autism. He was brilliantly dressed in a costume, and he was, of course, anxious, I think, to get some candy, just like every other child. I asked her how things were going, because she has been to my office and we

have tried our best to help her. She told me that she was fearful. She didn't know what was going to happen with the court challenge, of which she was now seized into as well. She didn't know what was going to happen because her son was about to turn six years of age, and all of this had had a tremendous stress upon her and her family. She told me that she was no longer at work. She's had to take stress leave. They are finding it very difficult. She almost started to cry on what should have been a very happy occasion, going door to door with her son, meeting neighbours. I wished her well, and I told her we would continue to fight.

I would ask the government to think about that woman and the thousands like her. You should not be taking them to court; you should be helping them.

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

Mr. Klees: I want to thank my colleagues the members from Beaches–East York, Halton, Toronto–Danforth and Thornhill. In my closing comments, I want to again thank the government for bringing this forward, but I cannot allow this government to take accolades for a new piece of legislation focused on children without balancing that with the reality that this government has within its power and its authority to change the lives of children and parents today simply by doing what they said they were going to do, and that is to extend benefits to those autistic children.

We cannot allow ourselves to be blinded. We can't allow ourselves to just simply turn the page. It's easy for us. When we close the door on our constituency offices and thank those parents and those children for coming—or, as the member from Beaches–East York said, when he closed the door and they went on their way—it's no longer in our minds. If we allow ourselves to think that way, then we can pat ourselves on the back for passing new legislation, and that becomes the focus.

My challenge today to the minister and to this government is to put this legislation on a solid foundation, and that foundation is first of all to keep your promise to that identified group of children you are well familiar with, and that you will do the fair and the just thing for those children.

1640

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes, in further debate, the member from Toronto–Danforth.

Ms. Churley: I stand here with a heavy heart today because of—as the previous members have referred—little Jeffrey Baldwin. Although the legislation before us today doesn't directly impact or affect that particular situation—although in some ways it does—I must say that it's very difficult to talk about protecting our children within this bill or with any bill.

I know the Minister of Children and Youth Services came to the memorial for little Jeffrey Baldwin in my riding. I have to hand it to Christie Blatchford, who is a writer for *The Globe and Mail*. I must say, Christie and I don't always agree on everything. She's a fantastic writer. She came to that memorial for little Jeffrey and

she wrote the most incredible, positive story about him. She brought him alive. She talked about the people who were there. It was a beautiful fall day, and the memorial for him was held in a park close to where he lived. There were people and women and families there with their children. We stood around and there was a maple tree planted in his memory with a little bench and a plaque. There weren't a lot of speeches at this thing. The emergency workers showed up, the people who first arrived when the 911 number was called and tried to revive him, the first to discover the horror of what had been happening to him.

I don't know about you, but I have to speak about Jeffrey Baldwin because he was from my riding. This happened in my backyard; it happened in all of our backyards. It's so horrible. For a while, like many of us, I think I turned a blind eye to it. People like Christie Blatchford was going to the court every day and writing about it and facing up to the horrors of what happened to that little boy and to his sister who was kept in that room. Little Jeffrey wasn't just starved to death; much, much worse happened to him before he died. Again, I'm not going to go into the details here, but I think we all have to face it and we all have to know what happened to Jeffrey Baldwin in that room in that home, to his little sister, who was kept in that room with him, and to his other siblings, who had to watch it happen. It is absolutely horrific, and when you read it, you can't stand it. It's actual torture to imagine that anybody—what monsters. What kind of monsters—what happened to them—could do the kinds of things that we are reading about that happened to this poor little boy? Everything was taken from him.

We're hearing more and more about it and, of course, we know that there's a court case going on and these facts are coming out, and it's so incredibly heartbreaking. I don't even know at this point, Minister, what to ask you to do. It's just so incomprehensible. I know that there's a court case, and I'm sure there'll be a coroner's inquest into this one. We need to look at what went wrong in the system. Of course, we know that the workers in the Toronto's Children's Aid Society work very hard. They have enormous portfolios and client bases. They work very hard. None of us want to attack these workers who, day in and day out, go into these homes and try to help children. But something went very wrong here. The workers themselves admit it: Something went wrong. We don't know the full implications yet, but they didn't check the files of the grandparents.

We must make sure that this never happens again. It does, from time to time, although this is one of the more horrific situations I've ever seen and heard about and it's hard to believe that it happened here in Canada, here in Ontario, here in my riding. But it did. Little Jeffrey completely slipped through the cracks and was hidden away from us successfully and ended up with no life, and then dying of starvation.

I wanted to pay tribute to Jeffrey Baldwin today. That's all we can do now. I invite people to go to Green-

wood Park in my riding at Greenwood and Dundas. Near the playground area where little Jeffrey never got to play in his short life, near the baseball field and near the playground, is the tribute to Jeffrey, and I invite people to go by. It's a beautiful spot. I think that now is an opportunity for us all—Jeffrey's gone; he's not with us any more—to acknowledge his short life.

I've been wanting to say this for some time. I made a statement shortly after I went to the ceremony last Sunday. I don't know at this point what we can do about it, but certainly we all have to figure out what we can do. With the minister, the government, we in opposition, working with Catholic children's aid and children's aid in general, what happened and what can we do to make sure that what happened to little Jeffrey will never happen to another child under our watch? He should have been under our watch, and something went wrong.

I want to talk a bit about the bill before us. It's fitting that it's before us today because, speaking of adoption—this is a different issue—the bill we just passed, after my work of 10 years and other people's work for 30 years, opened up adoption records for adult adoptees and birth parents in this province, actually catching up to a lot of jurisdictions. That has passed and now we've got our work cut out for us to make sure that over the next 18 months, before it's implemented, all the pieces that need to be fixed through regulation are done and it turns out to be good for everybody concerned.

This bill today, of course, is a different kind of bill. It really doesn't deal with the same issues we dealt with around the opening up of records, the privacy issues and those kinds of things; in fact, it's sort of the opposite. As I understand it, having gone to the announcement by the minister and having heard a wonderful young man—I forget his name; I can still see him; red hair—talk about why this bill is important to him. Of course, what this is all about—it's more, but one of the aspects of this that's so important is that children should not be given up by their biological parents in order for them to be adopted. That biological connection is important, and there are all kinds of reasons. This young man spoke about why biological parents sometimes just can't cope. There's not always abuse involved. Sometimes there is; sometimes it's just because of circumstances in a parent's life that they can't cope. They can't raise the child. There are too many issues. Why should that parent have to give up custody of their child and give up any kind of contact with that child for the child to be adopted into the family they're living with?

One of the rules this takes care of is when children are in the care of the children's aid society whose birth families have a court-ordered right to visit or contact them, and more than half of these families never contact their children. The existing system, therefore, prevents about three quarters of Ontario's estimated 9,000 crown wards from being adopted. Statistics from the Adoption Council of Ontario suggest that the number of international adoptions has climbed to about 600 a year, while private

agencies in Ontario have placed 170 children with families.

Studies have shown that crown wards move from foster and group homes every 22 months on average and suffer changes in social workers almost as frequently. You've just got to know that this is not a good situation for growing children, who need stability in their lives. The bill, therefore, would provide for what's referred to as open adoption, so that birth parents and relatives will be able to maintain contact with the child.

As you know, and we talked about it within the context of the adoption disclosure bill, most adoptions that happen today at birth—there are fewer, of course, in this country, but most are open—a birth mother, a young woman who decides to give up for adoption, gets to pick the parents and the parents have to be interviewed frequently by the mother. The mother has got to feel comfortable about where her child is going. They negotiate and work out some kind of contact. That's become the norm in this day and age because everybody understands the importance of keeping that connection, and the damage it does when that connection is taken away.

1650

What I understand from this bill is that the extent of the contact negotiated among the adoptive parents, the birth parents and the children's aid society is to be negotiated. Bill 210 presumes that birth parents know that they won't lose track of what happens to their children after adoption. It will clear the way for crown wards to be adopted much sooner. We know that Alberta, British Columbia and New Brunswick already have and allow forms of open adoption, and such arrangements are common in private adoptions in Ontario, as I already said.

As you know from our members who have spoken and from our critic in this area, we are very supportive of this bill, but we are looking at possible amendments and a strong emphasis on public hearings. I heard from a speaker earlier today that we will have those. The bill's efforts toward permanency and planning seem relatively sound to us, but we have heard, as more and more people are reading about the bill, that stakeholders have concerns about the narrowness of the bill and the exclusivity of the consultation process to date. I'm therefore glad to hear that the government is planning on having public hearings.

As I pointed out already, this is really all about children, and whatever we do should be what's best for the children. We all know that children in care deserve safe and stable family arrangements, and this bill is a good first step toward broadening the range of options for children in care. Minister, the new Minister of Children and Youth Services, you've got to remember that the Ombudsman has called your ministry the "ministry of I don't know." I know that you're in there to make changes and that you need a bigger budget and that you want to be able to stand up and say you have that budget, you have the accountability and you have the authority to be accountable in this and in other regards when it comes to

children. We need a super-children's ministry that not only deals with these particular issues but that is there to stand up for children from every aspect we can think of: from environmental health issues to health issues to these kinds of issues we're talking about today. We need a very strong children's ministry to do that. I'm hoping that with a new minister in place, we're going to see changes and we're actually going to see a very beefed-up, very strong children's ministry. I'll be the first one to do anything I can to help her achieve that, as I'm sure anybody here would. We all agree that we need a strong advocacy ministry for children.

We do know, Minister, that several children's aid societies are in deficit positions. Children's aid societies absolutely have to be sustainable and accountable so they can be there for the children who need them. Ontario does need to do so much more to provide the resources necessary to implement the bill. I know that's always an issue when coming forward with new initiatives in new bills; there's always the resource issue: Where do you find it around that cabinet table? Where do you get the allocation of resources you need to ensure that your new legislation is as effective as I'm sure the minister wants it to be? Again, if the minister needs any help from us on this side to push for that so she can sit around the cabinet table and say, "Look, they're beating up on me here because I don't have enough resources to implement this properly," we'll be there to help her do that. She can hold me accountable to that—that is, if I'm still here in this place, given what is going on in Ottawa these days. I've got a double role here.

But I wanted to be here to speak to this bill today. As you know, I'm here every day doing my job, and in my community, frequently, just running back and forth between ridings. Of course the great divide of Coxwell Avenue—it's not like I have to run very far. Fortunately, Michael and I share many issues in the east end anyway. But I wanted to be here to speak to this issue—I don't know how much longer I'm going to be here—because it is so vitally important to me, as to all of us. I wanted to put in my two cents' worth and my analysis of the bill and what needs to be done. We know that there's a chance for amendments, and that's a good thing. It does not do enough to ensure a fair complaints process for children in care, their family and caregivers. We've heard that from others.

I know that your ministry has promised action to correct this measure, and that's a good thing. We understand that the alternative dispute resolution must be used very carefully and that the ministry must ensure checks and balances in this process.

The review of the Child and Family Services Act is a very good first step. But as I said earlier in my comments, it focuses on only one aspect of child welfare; it should focus on others as well. This is what I'm hoping the minister will do, and this is why I'm concerned.

I know; I've been a minister and I understand. I learned the hard way that when you open up a piece of legislation to make changes, the tide comes: Everybody

who wants changes wants them to happen while a bill is opened up because it's so hard within the legislative agenda, a government agenda, to get legislation before the House. You have to line up sometimes.

When you do open up a bill, it is really important to get as many changes as are appropriate and necessary done at that time. Who knows when you're going to have the opportunity to do that again? My colleagues and others have been talking about things like children and special needs who are inappropriately placed in CAS care, and children who age out; we hear a lot about that, and I don't have time to go into it, but they age out of care. They get to be over 18, and then they don't have adequate support. The ministry's own report from their review of the Child and Family Services Act did have comments on a wide range of issues which it immediately deemed outside the scope of their review, but those are very important issues that people have been raising for some time and that we simply must address.

I'm also going to talk about First Nations communities. You will hear this, and I know you heard it from others, from the NDP caucus. First Nations communities are particularly concerned about the lack of consultation on this bill. They're also concerned about the ability of the ministry to make changes affecting their children by regulation instead of legislation. This is a long-standing concern and issue with First Nations, Minister, as I'm sure you are aware. Again, I understand that you are meeting with them, if you have not done so, next Tuesday, and we all appreciate that.

You know that they have many concerns about the lack of consultation, what they would like to see and what their needs are when it comes to their rights as First Nations: sovereignty and self-determination in terms of child welfare. I want to say again that First Nations, like the rest of us, want to ensure that whatever is put in place is the best for the children of their communities. I'm sure they can come up with and present the minister with some very good ideas of what can be done to improve the scope of this bill so that their concerns are dealt with.

In closing, I just want to say that there are many issues that the member for Beaches—East York will go into that I didn't. He has a particular focus. He will bring them up again. I know that the bill was warmly received by CAS agencies and adoption groups and that CAS agencies had a great deal of input into the bill. But as more and more people looked at it and got a sense of the scope of the bill, we started to hear that they needed to be consulted more, that they wanted public hearings and that they want us or the government, all of us, to put forward some amendments to strengthen this bill that we all support, that we want to see go forward. We all want to make sure that the bill is the very best it can be to protect our vulnerable children in this province.

1700

The Acting Speaker: We have more time for questions and comments. The Chair recognizes the minister.

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: I'd like to comment on a couple of things that have been said, but first I should say

that it really is heartwarming how much support we have in this House for the protection of our kids.

I'd like to just reinforce a couple of points that I made in my remarks a couple of days ago. This is with regard to more flexible adoptions:

"Under our proposed new system, the children's aid society will have options to place that child with a suitable"—I emphasize "suitable"—"member of their extended family...."

"The adoption process includes an assessment of a parent's strengths and needs, as well as criminal reference checks...."

"The process must always start with a rigorous safety and risk assessment for all children.... Through Bill 210 and the regulations that will follow, we will strengthen the client complaint mechanism to provide a higher standard of accountability. I would also like to point out that even as Bill 210 is moving through the legislative process, I have asked my ministry to immediately develop a regulation to address situations where a child may be placed with extended family or a community member. The completion of an appropriate assessment, including background checks, is a critical safeguard in such situations."

I'd also like to make it known to everyone that we have, in fact, removed the age restriction on the autism file. That restriction does not exist, so please make sure that your constituents, those who have come to your door, and your family and friends know that age restriction does not exist.

Mr. Chudleigh: I would comment on the minister's comments that she's pleased to see all the support in the House. Let me remind the minister that this is second reading of this bill, the reading in principle, and I think everybody in the House would agree with the principles of this bill. However, we do have some serious concerns about the lack of detail of the overall plan and how it may protect the vulnerable children in Ontario to provide them with a better life. We would hope to see in the hearings that some of these details will become apparent and that we will have a warmer feeling toward how the bill will actually operate. That will give us the ability to support this bill at third reading as well, when it is read into the record and becomes the law of this land. That's the way this system works. Support on second reading doesn't necessarily mean that that will carry over into the next area.

We do have those concerns. There are a tremendous number of children who are currently under the care of a children's aid society, and it would be necessary for those children to be protected. That protection system, of course, should be—we all hope would be—much, much better than the protection system that these children enjoy today. All too many of them fall through the cracks, not only as Jeffrey did but in less severe ways as well, equally imprinting on their young lives, so that when they grow up, they have those scars. Hopefully, the regulations of this bill, when they are put out, will answer many of those questions.

Mr. Prue: I listened intently again to my colleague from Toronto—Danforth and what she had to say. She spoke passionately and well. She praised the government. You won't always hear that in this Legislature, but we in the New Democratic Party think that this legislation is long overdue. It's good legislation. It certainly is being supported by the children's aid societies.

The whole issue of crown ward adoption is one that must be visited, and visited very quickly. If I get a chance to speak to this, I will be elaborating on this, but I did serve for many years on the Children's Aid Society of Toronto when I was the mayor of East York and later as a mega-city councillor. I see Mr. Bruce Rivers here watching everything that I'm saying. He is a great man and it was a great organization, and I know that what is being recommended here is the right thing.

Having said that, I listened to my colleague and I also listened to the minister and it troubles me—and I'm sorry to digress, but she did talk about the autism file. She said children after the age of six are going to be able to continue in the service, and I welcome that, but at what cost? The cost, it appears, is that children who are under the age of six may never get the treatment. That is, I think, the hard dilemma we are seeing in a government that promised to end the age discrimination and also promised to put in additional resources.

There are people in my riding who quite literally have children who have not, up to the age of five, seen any government service whatsoever. They're having to do fundraising, they're having to go to friends and neighbours, they're having to put their homes under mortgage, and it simply is not right. Granted, something is being done or may potentially be done for those over six, but we need to help each and every autistic child.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): I'm pleased to provide just a couple of minutes of comments with respect to Bill 210, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act. I'm interested in the aspects that relate to the acknowledgement of the role that relatives, and particularly grandparents, can play with family members who need protection or support.

It probably wasn't all that many years ago, in relative terms, that grandparents and extended family were the primary resource available for children who found themselves in need, as a result of parents not being available or, in many cases, young parents who weren't in a position to take care of children. I know in my own particular extended family and more lengthy family history, grandparents and great-grandparents took on the obligation to provide a nurturing and supportive extended family environment for cousins as a result of the marital situations in those families. It's a history that I've had the opportunity to carry with me over a long period of time and watch those children grow to adults and raise their own families.

The capacity to encourage, support and provide windows of opportunity, for grandparents in particular or extended family members, to engage effectively in the care of young people in our community so that it's not

strangers, in essence, who are providing the primary care at the beginning is a very important part of what we should be trying to achieve. This legislation, in part, helps to achieve that. It's certainly not the only thing incorporated into this particular piece of legislation, but I think it's a critically important part. You need only ask any grandparent in Ontario, for the most part, about their feelings for their grandchildren and their willingness to provide support on an as-required or as-desired basis.

The Acting Speaker: It's time for the oral response.

Ms. Churley: I do want to thank the minister and the members for Halton, Beaches–East York and Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge for their comments. I think all the comments were certainly pertinent to this bill. I was glad to hear what the minister had to say about some changes made. There's some focus on a need for further help for children with autism. That keeps coming up time and time again, for good reason, because a promise was made by the government and that was a promise broken.

As the minister brought up and as the member for Beaches–East York said, because of the court cases, children over the age of six can now get some support, but the issue is, will there be enough money to give the support needed to children under six. I think we would all agree that at the end of the day it's not just to the benefit of these children and their families, but it's to the benefit of society as a whole to help these children when they're really young, because the evidence is there that they grow up, in most cases, as stable members of society and can operate—again, not in all cases, but in most cases—in a normal fashion. That ultimately costs society less economically as well. That is something we will continue to talk about.

This is a second reading bill—quite true. We'll be watching to see that some of the amendments we've talked about and will be talking further about will be included and that the consultation happens. If that happens and the minister is really committed to having all-party support for this—that's where we all want to end up; no question about it—we will see this bill pass with flying colours in this House to the benefit of the children of this province.

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The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton–Kent–Middlesex): Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Etobicoke North.

I feel really privileged to speak in favour of this bill. This bill is about children. We often hear the phrase, "It takes a village to raise a child." I think that is very true of all of us. We understand that we have a collective responsibility for taking care of our children. This bill is going to make sure that more crown wards and children who are in the care of children's aid are going to find permanence in their lives, and find a permanent home. It's going to create more flexibility for adoption. It's going to give us more options for that permanence. It's going to make the children's aid society more accountable and

sustainable, and it's going to remove some of the barriers we currently have for adoption.

One of the things that hasn't been spoken about very much, but is something that should be added to the conversation, is the fact that this bill allows foster parents to become legal guardians, which gives them legal and permanent custody of children they have charge over. We all know that many families get very attached to their foster children. I know that in my own constituency I have many families who are foster parents who take on that special role. It takes a special person to do that kind of work; that's not easy. Most of these children come with problems and issues, and these families help them to work through that so they become productive members of society. It's very important that we do that.

We want to make sure that the legislation and the processes we have take into account the viewpoints of the children. We don't want to penalize these children because of things that have happened that are beyond their control. We want to make sure these children have every opportunity to be happy, so we need to make sure that all reforms we propose take those things into consideration.

When a child is taken from their family, be it a bad family or not, they are very vulnerable. This is a very high-risk time for these children. They are probably more at risk than ever before because they feel isolated. Even though the move is in their better interests, we know these children cling to their parents because that is the life and the people they know, regardless of what's happened in their situation. We want to make sure these children are protected and safe.

We talk about the issue of reporting. We know that people are legally required to report abuse. We talked about that earlier in this debate. But we also know that a lot of people are very reluctant to do that. People feel they should mind their own business. We still have that in our society. People still continue to ignore what goes on behind closed doors. People are worried about being wrong when they make an accusation. They're worried about having children mistakenly taken out of a situation. Sometimes the person who is the most aware of these situations is a member of the extended family, and they are particularly reluctant to take the children out of the situation because they know that, in doing that, they may lose contact with those children. So sometimes they try to keep the children in the family, try to influence them because of the fear of that loss. This bill will make sure that family does not lose that contact, that they are able to actually be permanent parts of that child's life and be able to remove them from that situation.

As a grandparent, and I've talked to other grandparents, this is a great fear because many grandparents want to keep their grandchildren with them. Sometimes it happens that your child is not the best parent or they've married into a situation or are in a partnership that isn't a good partnership. The grandparents are afraid they will lose those grandchildren if they do anything to report what's going on, so they cling, in a desperate effort to keep their grandchildren near them, and they try to

influence what's going on in the family. But that doesn't always work.

One of the things in Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and that I've heard about many times is the aboriginal situation. I have many First Nations bands in my riding. I've had many conversations with the chiefs and the band council members about the placement of aboriginal children in non-aboriginal foster homes. This bill addresses that situation. Our First Nations people are very concerned about children being moved away from their communities, away from their culture, away from their traditions and away from the family members who are around them. We need to build the capacity within our First Nations bands and communities that will allow those children to continue to stay in those communities, even when they've been removed from their home situations. First Nations bands want more ownership over providing for the safety and protection of aboriginal children.

The minister talked yesterday about some of the facts we see in this situation. Currently, as the minister reported, we have 9,000 children in permanent care of children's aid who are crown wards. On average, these children move every 22 months. That means they don't even stay two years in a situation. When they move, these children have to make new friends again, they very often change schools, they have new rules and new expectations, and all that instability affects their self-esteem and confidence. It also has a really negative effect on their ability to develop long-term relationships with people. I think most of us would recognize that and understand that when you move from family to family, after a while you become afraid to make attachments. You don't want to make attachments because you're afraid you will lose them, too, so you start to distance yourself in these situations. These children, as they grow into adulthood, carry that with them and have difficulty making long-term connections and relationships in adult life as well.

Currently, a child must sever all family connections before they can be adopted. This means that parents who know that what they are providing for their children isn't the best may still be reluctant to give that child up for adoption, even though they know adoption would be best for their child. They love their children, but in many cases there are situations where they sometimes simply cannot provide for their children, and they know that as well. But if giving their child up for adoption means they lose complete contact with that child, they don't want to do it. Under this bill, we will be able to allow children to be adopted into a permanent situation and still have contact with their families. That is a very important thing for these children.

Not all children, as was pointed out by the member for Toronto–Danforth, should necessarily go to family members. We all understand that, in the situation she spoke about, that was the wrong thing to happen to young Jeffrey. I certainly share the horror with her. When we hear these stories, I don't think any of us ever get over that kind of thing, ever become totally jaded or desensitized to what happens to children in those situations. We

want to make sure that children go into a family situation that is safe and protects them.

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But I also feel that children should be able to go and be adopted into their extended family. Their extended family brings with them the culture that they grew up in, and there are many. We are a very diversified country, a very diversified province. There are many people who have cultures that they want to share with their children, and those children have a right to learn and understand and be a part of that. So allowing children to be adopted within extended families means that they will be able to keep those things for themselves, and it's very important for those children to be able to keep their family ties and their ties to their community.

I feel that this is a very good bill. We want to make sure that these children are protected, and I think this bill goes a lot further than we had in the past in making sure that children have the kind of home situation that will build for them a kind of society that they will be proud to be a part of.

I will give this over to the member for Etobicoke North.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): It's a privilege, first of all, to follow my colleague from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex on this particular bill, the Child and Family Services Statute Law Amendment Act.

With your indulgence, if I might, before beginning on this particular topic, I'd like to send a tele-hello to my own children, who are watching right now: Shamsa, aged six, and little Shafiq, aged four. Of course, I love you, and hopefully I'm going to be holding you in my arms very soon.

It's that same kind of love and effort, of nurturing and hopefully being there for them in all their times of need, that same spirit, that I think we in this government are embodying in this particular bill.

I'd like, again with your permission, to quote from one of the great child advocates in recent memory: a lawyer trained at Yale, a former First Lady, and now a senator in New York. I refer, of course, to Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, who wrote in her book *Living History*: "When I returned to Yale for my second year in the fall of 1970, I decided to concentrate on how the law affected children. Historically, children's rights and needs were covered in family law," and usually defined by whatever their parents or the society demanded.

She goes on to talk about how she learned more about child development through a course of study at the Yale Child Study Center. She even co-authored a book called *Beyond the Best Interests of the Child*—a book that was authored, by the way, in co-operation with Anna Freud, Sigmund Freud's daughter. She writes: "I also began consulting with the medical staff at Yale-New Haven Hospital about"—and this is the point to acknowledge—"the newly acknowledged problem of child abuse," just entering the consciousness of the nation. That was only 1970.

She talks as well, for example, about a case that she had published under “Children Under the Law” in the Harvard Educational Review of difficulties that we in Ontario are experiencing even to this day, and that is some of the problems that individuals who would like to adopt children who are in the care of children’s aid societies come up against. That’s why we’re moving in this government, as part of this bill, to simplify the adoption process.

Par exemple, pour simplifier l’adoption pour les parents: à l’heure actuelle, les parents qui veulent adopter un enfant provenant de l’une des sociétés d’aide à l’enfance de l’Ontario font souvent face à de longues listes d’attente et à des modalités de demande qui ne sont pas uniformes. Ces dernières comportent une évaluation professionnelle des points forts et des besoins du père ou de la mère. Le gouvernement modifie les modalités de demande pour que les parents potentiels n’aient pas à subir des réévaluations successives, et afin que ces modalités soient uniformes, tant pour les adoptions d’enfants pris en charge par le gouvernement que pour les adoptions privées partout en Ontario. Pour donner aux familles qui adoptent un enfant par l’intermédiaire d’une société d’aide à l’enfance le soutien dont elles ont besoin, les sociétés seront en mesure d’aider davantage des familles dans le besoin grâce à des programmes et des services.

Part of what this bill is exemplifying is the underlying philosophy of trying to expedite not only the children’s aid society in the noble work that they do, but also to change some of the red tape of the legal framework aspects, whether it’s what I’ve just referred to, the flexible adoptions leading to things like in-family adoptions, as well as changing some of the legal framework that is out there. This is part of the vision that the government of Ontario has for children and youth: health, hope and opportunity, hoping to ensure that our children and youth reach their full potential.

As has been mentioned, as we speak, more than 9,000 children are crown awards, essentially the responsibility of the province. These individuals deserve our expedited care, attention and initiative, that they may find permanent homes in which they may thrive, be permanently nurtured and receive the mutual support of not only the government but their environment and, of course, families.

Part of this is, as I’ve mentioned, referring to the adoption bottlenecks; unfortunately, they exist. For example, since 1994 there has been a 185% increase in the number of investigations conducted by children’s aid societies. Unfortunately, as is quite evident even in the press today, still to this day there are a number of individuals, unfortunate children, who are exposed to both child abuse and neglect, be it physical, verbal, mental or sexual. This is why it is time for us in Ontario to move forward.

I can tell you that in my capacity as a physician before coming to this chamber, I would from time to time come across individuals and families where for various reasons—whether the caregivers themselves were physically

or mentally challenged, or there might have been even a cultural misunderstanding, in that certain forms of discipline which perhaps would have been more acceptable or current in the “old country” don’t really wash once you’re in Ontario. Whatever the particular scenario, I as a family doctor would still come across cases from the children’s aid society.

Without naming names and without even really citing an age, I remember one young individual, a little girl, who initially came to my attention because she really wasn’t receiving appropriate medical care. Family members would have to intervene; neighbours would have to intervene; eventually the children’s aid society was called. This child was removed from the custody of her own parents and, unfortunately, like so many other children who come to the attention the children’s aid society, essentially was shuffled from one home to another, to a group setting, to an individual setting and back and forth.

Meanwhile, part of the reason the government of Ontario, under the McGuinty vision, set up the entire new Ministry of Children and Youth Services is that we know very well that these formative years, basically zero to 10, have lifelong effects, whether it’s on mere physical development and intellectual development or self-confidence and self-esteem. It was at precisely this time that the particular young adolescent suffered the most in all those categories just mentioned: self-confidence, self-esteem, physical, intellectual and emotional maturation. It’s why we in this government need to take examples such as this, examples of individual cases, and broaden our initiatives, whether it’s through the various legal manipulations—because one must always appease the legal gods—whether it’s implementing philosophy on a widespread scale of flexible adoptions, helping the children’s aid societies to do their noble work, empowering them financially and resourcing them fully. There are, as you’ll appreciate, something like 52 children’s aid societies doing very noble work across Ontario.

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Ultimately, what is the government after? It’s after a thriving, nurturing and, if possible, permanent mutually supportive environment, not only for the children, but for society at large. Because only in that capacity, only in that method, only in that accessing of all these various points, will we as a government really be able to fulfill our duties to the children of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Time for questions and comments.

Mr. Chudleigh: One of the things that concerns us, of course, is how these processes are going to work. You hear the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex talking about parents who can’t provide for their children. Of course, there’s limited time for debate, and I know you didn’t have as much time as you wanted. I’m wondering, if you can’t provide for your children, what you do mean by “provide”? Is providing making sure they have the latest video games or the latest-fashion clothing? In my experience, the things that parents have to provide to

their children are love and self-worth, and those two things come free.

If you are considering taking a child from a parent and allowing them to be adopted under some system that allows that parent contact, but involves other people in that family relationship, I think you have to do so with a great deal of caution. Of course, the most important thing is the child and their development. But the other person is the birth mother, and I think you have to be very careful how you handle that birth mother, somebody who is perhaps already under stress, perhaps already in crisis. This process could destroy her completely. I think that has to be very carefully considered.

Those are some of the things that we don't see in this bill, as to how those things are going to be handled. It's fine to say, "It's going to be handled by professionals in the children's aid society," but there are untold numbers of stories about the children's aid society and how they've messed up in serious cases. I don't think that we'd want to expand on those number of cases.

Mr. Prue: I listened intently to the members for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and Etobicoke North, and I think what they had to say was particularly poignant and relevant to the debate here today. I commend them both.

The member for Etobicoke North talked about this being a very complex issue and the need to get it all right. I just want to expand on that, because he is right. We have to take, on occasion, a child from an abusive situation, whether that abusive situation is a parent who is drug- or alcohol-dependent, or sexually or physically abusive to the child. It is found out and society, the government and the agency have to move in to protect the child. That's what it's all about. Now, I don't think that anyone does that lightly. I don't think that anyone does that without considering the ramifications to the child, especially because even when you are taking a child from an abusive situation, it is still traumatic for the child. You are still taking him or her from the only parent they know, from the only lifestyle they know, from the home they know, from the friends they have at school, from the school they may be attending. You are literally yanking them away from what they know and putting them in uncertainty. We have to make sure that we do it right.

As I said earlier in my comments, I was on the Children's Aid Society of Toronto for a number of years and saw a number of very, very sad cases. But I also saw people who were dedicated and who worked; I saw a society that, if anything, needed more money. I saw people who were just trying their very best. I met foster parents who did the very best they could in the circumstance. We need to make sure that we get this right, that we deal not only with the crown wardship but all the other aspects so that any child who is taken from his or her parent or parents is well treated and is treated the best we can.

Mr. Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): It's a pleasure to stand as a parent and rise to this bill and to this situation. I must first of all compliment the fine, fine

speeches from the members for Etobicoke North and Lambton–Kent–Middlesex.

For all of us, it is a come-down to think that we have to institutionalize what the member for Etobicoke North calls so beautifully the environment we want for our children: a thriving, nurturing, permanent environment. To think that we, as parents, would fail and have to institutionalize that is a tough adjustment, and it's a philosophical adjustment in the classical sense of personal rights versus government rights and how we best build a society. It is the humility of mankind that we have to admit, as people, we fail and institutions collectively can come together and perhaps do it better than we can as individuals. It's not an easy thing for any of us to come to that conclusion, especially those who love their children as much as, obviously, members of this House do. But the excellence of us building a society is in the excellence of the way we come together to improve upon what we can't do as individuals. That, to me, is the essence of government. It's the essence of good government and it's the essence of what this bill is about.

I wish there was no need for this bill, but there is a huge need for this bill, when you see children starved to death on the front pages of our newspapers. We need protection for children because there are bad parents and there are people who don't conceive of a concept of bad parenting and don't think of it the way many of us take for granted.

I came from a very nurturing family, so for me it is hard to admit that we cannot do this other than as a collective.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I rise today to make comment on Bill 210 and on the comments from the members for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and Etobicoke North. I think we're all in agreement in the Legislature that to protect children is the most important thing.

The bill's aim is to increase the protection of children and to—I guess there are 9,000 children in permanent care of the children's aid society, which is very high. I have been very shocked, when I've met with the CAS in my riding of Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, to hear the stories and to hear their recommendations of things we can do to improve the laws.

The legislation here is good, we're supportive of it, but we don't have all the details, as mentioned before by my colleague. With children's aid societies carrying \$70 million in deficits, their boards are cash-flowing to keep their employees salaried and in place for child protection in our province. The bill doesn't address that. We're hopeful that in regulations some more money will be put in, but the devil is in the details, and the need to protect children is utmost. With these changes is the framework—and hopefully with the children's aid's support that they're giving us—and the guidance, and they will give the government further guidance on the exact details that need to be implemented.

The legislation also proposes more extensive use of mediation instead of courts in child protection matters.

So I think that for children's services we need to evolve. There are a lot of alternatives out there today, and I'm happy to see that the government is listening to the children's aid society, bringing this bill forward. I think we can be innovative, and we need to be, because we need to protect our children. There are a lot of good groups in our communities, so I think that if we can work and hopefully have regulations that are going to help the children's aid society with this, we'll all be better communities for it.

1740

The Acting Speaker: It's time for oral response.

Mrs. Van Bommel: I want to thank, first of all, the member for Etobicoke North for sharing his time with me, and the members for Halton, Beaches—East York, Mississauga South and Haliburton—Victoria—Brock for their comments.

I want to go back to the member for Halton and his comments about what we are trying to do for our children. I absolutely agree that, as parents, the best thing we can do for our children, and as grandparents, the best thing we can do for our grandchildren, is provide love. That is the thing children look for the most and why they have such difficulty leaving even a bad situation, because they, in turn, still love their parents and grandparents.

We say, "What happens to people and why do they do this?" I'm thinking of one particular situation where a mother had mental health problems. She suffered from severe depression and was violent during those stages, so to help her children, she would lock them in a closet to protect them. That was her way of protecting her children. She finally came to the realization that she needed to let her children go, because she couldn't protect them the way she needed to. That's what she had to do. So she gave the care of her children over to children's aid. I think she did the right thing, but she wanted to keep that contact with her children.

In this situation, where we allow parents and extended family to keep in contact with their children yet still give them permission to let their children be adopted into loving families, I think is an important aspect of this bill. I thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to this.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener—Waterloo): I'm certainly pleased to join the debate on Bill 210, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act and make complementary amendments to other Acts.

In listening to the presentations that have been made by my colleagues on all sides of this House, there is absolutely no doubt in my mind that everybody is extremely committed in wanting to ensure that the children who live in Ontario are protected and have the opportunity to live in a secure environment, in a home with a loving family. If you take a look at this bill, the purpose of this bill is to do exactly that.

I was very surprised—and I've heard some of my other colleagues comment as well—that at the present time there are 9,000 children in the permanent care of

children's aid societies throughout Ontario. We know as well that today, a child who is under CAS care in a foster home must completely sever all their ties to their birth family before being eligible for adoption. That means as well that 70% of children in permanent care can't be adopted because their birth family has a court-ordered right to contact them. The good thing is, this new funding framework, which I certainly support, will put greater emphasis on making sure that children have the opportunity for adoption, while at the same time being able to maintain their current relationship with their family. I think that's good news.

I think we've heard it said a few times this afternoon already that children, when they are born into a family and raised by parents who sometimes are abusive or have alcohol or drug problems—no matter what happens, those children love those parents, and there is usually no place those children would rather be than with that mother and that father—the only mother and father they have ever known. However, as we know, it becomes imperative at times that when these situations arise, for the protection and safety of children, they are removed from the home by the children's aid society, or parents, as we just heard, voluntarily relinquish their children to the protection and custody of children's aid because they recognize that they are not able to provide the secure, safe environment for their children that they know is needed.

It's unfortunate that these types of situations arise in the first place. That was one of the reasons our government introduced the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children bill when we were in office. It was a bill that was intended, and continues to this day, to do an analysis—to screen, in other words—all newborns in Ontario. The reason you would do this is to determine if some children who are born in this province might be at risk. That risk might well be the fact that the parents—mother, father—might be known to be abusive. Perhaps there were drug or alcohol problems. Perhaps there were other problems within that home that would put that child at some risk. It was intended that that child would be screened if a risk was identified. There would be support from a nurse, to support that child and family. There would be layworkers who would work with those babies and mothers and fathers until they went to kindergarten. Of course, what you're trying to do there is to make sure that parents become better parents and that the family can continue to function as a family.

We need to recognize that today in this province there are people who become mothers or fathers who, because of their own situation, because of their own families, don't know how to parent. There are a lot of moms and dads who don't know how to parent. They had no role model themselves. It's not something you just pick up.

When we set up this Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program, I can remember going to places where we were working with mothers in particular, teaching them that what they needed to do with these newborn babies was to rock them, sing to them and play with them. We take for

granted that everybody in Ontario would automatically know that, as a parent, that is what you do. You cuddle them, you hug them, you kiss them, you play with them, you read to them, you try to stimulate them. That's not the case. So that program was intended to help parents develop parenting skills. However, obviously not every child is identified to be at risk at birth. There are situations that require children to be put in the permanent care and custody of the children's aid society, and this bill is intended to deal with that.

I would agree with one colleague who today indicated that this bill is going to give foster parents the opportunity to adopt the children they have in their care. I have certainly seen many foster parents who devoted tremendous hours, months, years, to the lives of children, helping children who have been placed in their homes develop into well-rounded individuals who can go on and achieve success, whether it's academically or socially. I think it's tremendous that these people are now going to be given the opportunity to adopt these children with whom they have formed some very strong bonds of family. I think that's really important.

In fact, I think of one family in my community—my community being Waterloo region, where we have many foster parents who do an outstanding job in providing stimulating, safe, secure and loving homes for children. But I think of one family, and I don't know that the mother and father have had a break for a long time, because they accept into their home many children who are developmentally handicapped, who have severe problems. They are there night and day for those children. Sometimes the only break they get is when one of their older birth children returns to that home to provide a little bit of time for the parents, on occasion, to go out and see a movie or go to dinner.

1750

We're very fortunate in this province to have so many foster parents who are willing to support these children that go into the care of children's aid. If any of them are watching, and I know that all of my colleagues here would agree, I just want to say a sincere thank you to those dedicated individuals who do so much for those children.

We have a bill here that I believe is determined to do the right thing for children in this province who are in need of support. This bill also proposes more extensive use of mediation instead of the courts in child protection matters. They're going to use alternative dispute resolution methods before and during court proceedings.

When I take a look at this bill, on the surface I would support it. The only thing that I have some questions about is that all the detail is not here in this bill. I think this is an issue of such significance and such importance that it is extremely important that this bill go out for public consultation. We need to hear from people who have had first-hand experience. It may well be families, it may be people who are social workers or it may be people who have been involved in courts, but it's extremely important that this bill go out for very extensive consul-

tation because, obviously, if we don't get this bill right, it is going to have an impact on the children we are here to protect. We need to do what we can.

This bill is going to ensure that the adoption process is going to be accelerated, and that's important. I've been a secondary school teacher, and I've run into children who have gone from foster home to foster home and back to their birth family. These children have absolutely no roots, and they do look for roots. It's important that we provide that type of support for those children, that they have an opportunity to live in a loving home, to have roots but, if desired, they could continue to have a relationship with their birth family as well. This is what people are requesting.

There was an article in the paper, and I don't know if I can find it right now, but it was about a child who had been placed in a permanent home after moving from home to home. The difference it made to his life to finally know that he had a mother and father, and that he had his own room, his own friends and his own neighbourhood: He was able to interact with the brothers and the sisters that he now had, and there wasn't the fear that, at some point in time, he was going to be removed from that home and placed into perhaps another foster home or be returned to his birth mother, in this instance, who, despite her best efforts and desire to provide for her child, simply was not in a position to do so.

I met another young woman who stayed her whole life in the permanent care of child and family services, and she went on to get a university degree. Again, these children succeed despite many of the problems they have.

I want to just mention briefly that there has been a lot of progress made over the last number of years in trying to help children. We know that there are children who are abused. When our government was in office, we considered what had happened and we made some very significant changes to legislation, to the Child and Family Services Act, before this bill. I don't know if you remember, but we introduced an act, and the changes to the Child and Family Services Act were proclaimed on March 31, 2000.

The changes we introduced at that time really were no different from what we are trying to do right now. We are trying to promote the best interests, the protection and the well-being of children. In that instance, our changes expanded the reasons for finding a child in need of protection. For instance, the word "neglect" was specifically included and the threshold for risk of physical and emotional harm to children was lowered. That has resulted, in the years since 2000, in earlier action being taken to protect some of the children who were at risk.

These changes also allowed evidence of a parent's past conduct toward children to be used in child protection court proceedings. That is extremely important, that you be aware of what has happened in the case of how the parents have behaved with the children in the past.

Our changes at that time also clarified the duty of professions and the public to report that a child is or may

be in need of protection. That has encouraged more reporting of suspected abuse and neglect. I think that was one change that was extremely well supported, and we have certainly seen that it has been in the favour of children.

Our changes also made it easier for children's aid societies to get the information they need if they are going to protect our children. Our changes promoted earlier and more decisive planning for children's futures, so that permanent arrangements for children could be achieved as soon as possible, and that's what this bill today is trying to do as well.

It also ensured that access by relatives or other individuals to children who have been made crown wards is granted only if it is beneficial to the child, and provided for a mandatory review of the Child and Family Services Act at least every five years.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): I beg to inform the House that, in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to a certain bill in his office.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Todd Decker): The following is the title of the bill to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 183, An Act respecting the disclosure of information and records to adopted persons and birth parents /
Projet de loi 183, Loi traitant de la divulgation de renseignements et de dossiers aux personnes adoptées et à leurs pères ou mères de sang.

The Acting Speaker: It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday, November 14, at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 1758.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers
Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
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Simcoe–Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
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St. Paul's	Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L) Attorney General / procureur général		
Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)		

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

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

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