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Tuesday 14 February 2006

Mardi 14 février 2006

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 14 February 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 14 février 2006

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FEDERAL MPS FROM DURHAM

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): It is indeed my pleasure to stand in this Legislature and recognize and congratulate our new Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen Harper. I also want to recognize two members from the region of Durham who are now MPs and appointed to the cabinet of Stephen Harper. Our colleague Jim Flaherty was elected in the federal riding of Whitby–Oshawa and is now Canada's new finance minister. I am confident it will help to have a former Ontario MPP and former Ontario finance minister in this portfolio, especially as Ontario pursues the challenges of fair federal funding for the provinces, the fiscal gap.

Also in my own riding my federal counterpart, Bev Oda, was re-elected last month with an overwhelming majority. She was most recently named Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women. I congratulate Bev personally for her commitment. I know she will do very well.

Durham region is proud of the fact that two of our federal MPs have been named to cabinet. The ministers will also be strong advocates for not just Durham and the GTA but all of Ontario, I'm sure. On behalf of the citizens of Durham and the region as a whole, I'd like to congratulate and extend our best wishes to Bev Oda and Jim Flaherty.

I would also like to mention the great work that I expect from all members of the federal Legislature and the cabinet, who are ably represented not just by those two but by John Baird as well.

ELAINE VOLLETT

Mr. Tony C. Wong (Markham): I rise in the House to congratulate one of Markham's outstanding residents, Elaine Vollett, for being one of only 38 Ontarians to have received the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship this past Tuesday from our Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable James K. Bartleman.

Elaine's dedication to the public good along with her selfless and generous nature serve as a shining example to us all.

As a mother to an adult with special needs, Elaine was faced with the unfortunate reality that once school ended

for her son, so did his dreams. This led Elaine to start the Centre for DREAMS to give adults with special needs the opportunity to experience life through skills development. These skills include learning basic reading skills, how to use the public transit system and managing personal finances, to name just a few.

DREAMS stands for developing relationships with exceptional adults in modern society. Since its founding in September 1990, Elaine and her DREAMS team have created a safe, positive and welcoming environment for young adults with special needs.

DREAMS won the Award of Merit from the Markham Board of Trade in 2005, and in that same year the town of Markham named October the Month of Dreams in honour of the organization and its hero, Elaine.

Please join me in congratulating a good citizen, a dream-maker, an innovator, a mother, an educator and a hero of mine, Elaine Vollett.

Again, congratulations, Elaine. Ontario needs more people like you.

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Last Friday, February 10, I had the pleasure and the educational opportunity to visit and tour the Ontario sex offender registry at the OPP general headquarters in Orillia. I was pleased that our new MP for Simcoe North, Bruce Stanton, and the federal Minister of Health, the Honourable Tony Clement, MP for Parry Sound–Muskoka, were able to join me as well.

I would like to thank a number of individuals for their time and effort in making the tour possible: Deputy Commissioner Maurice Pilon, Detective Staff Sergeant Terry Nicholls, Detective Sergeant Jim Mascola, Detective Sergeant Robert Downie, Detective Superintendent Director Hugh Stevenson, and Detective Sergeant Steve Hayward.

As you are aware, the Mike Harris government initiated the Ontario sex offender registry when Christopher's Law was passed in this House in 2001. This bill was named in memory of Christopher Stephenson, who was brutally murdered by a repeat sexual predator.

The Ontario sex offender registry is considered by international experts to be a model registry. Although the Martin Liberals, under constant pressure, passed a somewhat diluted national registry in December 2004, there is much to be learned from the experience and expertise of the Ontario model. I asked my federal colleagues to

accompany me on this visit because, clearly, the more effective Ontario sex offender registry can be used to enhance community safety throughout our nation. The national sex offender registry should be an effective resource for all police services in Canada to utilize, as the Ontario sex offender registry is for all Ontario police services.

It is my intention to work with my federal colleagues to improve the national sex offender registry and, for that matter, the other provincial registries so that all Canadians can feel more protected thanks to the fine work being accomplished by the team at the Ontario sex offender registry.

LEGISLATIVE INTERNS

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): This is both the happiest time and the saddest time in an MPP's life at this time in the Legislature, because it is a time when interns will be leaving some offices to move to other offices. I want to say on behalf of our office that having Marc Peverini work in our office as an intern has been nothing but a joy. I say to whatever Liberal across the way is going to get him, you'd better treat him right, because we like him, we want to keep him, and he has done an absolutely outstanding job.

Interjection.

Mr. Bisson: It's not bad. The Liberals are toying now. I'm trying to do something nice for you, Marc, and the Liberals are giving you a hard time—something that might happen in the future.

I just say to all interns who work in the assembly that we as members appreciate the work you do in our offices. You work very hard to learn much about what happens in the MPPs' offices. You are devoted to the work that you do. You're very non-partisan and professional in how you do it.

I have to say that the experience we've had with Marc has been nothing but exemplary. To his parents, who may be watching this at some time: Job well done. You raised an excellent son who I know is going to go very far in this world because he certainly has demonstrated in the time in my office that he is both diplomatic and hard-working and, a third thing, quite a remarkable young man when it comes to his abilities.

Marc, we're going to miss you. Yes, you do have to cross over to the darker side, but then you will know, working on the darker side, why it is so important to be back with us one day and help us conquer Ontario in the next election.

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CARNAVAL DES COMPAGNONS NIPISSING WINTER CARNIVAL

M^{me} Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): J'aimerais souligner le lancement d'une activité culturelle historique dans ma circonscription de Nipissing. Il s'agit du 43^e

Carnaval des Compagnons des francs loisirs, qui se déroule du 10 au 19 février à North Bay.

I'm proud to rise today to inform the Legislature of the official opening this past weekend of the 43rd annual French carnival in my community.

Dimanche dernier, je me suis régalée de crêpes à la paroisse St-Vincent-de-Paul avant d'assister à la cérémonie d'ouverture à l'aréna Memorial Gardens en compagnie d'autres dignitaires et, bien sûr, du Bonhomme Carnaval.

Le Carnaval des Compagnons est enraciné dans nos souvenirs collectifs et dans notre vie communautaire. C'est un rassemblement de francophones et de franco-philés ainsi qu'une célébration de notre riche patrimoine canadien-français. C'est aussi une occasion pour les élèves de notre région de faire valoir leurs talents au moyen de présentations, de spectacles, de sculptures de neige et de décoration d'écoles.

Je félicite les bénévoles, le comité organisateur et le président honoraire du Carnaval, M. Marc Rancourt, des efforts considérables qu'ils déploient pour assurer le succès du Carnaval des Compagnons.

Congratulations to all the volunteers and organizers and to our honorary chair, Marc Rancourt from Ontera, for their time, their effort and their enthusiasm.

Sur ce, j'encourage les résidents de Nipissing à participer aux activités du Carnaval qui se dérouleront cette semaine, comme les festivals du livre, les spectacles musicaux, la soirée des arts, les déjeuners, les soupers traditionnels et, enfin, le dévoilement du Bonhomme Carnaval lors de la cérémonie de clôture le 19. Soyons fiers d'être Franco-Ontariens, et bon Carnaval à tous.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I speak often in the House on behalf of farmers and rural communities. I do this because agriculture affects my riding of Haliburton–Victoria–Brock greatly, but I can assure you that it impacts all Ontarians. Just ask the members of the grain and oilseeds producers of Ontario, who are here today at Queen's Park. They'll convince you that our economy needs a strong grain and oilseeds industry, and that farmers feed cities.

Agriculture is the second-largest industry in Ontario. They employ thousands, and their work spins off into the research, manufacturing and retail sectors. The Ontario grain and oilseeds producers include canola, corn, bean and soybean growers and wheat producers.

All MPPs, rural and urban, need to talk to these farmers today. You will realize that there is a crisis in this sector. For the second year they are making their voice heard at Queen's Park, at the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture in Guelph, and in Ottawa later this month. It's a shame that they have to do this yet again.

We owe these producers more than red tape and ineffective programs like CAIS. They were here last year and the government didn't listen to them. The McGuinty

government must listen to the unified voice in the Farmers Feed Cities initiative.

Our farmers work against unprofitable markets, banks repossessing equipment, and imports. They work in spite of government bureaucracy and frustrating and complicated programs, and they still sell goods at a fair price, while US competitors have huge subsidies. Two decades ago this sector had 1.4% of the provincial budget for their funding. Today they receive half of that.

Spring planting—

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

WEARING OF PINS

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would ask for unanimous consent that the members who have Farmers Feed Cities buttons could wear them today in the Legislature.

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

TRANSIT FUNDING

Mr. Bas Balkissoon (Scarborough–Rouge River): I rise in the House today to speak about the tremendous investments we are making in public transit through gas tax funding. As the member for Scarborough–Rouge River, I am very excited about the progress we have made and the difference this will make in my community.

Investing in public transit is investing in our future. It's an investment in cities. It's an investment in our economy. It means reduced commuting times. It means having more time available to do what matters most: being with your family.

The past government reduced transit funding, and transit riders in Scarborough suffered. In 1998, the Tory government went from funding 75% of public transit operating costs to funding 0%. In 2002, they started funding one third of operating costs—less than half of the original funding.

For 2005-06, more than \$120 million in gas tax funding went to the city of Toronto alone. This means more frequent service, shortened wait times, reduced congestion on buses and increased nighttime services. I've seen the results working. This allows transit riders to travel more easily and with increased convenience.

I'm pleased to acknowledge that this funding is working for Scarborough and that progress is being made. An investment in our public transit was long overdue, and this Liberal government has delivered on its promises of the gas tax.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Ms. Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia–Lambton): On November 24, 2005, the Ontario government, under Premier Dalton McGuinty, introduced Bill 36, the Local Health System Integration Act, 2005. The purpose of this

act is to implement a change that is intended to improve how our health care system is managed.

Local health integration networks are not-for-profit corporations that would be responsible to better facilitate local planning, coordinating and funding of local health services in 14 different geographical areas around this province.

This legislation represents a change to devolve from one decision-making centre for health care at Queen's Park for all of Ontario to 14 smaller decision-making entities across this province.

There is resistance to change by some groups, and they appear to be threatened by the uncertainty of change. Unfortunately, there's also a lot of misinformation being perpetuated by the groups who are resistant to LHINs. What LHINs are about is what every jurisdiction in Canada has done, which is to introduce some form of decentralization of health care, a model that Roy Romanow has been calling for for years.

TELEPERFORMANCE CANADA

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): Tomorrow will mark a new beginning—as they say in French, un nouveau commencement—in the city of Cornwall in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh. It is with great pleasure that I announce the opening of Teleperformance Canada, a company that is bringing 650 new jobs to the city.

Teleperformance, which is located just outside the city's downtown core, will, I'm sure, be the first of many companies in the near future to capitalize on the skills and dedication of Cornwall citizens. In bringing new jobs to the community, it will also be providing the means for its residents to give back to the city in terms of their economic contribution and social commitments.

Combine these new jobs with construction and spin-off work being provided by the numerous infrastructure projects—and, I must say, our hospital projects—happening in the city over the next few years, and I'd say we are looking at a new beginning for Cornwall.

The efforts of the provincial government, the municipal government and, above all, the businesses and citizens of Cornwall themselves are making this new beginning possible. There will be other difficulties ahead, I'm sure, and certainly we must continue to pursue economic and employment opportunities for the city. Still, there is a sense of hope and promise in the city, and I am proud to see it.

The last time he visited the city, the member from Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey commented on the recent job losses Cornwall has faced. Today, I would invite him to join me in congratulating the people of Cornwall and in welcoming this new business and this new beginning in the city.

WEARING OF PINS

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I wonder if there would

be unanimous consent in the chamber, as this is Heart and Stroke Month, to wear this small heart and stroke pin. There are pins available in each lobby.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Watson has asked for unanimous consent to wear the heart and stroke pin. Is it agreed? Agreed.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I beg the indulgence of the House to allow the pages to assemble for introduction.

I would like to ask all members to join me in welcoming this group of legislative pages serving in the second session of the 38th Parliament.

From Mississauga East, Yasmeen Almukamis; from Huron–Bruce, Sarah Anderson; from York West, Anindita Asaduzzaman; from Markham, Chelsi Bonair; from Erie–Lincoln, Mark Both; from Oak Ridges, Michael Bourgeois; from Ottawa South, Nicole Brouwer; from Scarborough Southwest, Hannah Dies; from Simcoe North, Sandy Edmonds; from London–Fanshawe, Ian Fogarty; from Guelph–Wellington, Jordan Guetter; from Toronto Centre–Rosedale, Samar Haouas; from Scarborough Centre, Marc Lombardo; from Oakville, Katelynne Moors; from Willowdale, Nicholas Morra; from Etobicoke North, Matthew Paolucci; from Ottawa Centre, William Pigott; from Vaughan–King–Aurora, Junaina Pirbhai; from Brampton Centre, John Raji; and from Hastings–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, Amelia Redmond.

1350

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SCHEDULE

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding the standing committee on public accounts and the standing committee on social policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Bradley is asking for unanimous consent to move a motion without notice relating to the public accounts and social policy committees. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that, notwithstanding the order of the House dated Thursday, June 17, 2004, regarding the schedule for committee meetings, the following committees be authorized to meet as follows: the standing committee on public accounts on Thursday, February 16, Thursday, February 23 and Thursday, March 2, 2006, at the call of the Chair, to no later than 6 p.m.; and the standing committee on social policy on Wednesday, February 15, 2006, between 9:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. for the purpose of considering Bill 36, An Act to

provide for the integration of the local system for the delivery of health services.

The Speaker: Mr. Bradley has moved that, notwithstanding the order of the House dated Thursday, June 17, 2004, regarding the schedule for committee meetings, the following committees be authorized to meet as follows: the standing committee on public accounts on Thursday, February 16, Thursday, February 23 and Thursday, March 2, 2006, at the call of the Chair, to no later than 6 p.m.; and the standing committee on social policy on Wednesday, February 15, 2006, between 9:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. for the purpose of considering Bill 36, An Act to provide for the integration of the local system for the delivery of health services.

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

OPPOSITION DAY MOTIONS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding opposition day motions.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Bradley has asked for unanimous consent to move a motion regarding opposition day motions. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that the opposition day provided for in the order of the House dated December 1, 2005, be scheduled for Wednesday, February 22, 2006, and that all other provisions as set out in standing order 42 shall apply.

The Speaker: Mr. Bradley has moved that the opposition day provided for in the order of the House dated December 1, 2005, be scheduled for Wednesday, February 22, 2006, and that all other provisions as set out in standing order 42 shall apply.

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

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Tuesday, February 14, 2006, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion number 59. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say “aye.”

All opposed will say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1355 to 1400.

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

Ayes

| | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Arthurs, Wayne | Gravelle, Michael | Qaadri, Shafiq |
| Balkissoon, Bas | Hardeman, Ernie | Racco, Mario G. |
| Bartolucci, Rick | Hoy, Pat | Ramal, Khalil |
| Bentley, Christopher | Jeffrey, Linda | Ramsay, David |
| Berardinetti, Lorenzo | Klees, Frank | Rinaldi, Lou |
| Bradley, James J. | Kular, Kuldip | Runciman, Robert W. |
| Broten, Laurel C. | Kwinter, Monte | Sandals, Liz |
| Brownell, Jim | Lalonde, Jean-Marc | Scott, Laurie |
| Bryant, Michael | Levac, Dave | Sergio, Mario |
| Cansfield, Donna H. | Marsales, Judy | Smith, Monique |
| Caplan, David | Mathews, Deborah | Smitherman, George |
| Chambers, Mary Anne V. | McMeekin, Ted | Sorbara, Gregory S. |
| Chudleigh, Ted | McNeely, Phil | Takhar, Harinder S. |
| Colle, Mike | Meilleur, Madeleine | Tascona, Joseph N. |
| Craitor, Kim | Miller, Norm | Tory, John |
| Crozier, Bruce | Milloy, John | Van Bommel, Maria |
| Delaney, Bob | Mossop, Jennifer F. | Watson, Jim |
| Dhillon, Vic | Munro, Julia | Wilkinson, John |
| Di Cocco, Caroline | O'Toole, John | Witmer, Elizabeth |
| Duguid, Brad | Ouellette, Jerry J. | Wong, Tony C. |
| Duncan, Dwight | Parsons, Ernie | Wynne, Kathleen O. |
| Dunlop, Garfield | Peters, Steve | Zimmer, David |
| Flynn, Kevin Daniel | Phillips, Gerry | |
| Gerretsen, John | Pupatello, Sandra | |

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

| | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Bisson, Gilles | Marchese, Rosario | Prue, Michael |
| Horwath, Andrea | Martel, Shelley | |

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 70; the nays are 5.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

YOUTH SERVICES

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): Our government has a vision for Ontario's children and youth. Our vision is one of hope and opportunity. Over the past two years, since the Ministry of Children and Youth Services was created, we have been transforming and improving the many sectors that provide support to our young people. This includes sectors that deal with some of our most vulnerable children and youth: child protection, children's mental health and youth justice.

Sadly, we too often see our children and youth appearing in multiple areas of our mandate. That is why we are working with our partners to build a system that is focused on the needs of our children and youth, a system that provides prevention and early intervention services and more community-based services and programs for youth who need help to overcome their difficulties so they can achieve their full potential.

That is why I am pleased to announce that I launched our government's new youth opportunities strategy this morning. It is a strategy that responds to what young people have said they need in order to help them over-

come the significant challenges they face in their day-to-day lives. As part of this strategy, we are investing \$28.5 million over the next three years to improve outcomes for these youth. This strategy includes outreach, mentorship and youth leadership programs, job readiness, employment programs and skills training. It will support the hiring of 39 youth outreach workers in Toronto, expanding to 62 across Ontario. These outreach workers will build relationships with youth, provide advice and connect them to appropriate services.

It will establish an annual program of summer jobs for youth from marginalized communities. This program will build on our experience with a smaller initiative funded by our government in 2004-05 and delivered in partnership with the city of Toronto. Starting this summer, the summer jobs for youth program will be expanded to include 750 youth, more than double previous numbers, expanding further to other areas of the province next year, to include 1,650 youth.

Our government is also partnering with the Toronto Police Service in an exciting, first-of-its-kind youth-in-policing program for 100 youth from marginalized communities starting this year, and next year the program will be expanded to include more than 150 youth and some other police services in other areas of the province.

We will also be piloting a school-based program in six Ontario high schools to support proactive peer mediation programs for early conflict prevention and increased student success.

The youth opportunities strategy complements the new youth challenge fund announced by the Premier two days ago, which will help Toronto neighbourhoods most in need of services to create new programs or enhance existing programs that help young people to overcome the significant challenges they face.

Our government believes in our youth. We will continue to listen to them and we will continue to do all that we can to help them pursue their dreams. In doing so, we can help to ensure brighter futures for our youth, their communities and our province.

POLICE

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I'm pleased to rise today to inform the House about a new resource available to police in the fight against illegal drug operations. I was proud to join senior Ontario police officers and several members of this House last week to open a new clandestine drug lab training facility at the Ontario Police College in Aylmer. The new lab is another example of our government's commitment to building safer communities by investing in the resources our police services need.

We are all aware of the dangers that illegal drug operations pose to our communities, and we owe it to those who protect us to give them the tools they need to do the job. This lab is one such tool in our fight against illegal drugs and the problems of violence, guns and gangs that come along with them.

Ontario Police College instructors will use the new mock drug lab to train officers how to identify, investigate and dismantle these illegal operations. The mock-up includes a realistic marijuana grow operation and a kitchen-based methamphetamine lab, presenting students with all the challenges they will face dealing with actual clandestine drug operations. It's another resource the college will use to prepare recruits and seasoned veterans alike for the evolving challenges they face policing our communities.

Clandestine drug laboratories, whether they are growing marijuana or manufacturing methamphetamine, pose a serious threat to the health, safety and economy of Ontario's communities. Across Ontario, marijuana grow operations cost the provincial economy millions in property losses and stolen electricity. These dangerous operations also pose serious health and fire risks.

We've all heard about the emerging threat of crystal meth. It's a very dangerous and harmful drug that ruins lives. It is highly addictive and cheap to manufacture, which means it is a particular danger for youth in our communities. We also know that illegal drug operations act as a catalyst for much of the gun and gang violence we now see in our cities. Law enforcement officials indicate that most of the marijuana harvested in Canada is exported to the United States in exchange for guns and other drugs, such as cocaine.

Events here in Toronto over the past year underscore the need for the government to take action to limit the flow of illegal guns into our province, and combating the illegal drug trade is a key step to doing just that.

1410

Helping police with the resources they need to shut down grow-ops and meth labs is a priority for the McGuinty government, a priority we take very seriously. As well as our investment in this training facility, we have taken several other important steps. Last December, the Legislature passed a bill to make it easier for police, municipalities, hydro distribution companies and the provincial government to work together to identify, shut down and make safe illegal marijuana grow operations. Last year, I also established the crystal meth working group. It brings together public safety and health experts to determine the extent of the meth problem in Ontario and to recommend ways the government can assist our community partners to deal with the production and use of this dangerous drug. We also lobbied the federal government for stiffer penalties for production, possession and trafficking of methamphetamine. We were pleased to see the maximum sentence raised from 10 years to life in prison.

We are working quickly to help municipalities and police services across Ontario hire 1,000 new police officers. My ministry is investing more money—an extra \$14 million in 2006-07—to accelerate the hiring and training of those 1,000 new officers. This money will make sure that if the police services want to hire their entire allocation this year, they will be able to do so. Through our Safer Communities—1,000 Officers Partnership program, we are providing more than \$37 million

every year in perpetuity as an investment in crime prevention and law enforcement and making our communities safer and stronger.

Under the program, 500 officers are being assigned to duties related to six priority areas, one of which is organized crime, including grow-ops. Officers are also assigned to youth crime, guns and gangs, domestic violence, dangerous offenders, and protecting children against Internet luring and child pornography. The other 500 new officers are being assigned to community-based policing, such as street patrols, working with schools, and traffic enforcement. Our program means more police officers patrolling our streets, more officers tackling illegal drugs, and more officers helping to make our communities safer and stronger. When you add on our ongoing funding for the community policing partnership program, our government is spending over \$68 million every year to help fund 2,000 new police officers across Ontario.

Like all new police officers, recruits under our 1,000 officers program will come first to the Ontario Police College for basic constable training. Four hundred of the 1,000 new officers have been hired and will have graduated from basic police constable training at the Ontario Police College by spring. Seventy-nine of them are there right now getting world-class training and instruction. This is a role the college has played for more than 40 years. Over that time, the Ontario Police College has built an international reputation for excellence in law enforcement training. Indeed, several police services from the United States, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, take advantage of the Ontario Police College's training expertise. But what is most important from Ontario's point of view is that, for more than four decades, this college has been graduating the exceptional police officers who work tirelessly every day to protect our communities.

One of the keys to the college's success is the strong support the college receives from the policing community. Indeed, Chief Armand La Barge, as president of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, has been a champion of the new drug lab and continues to be a strong advocate for the college and its programs. I want to thank him for his support and I also want to express my pride in the work being done at the Ontario Police College to make sure Ontario's police officers remain among the best-trained in the world. The staff and instructors share a passion for maintaining the college's well-deserved reputation as a world-class police training facility. With them, we share a common goal: to provide our police officers with the resources they need to protect and strengthen Ontario's reputation as one of the safest places to live in the world.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): As Ontarians, we are privileged to live in one of the most diverse societies on earth. Diversity is our heart and our soul. It is our strength. It is our history.

Today, I'm proud to rise in the House to acknowledge the celebration of an integral part of our history, the experience of the black community in Ontario, during Black History Month, and to pay tribute to the black Ontarians who have helped weave the social, cultural and economic fabric of our society.

The profound impact of these men and women can be seen throughout history, a history that goes back to 1604, when Mathieu Da Costa was the first recorded person of African heritage to set foot on Canadian soil, along with the great explorer Samuel de Champlain; also Olivier Le Jeune, who at six years of age was taken from Madagascar by the English and accompanied his masters to New France back in 1632.

The narrative includes trailblazers like Harriet Tubman, who helped 20,000 black men and women seeking freedom to find their way to Canada, and Mary Ann Shadd, who started the first integrated school in Canada and was the first female newspaper editor and the first female black lawyer in North America. It also includes Delos Roget Davis, who became one of Ontario's first black lawyers, and William Peyton Hubbard, who was the first black member elected to Toronto city council. It is a long and distinguished list that continues to grow as the torch is passed to a younger generation that includes artists, playwrights, journalists, musicians, business people and public servants, to mention a few.

Though this history is about individuals, it is also a story about specific black communities throughout Ontario. These great communities include Windsor, Amherstburg, Chatham, London, St. Catharines, Toronto and Grey county.

Today we will be celebrating this collective contribution at a reception in the legislative dining room at 4:30. I invite all my honoured colleagues in the House to join with me and the Honourable Madeleine Meilleur, the Minister of Culture, to share in the great celebration. As part of the celebrations we will recognize Alvin D. McCurdy, a carpenter, historian and collector of historical photographs and documents that chronicle the early black settlements of Ontario, and in particular the great city of Amherstburg, where he was born. Mr. McCurdy was born in 1916 and passed away in 1989. Upon his death, his estate donated his entire collection to the Archives of Ontario. We owe Mr. McCurdy a great debt. His collection will live on forever and will be an invaluable resource for researchers, genealogists, scholars and children and will touch us all.

Again, please join with me as we celebrate the 10th anniversary of the national declaration of February as Black History Month in Canada.

HEART MONTH

MOIS DU COEUR

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion):

February is Heart Month in Canada, and it's only fitting that on Valentine's Day, a day synonymous with affairs of the heart, we pause to reflect on how important it is for

us to keep our hearts healthy. Heart disease remains a leading cause of death in Canada. More than 40% of Canadians will develop heart disease in their lifetime, and nearly 70% have been affected in some way by heart disease or stroke. Troublingly, a recent Heart and Stroke Foundation report that was released yesterday showed that 58% of baby boomers think their weight has little or no effect on their health, this despite obesity rates among boomers rising 60% in the last 10 years.

The good news is that 80% of coronary heart disease can be avoided by exercising regularly, eating healthy foods, avoiding smoking and managing stress.

Notre gouvernement s'engage à promouvoir la santé auprès de l'ensemble de la population ontarienne pour une Ontario en santé. C'est pourquoi nous prenons des mesures pour aider les Ontariens à être en meilleure santé et à mener une vie plus active.

One of our key partners in raising awareness and conducting vital research is the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario. I'd like to acknowledge in the presence of the House and the gallery the chief executive officer of the Heart and Stroke Foundation, Mr. Rocco Rossi; Justin Brown, manager of government relations; and Laura King-Hahn, senior specialist, health partnerships. Thank you for the good work that you're doing.

Our government is an active partner in helping to educate Ontarians about preventing heart disease. The Ministry of Health Promotion invests \$5.6 million a year in initiatives designed to promote heart health across Ontario through the Ontario heart health program. The Ontario heart health program is a community partnership that focuses on risk factors for cardiovascular diseases and other chronic diseases. Last month I had the opportunity to see an example of the Ontario heart health program in action when I visited the Thames Valley Children's Centre in London, Ontario. The children's centre, which does great work, gives parents and children an opportunity to gather at a centre and participate in physical activity and rehabilitation. At the Thames Valley Children's Centre, programs through the Ontario heart health program are also designed to allow disabled children to participate in physical activity.

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Throughout the province, our government has worked with our partners and stakeholders to introduce Ontario's Eat Smart! healthy restaurant program. The Eat Smart! designation allows individuals and families to choose from a variety of healthier food choices on the menu and by request at any restaurant featuring the Eat Smart! symbol.

Accroître le taux d'activité physique des Ontariens constitue une autre priorité pour mon ministère. À l'heure actuelle, seulement 48 % des adultes ontariens sont assez actifs physiquement pour rester en bonne santé. Vie Active 2010, notre stratégie en matière d'activité physique, vise à ce que d'ici 2010 au moins 55 % des Ontariens mènent une vie active.

Last fall, Minister Kennedy and I were pleased to launch 20 minutes of daily physical activity as part of our government's healthy schools program.

Another major cause of heart disease is smoking. I'm very pleased and proud of the McGuinty government's track record on making Ontario smoke-free, the legislation of course taking effect on May 31 this year. Tobacco is a major factor in heart disease, stroke and diseases of the vascular system. Smoking-related cardiovascular disease is responsible, sadly, for over 6,000 deaths annually in Ontario. These are financial and human costs that we simply cannot afford.

Our government is taking steps to improve the heart health of all Ontarians, young and old. We're getting the message out that prevention is key, and this means eating foods that are healthy, exercising for 30 minutes a day and quitting smoking.

As we pause to celebrate the romance of Valentine's Day, let us take a moment to celebrate heart health in the province of Ontario.

As a former chair of Ottawa's person-to-person campaign for the Heart and Stroke Foundation, I encourage residents of Ontario to be generous when a dedicated volunteer comes to your door seeking support for the tremendous work the Heart and Stroke Foundation does each and every day in this province.

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

YOUTH SERVICES

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): When it comes to youth opportunities, I'm glad to see the government finally responding to concerns that our party has been raising for a long time. Our leader, John Tory, has been talking about the importance of helping young people long before today. As he pointed out in this House yesterday, he called on you in August 2005 to put in place a coordinated program that would achieve results.

Our party's Time for Action report contains 22 recommendations for making our communities safer and helping youth at risk. I encourage you to look at our report and to remember that fighting youth violence requires both helping youth at risk and a better enforcement and justice system.

POLICE

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): As critic for community safety and correctional services, I'm very pleased to respond to Minister Kwinter's announcement.

Minister, in your fourth paragraph you say, "We owe it to those who protect us to give them the tools they need to do the job." I'm curious: Is the establishment of the clandestine drug lab at the Ontario Police College part of your justice modernization plan?

I think you should be able to recall that that was a plan that has seen \$339 million slashed from the justice ministry. You and the Attorney General both endorsed that plan. You called it "ambitious and comprehensive" in your September 27, 2005, memo.

Although you spent \$230,000 on the drug lab, how much would have been available to our justice ministry

for fighting illegal drug crimes if in fact you had not decided to do a lot of slashing with that ministry?

Minister, I'm pleased that you made the announcement at the Ontario Police College. You've actually opened it up, but I'm very curious where we'll see your government go with your plan to slash \$339 million from the justice ministry.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I join with my colleagues today in celebrating the diversity of our province and our country. We join all Canadians in honouring the legacy of black Canadians, past and present, during Black History Month.

This is a time to celebrate the many achievements and contributions of black Canadians who, throughout history, have done so much to make Canada the culturally diverse, compassionate and prosperous nation we know today.

This past Sunday, John Tory attended the 10th annual Ontario Black History Society launch, an event that recognizes the experiences, accomplishments and achievements of Canadians of African ancestry. He made the following statement, which I would like to read into the record on this occasion: "I believe Black History Month must ultimately be about the future, about the bright horizons ahead and the great things our African-Canadian communities can achieve and all Canadians can build together."

I too want to join in expressing gratitude to Mr. Alvin McCurdy and his family for their gift of history to our province, and invite all Ontarians to join us in celebrating Black History Month.

HEART MONTH

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): I want to add the voice of the PC caucus in support of Heart Month and the Heart and Stroke Foundation's fundraising campaign. Our party led the way with regard to reforming laws in Ontario to disallow smoking in public and private places. In December 1985, I introduced the first bill in Canada to control smoking in the workplace and in public places. Our party is proud of our record in terms of this very harmful social habit that led to so much heart disease in the past.

I want to encourage Ontarians to make healthy choices in an effort to prevent heart disease and stroke, simple things like eating less fast food and takeout, increasing the number of fruits and vegetables you eat, and increasing physical activity by just 10 minutes a day. These are only three of the Heart and Stroke Foundation's 10 suggested ways to improve your health.

Although we can prevent cardiac disease, it doesn't resolve all the problems with regard to those who require surgery. I am proud of the fact, and I want to remind all Ontarians, that the Progressive Conservative government, of which I was a member, reduced wait times for cardiac surgery by half between 1996 and 2003.

Before I finish, I would like to recognize the representatives of the Heart and Stroke Foundation and thank them for all the hard work they do on our behalf.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): In response to the statement made by the Minister of Health Promotion, I want to refer to some of the results that were released yesterday by the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada in its annual report on Canadians' health, because the results that were released yesterday show just how far every government, including the Ontario government, has to go to deal with heart health.

The results were shocking: 30% of baby boomers are obese, compared to 19% a decade ago; 24% of today's seniors are obese. Secondly, more than half—52%—of boomers are physically inactive, up from 43% a decade ago; 50% of today's seniors report a sedentary lifestyle. Thirdly, while smoking rates have decreased among boomers over the past decade, from 29% to 21%, they are still much higher than the 11% of seniors who smoke.

Those results were followed up by commentary by health care professionals who deal with this issue on a daily basis, and I want to read into the record some of their quotes.

“This year, every day almost 1,000 Canadian baby boomers will turn 60, entering the prime age for heart disease and stroke,” says Dr. Beth Abramson, Heart and Stroke Foundation spokesperson and cardiologist. “Rising obesity rates and inactivity among boomers could threaten years of steady progress towards better heart health.”

Quote number two: “Boomers are clearly heading towards a downward spiral when it comes to their heart health,” she said. “The picture is not good when compared to the previous generation, today's seniors. Boomers are certainly not headed in the right direction.”

Finally, “We know that 42% of Canadians already in their 60s report having heart disease, stroke or hypertension. Boomers—with their high rates of obesity and inactivity—could be even worse off,” says Dr. Robert Reid, Heart and Stroke Foundation researcher.”

I think that's probably why Mr. Rossi, when he came before the social development committee with respect to the LHIN legislation, raised these two concerns and asked the government to respond to these two very serious concerns:

“One of our concerns about the establishment of LHINs is that there will not be clear accountability at the provincial level to ensure continuing progress with implementation of the stroke strategy. This strategy must be continued for the sake of today's patients and those at risk of becoming patients in the future. It must continue to be the object of improvements, such as increased powers for the provincial and regional steering committees to hold health care providers accountable for integration.”

1430

The second concern had to do with research. I quote again from Mr. Rossi: “I don't believe that Bill 36 even mentions the word” research. “True integration must

include strong links to research so that we minimize the gap between what we know and what is practical. Good research has been the bedrock of our foundation's success and the wellspring of innovation and improvement.”

I look forward to seeing the government amendments that respond, because so far they haven't been put to the committee.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): New Democrats join the Minister of Citizenship in celebrating Black History Month. We say, through Black History Month, that we acknowledge that African Canadians have been here in Canada and in Ontario for hundreds of years. Through Black History Month, we confirm and affirm the contribution of African Canadians in Ontario.

The Minister of Citizenship mentioned some of the trailblazers. I would add a couple of more names to that list: Rosemary Brown; Zanana Akande; Alvin Curling, who was a Liberal MPP in this place for a long time; and Lincoln Alexander.

I want to remind the governments of their obligation, and I would remind all the MPPs of our obligation, to do things that celebrate Black History Month. I say this: In the Toronto Board of Education, we are losing the international language program, including the black cultural programs, because the Toronto board cannot afford to keep them. Unless provincial governments donate and give some money to the Toronto Board of Education to keep the black cultural programs, they will die.

I will remind the government that we used to have an anti-racist secretariat from 1991 to 1995. We no longer have it. The point of having an anti-racist secretariat is to say that the government is committed to fighting racism. This government should think about reinstating an anti-racist secretariat, because as much as we would love for racism to disappear, it hasn't, and we need to work proactively to deal with it.

I would remind the government that they should employ employment equity principles as we talk about access to jobs and to promotion. I would remind the government that the salaries of racialized communities are much lower than white society, and that we, as a government and as members, need to deal with these issues and many more issues that I haven't been able to touch on.

ORAL QUESTIONS

OMERS PENSION FUND

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My first question is to the Premier. Premier, I think that all of us agree that an illegal strike anywhere, any time, is wrong, and I think it is our obligation to do everything we can to

prevent it. When I wrote to you today, I was not suggesting that you should give in or give up; I was merely suggesting that you try sitting down with all concerned—officials from the police and fire and other emergency responders, CUPE, municipalities—and see if we could find a way to resolve some of these issues and to avoid a damaging and dangerous illegal strike.

Why won't you even consider such a meeting, using your good offices, not to force your way on people, but just to see if we could try to resolve some of these issues? Why wouldn't we give that a try?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I appreciate the spirit that informs the leader of the official opposition's question today, but I have an important responsibility. That responsibility is to honour a specific commitment made to both municipalities and workers, a subsection of which is very important; of course that is CUPE. I further made a specific commitment to introduce legislation that would enable police and firefighters, recognizing the grave risks associated with their work, to negotiate additional supplemental benefits, including the ability to retire a little bit early.

I've got to live up to that responsibility. That's why we intend to move forward with this legislation. There has been much opportunity, I want to assure the leader of the official opposition, for discussion and for committee hearings and for amendments and the like, and we are eager now to move forward with this bill.

Mr. Tory: I think we all recognize that we all have important responsibilities. We all recognize, for example, in principle, the desirability of special recognition being given to those emergency response workers to have separate retirement arrangements. But in the end, you know you have the numbers to pass this bill this month, next month, June—whatever. It's obvious from the 100 or so amendments made so far that the extensive consultation you referred to yesterday hasn't been extensive enough. And it's obvious, from the generally chaotic situation that exists where we're on the brink of an illegal strike, which none of us wants to see and none of us approves of, that the situation has not been the result of extensive enough consultation.

So I ask you again, notwithstanding the important responsibilities, notwithstanding the points of principle, but recognizing that you have the time to pass this, you have the numbers to pass this well off into the future, why won't you take a bit of time to listen, to try to cool things down, to try to avoid a much worse situation, including an illegal strike which we all oppose and must do whatever we can to avoid? Why won't you do that?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I say to the leader of the official opposition that I have asked that CUPE members honour their commitment to the people of Ontario and continue to maintain those services upon which we all rely. I think it's important for all of us to respect the process.

We have done more than that, I would argue. We have had two rounds of committee hearings. The bill will be brought back into the House. There will be an oppor-

tunity for additional debate. We will respect, and we have throughout this matter respected, the process. I would ask that CUPE workers, and Mr. Ryan in particular, also respect the process and honour the law. We have made a commitment. We are living up to that commitment, and we will continue to do so.

Mr. Tory: Even if it was to make that plea in person—he's offered to meet you, he's given you his cell-phone number, he's made himself available—even if it was to make that representation, in which I share, which is to ask him to honour the law and maybe just to spend a few minutes listening to him, would the Premier please tell me, when you know you have the numbers to pass this bill whenever you want between now and the spring or any time, what do we have to lose if you take the time and make the effort to bring municipalities, police, unions and other sponsors together in your office and use your good office to try to avoid this illegal strike, try to resolve these issues through means other than these kinds of chaotic situations like an illegal strike? What do we have to lose?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The leader of the official opposition will know that there are always groups that, in one way or another, will be opposed to any government initiative put forward by any government of any political stripe. They are entitled, of course, to register their concerns. But I think, and I know the leader of the official opposition would agree with me in this regard, it is unfortunate that one particular opponent—who represents, by the way, a minority of OMERS plan holders—would engage in a game of brinkmanship. I think each and every one of us should respect the process. There has been a process respected by our government. We had 13 separate days of committee hearings. We entertained over 100 various amendments and in fact adopted some put forward by the opposition. We have a commitment. It is our intention to live up to that commitment. But, in doing so, we will always respect the process and those who might be opposed.

MINISTERIAL CONDUCT

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is again to the Premier. We heard a lot from you yesterday about what is not in your rules and your set of standards for ministerial behaviour. Could you please tell us here today exactly what your standards are for ministerial behaviour, and people staying or going from your cabinet?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I know that the leader of the official opposition would certainly hold himself out to be a fair man. And, in fairness, we should respect the findings in the Integrity Commissioner's report.

The leader of the official opposition made three separate allegations surrounding Minister Takhar. One was that he enriched himself or his business. Another was that he was involved in the management of the business. The third was that the trustee was no longer at arm's length.

The Integrity Commissioner specifically found, on the first two allegations, that there was no complaint. He did not agree, and the leader of the official opposition knows this. What he did, in fact, find was that there was a breach of the act, and it had to do with the fact that, although he had had his trustee previously approved by the Integrity Commissioner, he should have brought to his attention that he was no longer in an arm's-length position. That is the subject of the Integrity Commissioner's report and that's why he found that Minister Takhar was in breach of the integrity act. I just think it's really important that we understand the facts here.

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Mr. Tory: I do agree with the Premier that it's important we understand the facts, and the facts are that, for the first time ever, a cabinet minister has been reprimanded under this act, that the cabinet minister in question has been found guilty of egregiously reckless behaviour and negligence by the Integrity Commissioner—

Interjections.

Mr. Tory: Well, that's what his decision says.

Yesterday, you said that all was fine because his behaviour "does not involve an abuse of taxpayers' money through expensive hotel rooms and steak dinners. Minister Takhar did not in any way enrich himself; he did not in any way abuse or was even seen to attempt to abuse taxpayer dollars." Since you wouldn't answer my first question, can I assume that the standard of behaviour that you apply to your ministers is that if it's anything other than steak dinners, expensive hotel rooms, self-enrichment or abuse of taxpayers' money, then it's okay? Egregiously reckless conduct and negligent conduct is fine; only if it's hotel rooms and steak dinners does it count as being worthy to lose one's job in your government.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: What the leader of the official opposition can assume is that the facts in each of these matters are important. Again, I'll repeat this because I think it's very important. The allegations were threefold, coming from the leader of the official opposition. One was that Minister Takhar enriched himself or his business. In response to that, the Integrity Commissioner said, "In my opinion, there is no evidence, direct or circumstantial, upon which I could find that the minister breached section 2."

He then said that he was involved in the management of a business—that was the leader of the official opposition's allegation. The Integrity Commissioner said, "I can find no more than an error in judgment.... I therefore conclude this aspect of the complaint has not been established." But he did say, in fairness to the leader of the official opposition, that he should have notified him of the change of status of his trustee. In response to that, he said: "I have to recognize that the minister did not go about intentionally trying to short-circuit the system. I accept his statement that had he realized that his arm's-length relationship" with his trustee "was compromised, he would have taken steps through his office to straighten things up." On the basis of those facts, I have come to the conclusion that Minister Takhar should stay in cabinet.

Mr. Tory: I think, whatever the facts are, the one fact that is—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Stop the clock. Minister of Northern Development.

The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: The one fact that can't be contradicted is that, for the first time in the history of this regime and this act, and having an Integrity Commissioner passing judgment on matters of this kind, a cabinet minister has been reprimanded. Whatever various interpretations may be of what has been said, that is a fact and you have accepted that, whereas before, when a minister was not reprimanded but was found to have breached the very same law, you said it was cause for his resignation.

I think your ministers, Premier, should take great comfort in knowing they can get away with just about anything before you would ask them to step aside. Can we now conclude that a minister is free to act in a reckless and negligent fashion as long as it doesn't involve public dollars? Can we now conclude that it's okay for your ministers to breach the Members' Integrity Act as long as it serves the government well politically? This was not your standard when you were in opposition. What are your standards now that you're Premier of Ontario? What does it take for someone to lose their job in your government?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The leader of the official opposition has trouble accepting the facts, and the facts are not unimportant. In fact, they are important. The important issue here upon which the Integrity Commissioner came to the conclusion that the minister had breached section 11 of the Members' Integrity Act was whether the trustee, previously approved by the Integrity Commissioner, was no longer at arm's length from the minister. He says, "I conclude that the minister has breached section 11 of the act." He goes on to say, "I have to recognize that the minister did not go about intentionally trying to short-circuit the system." He says, "I accept his statement that, had he realized that his arm's-length relationship with his trustee was compromised, he would have taken steps through this office to straighten things out." So if the leader of the official opposition wants to know what my standard is on this matter, I believe that in these circumstances, given those facts, it is appropriate that Mr. Takhar apologize, as he did, and that he remain in cabinet.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I would take just a moment to draw members' attention to the east members' gallery and introduce a former colleague, Murad Velshi from the riding of Don Mills, who served in the 34th Parliament.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): To the Premier: Last May, your then-energy minister,

Dwight Duncan, promised “full public discussion and dialogue” on new nuclear plants. In December, you promised “a full and open public consultation” before approving more nuclear plants. Today we learn that your electricity generating company, Ontario Power Generation, has been in the backroom already sizing up plans for two new nuclear plants at Darlington and near Port Hope. Premier, is this what you meant by a full and open public consultation on nuclear power?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): I thank the opposition member for the question.

At no time did we give any instructions to Ontario Power Generation to participate in any discussions with the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission. In fact, the only time that we had discussion with them was to increase the water power in this province, starting with Upper Mattagami, because renewables is a particular emphasis that we want to have.

If in fact the gentleman is referring to the briefing notes, those notes were not from Ontario Power Generation; they were actually from the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission.

Mr. Hampton: I will quote from the briefing note. “Prospect for new build: OPG has two potential sites that may be available for a new build.” But you see, Minister, the McGuinty government is the sole shareholder of Ontario Power Generation, so they couldn’t be taking direction from anywhere else, because there’s no one else to direct them but the McGuinty government. So my question is, again: Is this what the Premier meant when he promised a full, public, open consultation on nuclear power, that Ontario Power Generation would be in the backroom already sizing up sites for new nuclear plants before any consultation process was ever held? Is that the McGuinty promise?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: The member again, as usual, has quoted only part of the briefing notes. In fact, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission has a responsibility, as you know, to be on-site for every nuclear station. They work very closely with all of the plants. They look at the outages and the problems that they have; they look at the challenges that are facing, obviously, the stations that are older.

But having said that, one of the questions I think we should recognize is that we are currently, in 12 cities across this province, asking Ontarians what they think. That’s what we are doing. Yesterday, I was in Mississauga. I had the opportunity to be there for three hours and listened to the input from Ontarians about what they feel the mixed fuel supply should be about. I was very interested to find that people were not just relying on a particular fuel; they were looking at all the mixed supply, with a significant emphasis on replacement for renewables, for conservation, and what else we could do to ensure that the lights are kept on for the people of Ontario.

Mr. Hampton: Well, I say to the Premier, this looks like the biggest fix since Salé and Pelletier got robbed of

the gold medal at the Olympics. You promised people full, open, public consultations on nuclear power. Even months before your sham process begins, Ontario Power Generation is already sizing up site locations for two new nuclear plants. Premier, given your obvious broken promise, why should people across Ontario believe anything the McGuinty government says about nuclear power?

1450

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: Again, it’s interesting that the member only chooses part. In fact, if you look at the briefing notes, they indicate that “OPG has a number of initiatives underway to prevent the need for a long outage to replace feeders ahead of the projected date for reactor refurbishment.” There are a number of initiatives. It is part of their responsibility to maintain the generation plants at absolute and uttermost peak. It is their responsibility to work very carefully with the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission on all of their reactors. It’s absolutely no different for Bruce.

There was nothing that came from this government other than that they had the regular meetings they normally do. There was nothing from this government other than the fact that I met with OPG and asked them to increase the water supply in this province, starting with Upper Mattagami because we know that there’s additional water that we can use for hydroelectricity in this province that has been underutilized and underinvested in for the last 12 years.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): New question, the leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: To the Premier: I know the Premier doesn’t want to hear about his latest broken promise, but I think it’s important that he hear what people are saying about the McGuinty mega nuclear power scheme. The Toronto Star says that at last night’s Toronto open house, speaker after speaker said “nuclear power is expensive, unreliable and dangerous to the environment and human health.”

Premier, you promised to listen to working families. Instead, Ontario Power Generation is already selecting sites for new nuclear plants. Is this what the McGuinty government meant by full, open and public hearings on nuclear power—a sham process that starts before any consultations are even held?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: If you recall, under Bill 100 we actually put in place the Ontario Power Authority, which had the responsibility to engage in a process of consultation to develop a mixed supply option for this province because we actually have to replace 25,000 megawatts of supply by the year 2025. They went out and participated—over 40 newspapers; over 280 individuals. The stakeholders actually called in Greenpeace, not once, not twice but three times, and the Sierra Club. They had a broad range of consultation.

They then came to this government with their recommendations. We posted it on the EBR. My office has been open and I have met with virtually everybody who

wants to meet with me. There were a few who didn't show up. We have had continuous engagement through e-mail. We have had continuous engagement through letters. Now we're participating in 12 communities.

Once that is done, then it goes to the Ontario Energy Board, which in fact engages in another public consultation, and then when the projects are determined, they engage in another —

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: I want the Premier to hear what Elizabeth May, executive director of the Sierra Club of Canada, has to say about your process. She's a respected environmentalist and an Officer of the Order of Canada. At last night's open house whitewash in Ottawa, she said that your consultations are inadequate or, in her words, "a dog and pony show with no dog and no pony." Premier, Elizabeth May of the Sierra Club wants you to live up to your promise of full, open and public consultations on nuclear power. Will you put your Ontario Power Authority supply mix report to a full, formal environmental assessment, which Elizabeth May is asking you to do?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I find it absolutely amazing, and maybe just a tad amusing, that the individual who comes out in such strong favour of this consultation in fact cancelled all consultation on the Ontario Hydro 25-year supply plan, cancelled all of the conservation initiatives and cancelled Conawapa, and doesn't like wind, doesn't like hydroelectric and doesn't like nuclear.

The fact of the matter is that the one advantage we have in this wonderful province is that people are open and able to give their opinion from a wide range of perspectives. Certainly I heard that last night. It was refreshing to hear people who wanted to speak about renewable energy and conservation and photovoltaics and what they could do as individuals to make a difference. Finally, people were talking about the need for transmission to bring all that wind and run-of-the-river that's in the north down to where the power is needed for our factories. I thought it was one of the best evenings I've spent, and I am looking forward to participating in many more.

Mr. Hampton: The only wind we're getting is the wind from the Minister of Energy. This is what Dave Martin from Greenpeace calls your nuclear meetings: "totally inadequate." Dan McDermott from the Sierra Club calls them "a sham," and Kim Fry from the Toronto Environmental Alliance calls them "a disgrace." And that was before they learned that the fix was already in.

Premier, your \$40-billion nuclear boondoggle has huge economic and environmental risks. Will you keep your promise? Will you put your Ontario Power Authority supply mix report to a full, formal environmental assessment, which environmental groups and people across Ontario are asking you to do? Will you keep your promise, Premier?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: You know what I will do? I'll keep the promise to keep the lights on in Ontario, leadership that's been lacking in the energy sector for a long period of time. It's really quite—

Interjections.

The Speaker: We'll wait.
Minister?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I reiterate: It's our responsibility to take leadership and keep the lights on for the people of Ontario, and it is leadership that we take responsibly. We use their money prudently because we said we would. We will maximize our existing assets both in generation and transmission. We will build new generation, 10,000 megawatts of which is under way. We will put in place a culture of conservation, and we have put that in place as well.

I can appreciate that someone who neglected those before may not be pleased to hear about them now, but the difference is that in the future the lights will remain on. There will be electricity for our industries, and the people of Ontario will have a strategy in place that will make a difference for them as they plan their future, be it in their individual lives or in their business plans. They can rely on affordable, clean energy for the people of the province of Ontario.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): Again to the Premier: Yesterday you made reference in the list of accountability measures you claim to have taken that freedom of information has been improved. I wonder, if that's true, if you could explain to us why, under the freedom of information regime of your government, it took us over seven months to receive the transportation minister's cellphone bills and schedule for the time surrounding his visits to his company. Maybe at the same time you could explain how it could be that, once received seven months later, the phone bills for the relevant period showed absolutely no incoming or outgoing phone calls, even though the evidence shows he did make phone calls during those periods. Perhaps you could explain those two things.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): We are more than pleased to talk about our record when it comes to accountability. I took the opportunity yesterday to outline some of those for the leader of the official opposition, whether we're talking about our new Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act or whether we're talking about our ban on partisan government advertising, which cost taxpayers over \$100 million on the Conservative government watch. We brought in real-time disclosure for political donations, which we thought was a very important step forward. We brought the sunshine in over OPG and Hydro One, which would have been hidden from daylight by the Conservative government. When it comes to accountability measures, we are very proud of the steps we've taken so far, and we look forward to taking more.

1500

Mr. Tory: Whatever sunshine you claim to have let in, you've brought the curtain down on freedom of information. It's interesting, because it took seven months to

get the phone bills—well beyond the limits, well in excess of any appeal and extension periods. It took seven months to get the minister's schedule for the dates in question. It is very clear that on the day in question, this meeting, which we now know took place because it's in the Integrity Commissioner's findings and in the evidence, doesn't even appear on the schedule, which raises the issue of whether these are the real schedules that were produced under freedom of information.

Why is your government going out of its way in terms of time taken and these documents being produced that have no record of anything going on, and all the rest of what is there is blacked out? Why are you going out of your way to stonewall access to information on this? What is your government trying to cover up here?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: We are more than pleased to comply with any requests that are brought forward and to adhere to the freedom of information legislation and anything that might flow from that. I know that the leader of the official opposition would be interested in a section on response rate compliance put out by the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner in their annual report. In talking about our first year of government, they said, "This marked a potential watershed in the compliance rates of provincial ministries responding to requests. Overall, provincial ministries had a compliance rate of 77.2%. This represents a remarkable turnaround from the compliance levels achieved in preceding years.... They reached a low point in 1996 when only 39% of requests were answered within thirty days."

I'm pleased and proud of what we've been doing, and we look forward to doing more.

OMERS PENSION FUND

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is for the Premier. The tragedy of the OMERS bill, Bill 206, is that the bill is in fact fixable. In committee, the New Democratic Party tabled many amendments that would have solved the problem, but the Liberal members on the committee voted unanimously against those amendments. Premier, before it's too late, will you at least take another look at those amendments? Can you at least do that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I'd like to thank the member for the question. As she well knows, there were legislative hearings both after first reading and after second reading. The devolution of OMERS has been talked about for 10 years by three different governments. None of those governments was successful in doing it. We intend on doing it. We believe it's those people who pay into the plan, both from the employee and the employer viewpoint, who should have the say over the plan. That's what the devolution is all about. We intend to live up to that commitment. There have been enough discussions about

this, ongoing on a number of different levels. There's been an awful lot of consultation. There have been 13 days of legislative hearings. We really believe that the final result is a bill we can be proud of in the sense that the payers who are paying into the plan, both on the employer and the employee side, will have a say about governing the plan in the future

Ms. Horwath: Back to the Premier: You're ignoring the stakeholders and now you're about to download labour unrest to the municipalities as a result. You don't want to reconsider the amendments that we tabled in committee that are going to solve the problem.

How about another solution? How about honouring some of your own promises that you put together in a letter to OMERS back on October 3, 2002? In that letter, you promised a dispute resolution similar to the teachers' plan. You also promised a single-based plan, with additional supplemental plans for all employees across the board. Those were your promises. Will you honour those promises now and save us all a whole lot of trouble in this province?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: We are honouring our commitments that were set out by the Premier and by this party when it ran in the election of 2003, and that is, to devolve the OMERS plan to those people who are paying into it, both from the employer and the employee viewpoint, and also to allow supplemental benefit plans for those emergency workers to be negotiated at the local level. That supplementary plan, whatever is negotiated at the local level, will not have any impact on the main plan. No one who currently has a pension is going to have their pension affected in any way whatsoever. The scaremongering that's been going on with respect to pensioners losing their pensions or somehow having their pensions reduced is totally incorrect and inaccurate. All pensions that are currently in effect will remain in effect and will not be affected at all by any changes being made in Bill 206.

CHILD CARE

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. I know that our government has been working very hard to deliver an early learning and child care agreement with the federal government on behalf of parents in Ontario who are looking for high-quality, licensed child care. In my own rural riding the demand for high-quality child care far outweighs the supply, and I know we have the same situation right across this province.

Prime Minister Harper has said that he plans to cancel these child care agreements, so it's no surprise that, since the election of the Conservative government in Ottawa, when I speak to parents in my riding, they tell me about how concerned they are for the future of these child care agreements. Minister, can you tell me what this child care agreement means for the constituents of my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex?

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): I want to thank my

colleague the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. First, let me tell you what this agreement means to the people of Ontario. Across the province, we're talking about a commitment of \$1.9 billion over five years. In the first three years of the planning process here in Ontario, the objective is 25,000 new, regulated, high-quality early learning and child care spaces, because this is what parents have been telling us they need.

In relation to that particular area, I can give you some stats. The three municipalities of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex stand to lose, if this agreement is not allowed to continue, 1,975 spaces—\$88 million of investment in early learning and child care for the parents and children of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex.

Mrs. Van Bommel: Thank you, Minister. Obviously, there's a lot at stake for the constituents in my riding, as I'm sure there is right across this province for all parents. I know parents are counting on these agreements to provide high-quality child care for their families. Minister, what can we do, what can our communities do, what can parents do to make sure that the federal government understands the importance of this funding agreement?

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: I'm calling upon parents and specialists in this area to make public the concerns they have been raising with me, because the agreement that the government of Ontario executed was with the government of Canada. This is not a partisan agreement; this is something I'd like all members of this House to come together on for the people of Ontario. I'm asking the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the third party to work with us. Work with us, because this is an expectation and a need expressed by parents in Ontario, parents represented by all of you here in this House. I ask the Leader of the Opposition and I ask the leader of the third party to stand with us, as the government of Ontario, on behalf of the people of Ontario, stand on behalf of parents and their children for whom we're trying to deliver the best start in life, because this—

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

MANUFACTURING SECTOR

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): My question is to the Premier. January was an especially cruel month in the manufacturing sector in Ontario. We lost a staggering 33,000 manufacturing jobs. That's over \$1,000 a day, Premier. The manufacturing sector is in crisis, and all of Ontario is suffering as a result.

On Thursday, December 8, in this very Legislature a motion was passed with the unanimous consent of this House. It requested of the government a comprehensive action plan to assist the communities that have been affected by this economic crisis. My question, Premier: Where is the action plan? On what day can we expect to receive the details of this plan?

1510

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Hon. Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): Let me just say that with respect to the loss of manufacturing jobs, there is no doubt that Ontario faces significant challenges, mostly attributable to the high dollar. In fact, many economists have pointed to that as the direct result of the job losses.

When you look at what Ontario is doing, we have on our part made a number of significant moves. The auto strategy we put in place has now secured almost \$6 billion worth of new investment. In addition to that is the advanced manufacturing investment strategy I announced in December, which is moving forward and, I'm happy to report, is oversubscribed already, and will lead to new investments. But as I say, with respect to the challenges that are being faced in this sector, the high dollar is the direct result of those job losses.

Mr. Chudleigh: The high dollar is one thing, but you've also increased taxes to these same companies. You've increased energy costs and electricity costs. You've driven up expenses to these industries. Among those industries, and this is just January, are B.F. Goodrich in Kitchener, Waterloo, 1,100 jobs gone; Ford Motor Co. in Windsor, closed, and in St. Thomas, down to 1,200 jobs; John Deere in Woodstock, closed, 325 jobs; Bowater, another shift gone, and Thunder Bay, laid off 280 people; Winpack Technologies in Toronto, laid off 250 people. The list goes on and on.

These people are from all across Ontario. You said you were going to bring in a plan for the communities that were hurt. I don't see that the dollar exchange is going to affect that. These communities are suffering. Where's the plan for these families and, in this massive list of companies that have laid off, whereabouts is the plan for these communities to help them through this desperate situation your government has put them in?

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: Do you know what? We have a real concern for the people who have lost their jobs in these communities that are affected. In fact, recently I met with the mayor of the city of Cornwall, and we put together an action plan for the city of Cornwall that does a number of things.

Let me go back to the question of the dollar. If you don't believe me that this is what's hurting manufacturing in Ontario, I'll quote from Doug Porter, deputy chief economist at BMO, who said, "There's no question that manufacturing is struggling and will continue to struggle. The dollar is the overwhelming story."

I would suggest that the member opposite should pick up the phone and call his federal cousins, who are the government today, and ask them what they're going to do to help Ontario's manufacturing base because, frankly, Ontario is doing a number of things.

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: Mr. Speaker, they're interrupting.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: I would suggest to the member that the federal government has to bring forward some

initiatives, just as we have done in this province. We have an investment strategy for manufacturing, we have an auto sector strategy, we have a forestry sector strategy, and we've capped electricity prices for large industrial users, a very comprehensive economic set of initiatives that are designed to help Ontario's manufacturing base. We need the federal government to assist Ontario, so pick up the phone, call your federal counterparts and ask them what they're going—

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): You pick up the phone.

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: I have. I have picked up—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

WASTE DIVERSION

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is for Minister of the Environment. The city of Toronto's garbage woes never seem to end. A great part of their problem is funding, or the lack thereof, for waste diversion. During the 2003 election, Liberals promised to divert 60% of the waste from Ontario landfills by 2008. To date, you and your predecessors have not filed a plan, and to date, you have made no progress reports. When can we expect them?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I'm pleased to have an opportunity to speak to the issue that the city of Toronto is currently facing. As many in this Legislature may be aware, the city of Toronto is currently in contract renegotiation with their hauler that is transporting waste to the US. They have indicated to me that they do not expect significant waste transportation issues through the transition period from Wilson to Republic, which will be on April 1, 2006. I think it is important to highlight why this issue is in current discussion.

The city of Toronto, like all municipalities in this province, has been working diligently and working closely with my ministry to develop their alternative plans. We have all said that transporting waste to Michigan is not a long-term solution, and the member is quite right that additional diversion and increased diversion is a large part of that solution.

Mr. Prue: My question isn't about the transportation of waste, and yes, I'm aware of the dilemma of the city of Toronto. But in 2003, it was you and your government, or your government-in-waiting, and not the municipalities, that promised to divert 60% of the waste from landfills. You've failed to ban organic waste from landfills and to develop a recycling program for used oil, e-waste and tires. There's no plan. The only McGuinty government solution to the pending garbage crisis offered to date is to weaken environmental assessment rules. That's all you've done.

Toronto has ambitious waste diversion targets and plans, but needs some financial support. Is it your intention to continue with your do-nothing policy, or will you be providing funding so that Toronto can deal with this crisis?

Hon. Ms. Broten: I think it is imprudent of the member opposite to declare that there is a crisis in the city of Toronto. There is no crisis in the city of Toronto. There is a contract negotiation in place with respect to the waste hauler. So let's deal with those facts.

The city of Toronto is working hard on one of the best diversion strategies in the province. Each and every municipality across this province is putting forward plans. My ministry is meeting closely with those plans, focusing in particular on those municipalities that transport their waste to the US. We're encouraged by the progress they're making. We're working closely with municipalities such as the city of Toronto. There is nothing preventing any of those municipalities from coming forward with innovative and new technology, new solutions, as long as they're clean and do not take away from diversion.

With respect to the member's comments on the Environmental Assessment Act, I would put him on notice that the environment assessment process is not going to be weakened; it's going to be streamlined and efficient. A streamlined and efficient process does not mean a weak process. Communities across this province, environmental activists—all participants in the environmental assessment process—need to understand a process that takes place faster and quicker and more efficiently.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): My question is for the Minister of Health. I know that it's no surprise to you that the state of our health care system is front and centre in the minds of many Ontarians. Given this, it's also no surprise to you that our government is improving the health care system. It is the subject of regular conversations I have with my constituents in Huron–Bruce. You also know that the state of our health care system is one of the major reasons why Ontarians spoke resoundingly for change when our government was elected just over two years ago. It's clear that the policies and actions of the previous government left much to be desired for patients, and it's also clear that the status quo is not acceptable. That is why I am so excited, whenever I have the opportunity, to speak with you about how you are moving forward and how our government is bringing progress to our health care system that works for the patients.

Minister, can you tell me how the Local Health System Integration Act will benefit my constituents?

1520

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): It's a privilege to have a chance to answer the question of the hard-working and effective member from Huron–Bruce. Her passionate commitment to her constituents on matters of health care is very strenuous.

I think, at its heart, what we seek to do with local health integration networks is to make a significant trans-

fer of power; that is, to delegate the significant authorities that the Minister of Health has traditionally had the privilege of executing, on the basic premise that it's not appropriate to try to micromanage a \$33-billion operation from head office. So we're going to transfer those powers down to people closer to the action in local communities who are in a much better position to determine—in a circumstance where resources will always be more limited than we would prefer—which local priorities must be advanced first. We do this on the basis of a patient-centred health care where population health will drive the decisions made at the local level and where the patients once and for all will have a much easier time of being involved in a conversation about health care on a local basis.

Mrs. Mitchell: Thank you, Minister, and thank you so much for communicating. I know my constituents want to be part of a health care system that is delivered at a local level, and they want health care to be delivered in a way that responds to their needs.

I would like to ask you another question. I know that the legislation is currently being reviewed by the standing committee on social policy. Can you tell me what we can expect of this process?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: We know that the members of that committee have been working very hard, through what I believe have been seven or eight days of public hearings, on the detail of amendments and the like. I just want to thank them for their efforts. Each and every bill that I've had the privilege of bringing into this Legislature, save one where there was unanimous consent and agreement for it, went out to committee and has been enhanced through the work of those committee members. They're in that phase right now, and I want to thank them.

Generally speaking, the government has tabled amendments to further enhance principles of community engagement and due process related to any prospective integration decision. Amendments to guarantee the role, at both the provincial and local levels, for aboriginal and francophone groups to make sure they have all the influence that's necessary around local planning are the nature of amendments that our government has brought forward, in addition to enshrining the principles of the Canada Health Act and the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act. We believe that the advice and direction that has been offered by a variety of people commenting during the process has enabled us to make a better bill, and we're looking forward to that bill having the opportunity to come back for further debate here in this chamber.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Where is the Minister of Natural Resources?

Interjection: He's here.

Mr. Miller: Okay, good. I'll wait for the minister to take his seat.

Minister, the situation in the forestry sector has gone from bad to worse in recent months under your government's watch. Every week another mill closes or layoffs are announced. The Bowater kraft mill in Thunder Bay, putting another 280 people out of work, is a recent example.

Two weeks ago, I was in Timmins for pre-budget consultations. The Ontario Forest Industry Association started out their presentation by emphasizing that the sector is in a crisis. As I sat there listening to the OFI presentation, I received an e-mail from a forestry company in my riding. It began, "Dear Mr. Miller: Our industry is in a crisis. What will it take for someone to notice?" Minister, when are you going to get serious about the crisis in the forestry industry?

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): First of all, I will say to the member, we admit there is a crisis in the forest products industry. In fact, I saw that coming about two years ago, and I brought the industry, the workers, the municipalities and the First Nations together to give me advice as to how to handle that oncoming crisis, as we saw it coming. I got that report, and we have responded almost fully to that report.

I've been working with the Premier and the cabinet to do even more. The Premier has indicated to the public that we are going to be doing more for the forest industry. We work every day with that industry to make sure that we don't lose any more jobs, that we encourage further investment in the future so that we can sustain this industry for all of this province.

Mr. Miller: Minister, even your own members say your response has not been adequate. The member from Thunder Bay–Superior North said, "The \$350 million in loan guarantees offered by the McGuinty government in June have not been well received by industry because it would do nothing to reduce day-to-day costs."

I'd like to continue with the letter from my recipient, which exemplifies that point. It goes on:

"My husband and I operate a small forestry company in Huntsville, Ontario.

"We have had concerns for a while now and as these concerns become reality, we wonder what is going to happen in an industry that is largely being ignored....

"Fuel and insurance costs, equipment repair costs are a daily struggle and affect the bottom line of both big and small companies....

"And it is not only the mills that are suffering, because every mill that closes its doors takes with it not only their employees but also logging and trucking companies and all their associated employees and subcontractors. As one of Canada's largest industrial employers, why are we being largely ignored?"

Minister, why do you continue to ignore the cries for help from forestry operations, large and small?

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: Respectfully, I say to the member, I don't think the \$680 million is ignoring the cry to help. We have a tremendous cash infusion for this industry and, in fact, we have 18 proposals now before our com-

petitive secretariat that, if they were to go ahead to completion, would lever \$680 million of projects—investment in a very vital industry across this province, but especially northern Ontario. I am very confident that most, if not all, of those projects are going to go ahead. We're starting to turn a corner in this industry. I think, with the announcements that are going to come in the next few weeks, the member is going to see that. I ask the member to work together with us to make sure that we have a bright future in Ontario for our forestry industry.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Again, farmers from across the province have been forced to protest your government's failure to help farm families deal with the serious financial losses suffered in 2005 and your failure to announce a long-term plan to end the farm income crisis. Today, some banks are cutting off farmers' credit because of poor commodity prices last year. Meanwhile, farmers need financial help today if they're going to get their crop in the ground this spring. Premier, instead of wasting time on more photo ops, instead of blaming Ottawa, will your government act today, level the playing field and provide farmers with the \$370 million in provincial funding that they need to stay in business?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I welcome the question and I want to report to the House that we held our very successful second annual agriculture summit last week. The important dimension related to that summit is that it requires that we work together to look at how we can strengthen the agrifood sector over the next five, 10, 15 and 20 years. But in addition to that, after the summit I had the opportunity to meet with a number of representatives from the farm groups to talk specifically about the kinds of assistance that the leader of the NDP raises with me today. As a result of that, I spoke with Prime Minister Harper and asked if we might not immediately arrange a meeting between his agriculture minister and mine, and that meeting in fact is happening as we speak. I look forward to saying more about that in supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Well, I spoke with some of those farmers who said they've been to lots of meetings with their government; what they want is an end to the meetings and some action. These people are on the verge of losing their farms and losing their families' livelihood. They're being faced with higher energy prices, including your sky-high electricity rates. This year alone, they're facing an additional \$300 million in costs. They need action, they need financial support now and they need to see a strategy that will return to them their costs of production. When are they going to see action, Premier, rather than more meetings and more photo ops from your government?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To follow up a little bit more in terms of that conversation, what I said to the Prime Minister was that we are prepared to bring money to the

table as soon as possible. What I would like to do is, if he would come to the table with some money, we could make the assistance that we could provide our farmers with much more meaningful. That is the subject matter of the meeting being held this very day.

Now, to that end, I will ask Mr. Tory in his capacity as leader of the official opposition if he might implore his colleagues in the Conservative government on Parliament Hill as well to understand the urgency of the situation here for our farmers in Ontario. I am saying again, we are prepared to bring money to the table. But what I'd like to do, and the commitment I made to Ontario farmers, is that we want to make that assistance more meaningful by ensuring that we have a federal partner there at the same time. That's the purpose of the meeting that's taking place right now.

1530

OMERS PENSION FUND

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph–Wellington): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. My office has received calls from CUPE members wondering about how Bill 206, the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System Act, would apply to them. They are concerned about their pension plan. They want to know if they can enjoy their retirement years. Since those individuals are not firefighters, they're not paramedics and they're not police, they are concerned about the stories they are hearing and who is paying for what. They are hearing stories that they are paying for firefighter pensions. They are hearing stories that police will get a better pension at CUPE members' expense.

Minister, will you stand today and clarify for CUPE members in my constituency, who seem to be subject to a lot of misinformation as to who actually pays for supplemental plans?

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Once again, Bill 206 does not increase pension contributions for anyone. As a matter of fact, all it does is give local bargaining to employers and employees to bargain for supplementary benefit plans for our emergency workers; namely, police, fire and paramedics. Anything that is negotiated locally along those lines is being paid on a 50-50 basis between employer and employees and does not in any way affect the main plan.

Pensioners currently receiving a pension from OMERS: It should be noted that their pensions are not in any way, shape or form affected by Bill 206. They will continue to receive their pensions, and their pensions are not in any danger whatsoever.

Again, the supplemental plan that has been the main subject of the Bill 206 discussion is completely separate and apart from the main plan and does not affect the main plan under OMERS.

Mrs. Sandals: That's good news for the constituents in my riding who are retirees and also for those who are CUPE members and are concerned that somehow they're losing, which is absolutely not true.

But I've also been hearing from municipalities in my riding. Municipal officials have been concerned that somehow their taxes will be going up because of this bill. They've published some numbers and claim that, as a result of our bill, local citizens will be facing higher property taxes this year.

I have heard you on numerous occasions in this House speak to our government's actions to ensure strong communities in Ontario and our co-operation with municipalities. But could you please assure our municipal partners that Bill 206 will not result in an immediate massive increase to property taxes?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: Let me also suggest to those individuals who are interested in this Bill 206 issue to go to the ministry website, where there is a factual sheet as to exactly what Bill 206 provides.

With respect to the claim by AMO that this will produce massive tax increases, let me just say that any supplementary plan will take at least two years to come into existence. Any new benefit can be negotiated only on a once-every-three-years basis, and the kinds of tax increases that AMO is talking about are simply not accurate.

Again, any supplementary plan is for those emergency workers who are at greater risk in the protection of our communities and our lives on a day-to-day basis. That's why we're granting them the right to negotiate supplementary benefit plans at the local level.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I would like to seek unanimous consent to move a motion respecting the business of the House this afternoon and this evening.

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

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that, notwithstanding any standing order or the order of the House earlier today, this afternoon's debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 14, An Act to promote access to justice by amending or repealing various Acts and by enacting the Legislation Act, 2005, shall be deemed adjourned at 6 o'clock and the debate considered to be one full sessional day; and further

That the House sit beyond 6 o'clock for the purpose of completing consideration of the motion for third reading of Bill 27, An Act to amend the Arbitration Act, 1991, the Child and Family Services Act and the Family Law Act in connection with family arbitration and related matters, and to amend the Children's Law Reform Act in connection with the matters to be considered by the court in dealing with applications for custody and access, following which the Speaker shall adjourn the House until Wednesday, February 15, 2006, at 1:30 p.m.

The Speaker: Mr. Bradley moves that, notwithstanding any standing order—

Hon. Mr. Bradley: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

PETITIONS

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario has an inconsistent policy for access to new cancer treatments while these drugs are under review for funding; and

"Whereas cancer patients taking oral chemotherapy may apply for a section 8 exception under the Ontario drug benefit plan, with no such exception policy in place for intravenous cancer drugs administered in hospital; and

"Whereas this is an inequitable, inconsistent and unfair policy, creating two classes of cancer patients, with further inequities on the basis of personal wealth and the willingness of hospitals to risk budgetary deficits to provide new intravenous chemotherapy treatments; and

"Whereas cancer patients have the right to the most effective care recommended by their doctors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to provide immediate access to Velcade and other intravenous chemotherapy while these new cancer drugs are under review and provide a consistent policy for access to new cancer treatments that enables oncologists to apply for exceptions to meet the needs of patients."

I will apply my signature to this petition, and I will ask page Michael Bourgeois from Ballantrae to come forward to present this petition to the table.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): 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 on 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.”

This has been signed by several residents of the town of Fort Frances on behalf of Community Living Fort Frances and District. I have affixed my signature as well.

1540

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition addressed to the Parliament of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas Ontario has an inconsistent policy for access to new cancer treatments while these drugs are under review for funding; and

“Whereas cancer patients taking oral chemotherapy may apply for a section 8 exception under the Ontario drug benefit plan, with no such exception policy in place for intravenous cancer drugs administered in hospital; and

“Whereas this is an inequitable” situation, “creating two classes of cancer patients, with further inequities on the basis of personal wealth and the willingness of hospitals to risk budgetary deficits to provide new intravenous chemotherapy treatments; and

“Whereas cancer patients have the right to the most effective care recommended by their doctors;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to provide immediate access to Velcade and other intravenous chemotherapy while these new cancer drugs are under review and provide a consistent policy for access to new cancer treatments that enables oncologists to apply for exceptions to meet the needs of patients.”

Thank you very much.

OMERS PENSION FUND

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a petition from CUPE Local 1457, and it says:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas CUPE Local 1457 is concerned by the Liberal government’s legislation, Bill 206, Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System Act, 2005; and

“Whereas Bill 206 contains a multitude of changes that will cripple OMERS’ ability to manage its \$40-billion pension assets; and

“Whereas Bill 206 makes no provision for oversight of pension funds or accountability; and

“Whereas Bill 206 changes the rules on resolving differences among sponsors, making it harder for CUPE to find a way to improve and protect pensions; and

“Whereas Bill 206 discriminates against women and lower-paid members while providing for special consideration for police and firefighters;

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

“That the McGuinty government abandon passage of Bill 206.”

GO TRANSIT TUNNEL

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition addressed “To the Parliament of Ontario, the minister of infrastructure services and the Minister of Transportation,” which reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

Since this is such a great petition, I am very happy to sign it as well.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I want to thank Dr. Timothy Hillson, an ophthalmologist in my riding, for helping with this petition.

“Whereas age-related macular degeneration is the leading cause of blindness in the elderly and is present in some form in 25% to 33% of seniors over the age of 75. AMD has two forms: the more common “dry” type and the “wet” type. Although the wet type occurs in only 15% of AMD patients, these patients account for 90% of the legal blindness that occurs with AMD. The wet type is further subdivided into classic and occult subtypes, based on the appearance of the AMD on special testing. Photodynamic therapy, a treatment where abnormal blood vessels are closed with a laser-activated chemical, has been shown to slow the progression of vision loss in both types of wet AMD;

“Whereas OHIP has not extended coverage for photodynamic therapy to the occult subtype of wet AMD, despite there being substantial clinical evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of this treatment in patients with either form of wet AMD. Untreated, these

patients can expect a progression in their visual loss, with central blindness as the end result;

“Whereas affected patients are in a position where a proven treatment is available to help preserve their vision, but this treatment can only be accessed at their own personal expense. Treatment costs are between \$12,500 and \$18,000 over an 18-month period. Many patients resign themselves to a continued worsening of their vision, as for them the treatment is financially unobtainable. The resultant blindness in these patients manifests itself as costs to society in other forms, such as an increased need for home care, missed time from work for family members providing care, and an increased rate of injuries such as hip fractures that can be directly attributable to their poor vision.

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to fund the treatment of the occult sub-type of macular degeneration with photodynamic therapy for all patients awaiting this service.”

I'm pleased to sign my name to this petition.

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I'm pleased to join with my colleague from Niagara Falls and, it would seem, my colleague from Simcoe North in 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,” which is wet, “and there are other forms of macular degeneration,” such as 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 that the government of Ontario should cover treatment for all forms of macular degeneration through the Ontario health insurance program.”

I affix my signature to this petition and I ask page Yasmeen to carry it for me.

AUTISM TREATMENT

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

“Whereas children with autism who have reached the age of six years are no longer being discharged from their preschool autism program; and

“Whereas these children should be getting the best special education possible in the form of ABA within the school system; and

“Whereas there are approximately 700 preschool children with autism across Ontario who are required to wait indefinitely for placement in the program, and there are also countless school-age children who are not receiving the support they require in the school system; and

“Whereas this situation has an impact on the families, extended families and friends of all of these children; and

“Whereas, as stated on the website for the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, ‘IBI can make a significant difference in the life of a child with autism. Its objective is to decrease the frequency of challenging behaviours, build social skills and promote language development’;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to fund the treatment of IBI for all pre-school children awaiting services. We also petition the Legislature of Ontario to fund an education program in the form of ABA in the school system.”

CURRICULUM

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a petition to do with education. It says:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Education plans to remove the study of derivatives from the grade 12 mathematics curriculum; and

“Whereas the grade 12 university preparation course Advanced Functions and Introductory Calculus is designed for students intending to study university programs that will involve calculus; and

“Whereas the course currently provides an introduction to the fundamental concepts of calculus, which are also required in grade 12 physics; and

“Whereas it contains three strands: advanced functions, in which students explore the properties and applications of polynomial, exponential and logarithmic functions, underlying concepts of calculus, in which students develop an understanding of the basic concepts of calculus by analyzing the rates of change involved in applications; and derivatives and applications, in which students develop, consolidate and apply to graphing and problem-solving the rules and properties of differentiation; and

“Whereas all of these strands are requirements for most university programs, and to remove any of them from the high school curriculum will leave the students of Ontario at a disadvantage when compared to the students from other provinces;

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

“To ensure that the Ministry of Education continues to retain all parts of the current grade 12 mathematics curriculum and stop making changes that put the future careers of Ontario students at risk.”

That comes to me from students from my riding.

1550

FIREARMS SAFETY

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a petition, and it reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the practical examination for the handling of firearms is a valuable component of the hunter safety course; and

“Whereas hunters and safety instructors have grave concerns about the removal of the practical examination for handling firearms;

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

“That the practical examination of the handling of firearms continues to form part of the hunter education safety course for Ontarians.”

CURRICULUM

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a petition to do with education from students in my riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka, which says:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the current Ministry of Education of Ontario has prepared a secondary school curriculum completely devoid of the topic of calculus to be implemented in September 2006;

“Whereas the changes to the curriculum have been presented to educators only after October 2005, and not yet to the general public;

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

“To ensure that the total removal of calculus from the Ontario secondary school curriculum be delayed until at least September 2008, so that the change may be openly and thoughtfully considered.”

That’s from students from my riding.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ACCESS TO JUSTICE ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR L’ACCÈS À LA JUSTICE

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 13, 2006, on the motion for second reading of Bill 14, An Act to promote access to justice by amending or repealing various Acts and by enacting the Legislation Act, 2006 / Projet de loi 14, Loi visant à promouvoir l’accès à la justice en modifiant ou abrogeant diverses lois et en édictant la Loi de 2006 sur la législation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Niagara Centre.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I started these comments yesterday evening, and I’ve got the opportunity now to wrap them up. It’s unfortunate that the House wouldn’t accommodate me by sitting an extra half-hour. It’s just strange. Sometimes you get the impression that these people just don’t want to work. I was eager—

Interjections.

Mr. Kormos: Look, I was eager to finish my limited one hour in leadoff comments on this bill but other folks wanted to go home. Far be it for me to tell people that they’ve got to maybe work an extra half-hour later on any given day.

Just a brief recap of what we covered: The New Democratic Party acknowledged the incredible contribution of Sheena Weir from the Law Society of Upper Canada to the formulation and development of, finally, legislation that will be the framework for the regulation of paralegals. We are very grateful to her and we compliment her. She’s an incredibly talented, skilled person, and she played a major role in getting this onto the front burner.

We talked in the chamber, during the course of my comments, about schedule E, and that is the section that would, incredibly, permit the crown, the prosecutor, to tender evidence against an accused in a provincial offences case over the telephone, by video conferencing. It quite frankly is repugnant to any fair-minded person and is an incredible affront to the presumption of innocence, which certainly is a foundation of our justice system and a very valuable one that we should treasure. I indicated, on behalf of New Democrats, our preference that schedule E simply be—the Attorney General should stand up and simply say that it’s gone, it’s severed, it’s not a part of the legislation.

On finally dealing with the provisions in schedule B that deal with the reform of the justices of the peace appointment: We agree with the general proposition. Once again, it’s something that has got to go to committee for some thorough, significant and extensive review, because there are a number of interesting things here. One is the eligibility standards for people to be appointed. In days gone by, and quite frankly up to the present, the eligibility standard for becoming a justice of the peace is belonging to the right political party and having made enough financial contributions to that party in power. Well, please, Mr. Delaney, it was surely one of the last bastions of the crassest patronage.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): My opponent got a nice position.

Mr. Kormos: As Mr. Bradley indicates—you’re now on the record, I having responded to your interjection, sir. I don’t know whether Mr. Bradley is suggesting that the appointment of his opponent—look, you beat him, for Pete’s sake. Don’t begrudge him a role on the bench. Quite frankly, I want to tell you that His Worship Tom Froese has acquired an exceptional reputation in Niagara for his performance as a justice of the peace.

Look, patronage without merit is a blot on a democratic system. Patronage with merit is still patronage, but somewhat more understandable. In the case of Tom Froese, I’ll readily state that there was merit attached to what may well have been a patronage appointment.

I indicated that Tom Froese is one of the good ones. I talked about people who impressed me a great deal, people like Tony Argentino, now passed away; people like Gabe Tisi, an outstanding bilingual justice of the peace who provided French-language services; and Morley Kitchen, I would say a truly superb justice of the peace. Remember old Inspector Bill Wright in Welland—Crowland, as a matter of fact, more appro-

priately. Inspector Bill Wright was one of the first JPs I had to work with as a very young law student and then lawyer.

There is an interesting provision—I started to tell you yesterday about a very valuable package I received from Enam Bukhari, a lawyer in St. Catharines. Mr. Bukhari some years ago suffered some very serious health problems that have left him on a respirator and with severe disabilities. It was after undergoing that experience and becoming disabled, if that's not unfair, that Mr. Bukhari acquired his master of law degree from Osgoode law school. He has maintained a practice in the city of St. Catharines and has a strong and stellar reputation.

He wrote to me with a lot of supporting data about the matter of access by persons with disability—please, Mr. Parliamentary Assistant, if you'll bear with me for just a couple of seconds—to judicial positions. What's interesting is that in your schedule B of Bill 14, you talk about, in what will become section 5.2 of your act:

“(1) A justice of the peace who believes that he or she is unable, because of a disability, to perform the essential duties of the office unless his or her needs are accommodated may apply to the review council for an order under subsection (2).

“(2) If the review council finds that the justice of the peace is unable, because of a disability, to perform the ... duties,” etc., they can then order the necessary supports, subject to cost restraints, which I find a regrettable thing, and we'll be dealing with that in committee.

So there's consideration—I applaud the authors of the legislation, the drafters, for including consideration of a justice of the peace, a judicial official, who becomes disabled or acquires a disability, because that assumes after their appointment, but there's nothing in this legislation that addresses the very legitimate concerns of lawyer Enam Bukhari when he talks about the need for there to be accommodation of persons with disabilities when it comes to appointment to judicial positions. In fact, among the items that he sent me was a summary of appointments over a period of, oh, several years—he's dealing here with appointments to the provincial judge bench, but appointments of representative groups for the period from 1989 through to 1998, persons with disabilities, year after year after year: zero, zero, zero.

So I'm looking forward to committee with respect to this bill, because just as there's a provision to accommodate justices of the peace who acquire disabilities after their appointment, I put to you, sir, that there should be provisions to accommodate applicants for the position who would otherwise be deemed qualified or highly qualified for the purpose of consideration by the Attorney General: persons with disabilities. I want to thank Enam Bukhari, a lawyer from St. Catharines, for the material he put together and presented to me.

1600

We've got to move quickly now. I found most interesting being reminded, back in schedule A—because to wrap up I've got to move to the paralegal regulation, if I may. Part V of the new Courts of Justice Act, section 71,

will read, should this bill pass, “The administration of the courts shall be carried on so as to....

“(b) encourage public access to the courts and public confidence in the administration of justice;

“(c) further the provision of high-quality services to the public; and

“(d) promote the efficient use of public resources.”

You call this bill the Access to Justice Act. Let me tell you about a young couple, let's say, in Fenwick, Ontario, for example, who buy their matrimonial home and who have a lawyer representing them. When their neighbours on the adjoining property decide to dig a pool, the contractor with the shovel digging the pool smells petroleum and oil products as he digs through the earth. Neighbour speaks to neighbour, and that neighbour recalls, “Yes, quite right; the lawyer who did the title search identified any number of petroleum companies as having been previous owners of this property, but that lawyer assured us that that, in and of itself, wasn't problematic.”

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): They were drilling for oil.

Mr. Kormos: What happened is that service stations and oil and gasoline storage were on this property when it was a very rural property.

Bear with me. A young couple, hardworking folks, their largest single acquisition, their family home down in Fenwick, discover, after the fact, that they're living on property that is contaminated with gasoline and oil. They do the right thing. In a civilized society, you litigate; you sue. They hired a lawyer. They issued a statement of claim, and in fact they gave me a copy of the statement of claim. They're on their third law firm now. Mr. Parliamentary Assistant, you would know a great deal about this. The statement of claim has been issued. They're not even at discoveries. The litigation is against a number of oil companies, the previous owners of the property and, of course, the lawyer. Why not? Think about it. Who are you supposed to trust? But they're all defending like mad. The lawyer has got the errors and omissions insurance defending him, doesn't he, Mr. Parliamentary Assistant? The lawyer doesn't have to reach into his pocket to pay for a lawyer and retain counsel. The oil company has got all of our pockets to reach into to defend themselves, and the previous owner has to hire counsel too.

So here's a young couple in this incredible dilemma. Think about how heartbreaking that would be, right? They want to have children, but they don't want to think of having children when they're in this home. And the house is worthless now because it has been revealed—they can't sell it now denying any knowledge of contaminated soil, can they? So in 2001 the statement of claim was issued; no discoveries yet. Legal fees to date, for these homeowners alone: \$35,000. I became aware when they came into the office in this incredible crisis. Here they are, \$35,000 into this litigation, with good lawyers that they've retained now, but with the prospect of a whole lot more to spend, and defendants who have deep pockets, especially the two oil companies, and the errors and omissions insurance.

I'm not criticizing the lawyers. Look, skilled lawyers, with well-staffed offices and the resources you need to run a good law firm, cost money. You've got to pay for the support staff; you've got to pay for the research; you've got to pay for all this stuff. You need expert evidence prepared and accumulated.

Here's a young couple, \$35,000 in legal fees to date—not even into discoveries. So, Mr. Parliamentary Assistant, you and I both know that this bill does nothing to enhance access to justice for victims like this young couple, does it? It's naive to suggest that it does.

That takes us into paralegals, because the real debate should be bona fide access to justice. Matrimonial litigation: Couples who are trying, in a structured way, in the court system, to resolve all the differences that arise when there's a marriage breakdown. You and I both know full well—because we've had these folks in our constituency offices, heartbroken—the legal fees are \$40,000, \$50,000, \$60,000, \$70,000, \$80,000, \$90,000; it's not at all unusual. Protracted litigation—years and years and years.

Look, I'm not suggesting you solve the problem by letting non-lawyers do family litigation; I'm not suggesting that at all. I don't think anybody here in this room would argue that; I don't think people in the paralegal community would argue that. One of the things I think we have to understand is that things like family litigation are so complex and so technical that you need—or at least, in the best of all worlds, all parties would have—competent, experienced legal counsel with specialization in that area.

Let's talk about the paralegal framework. You know that there is incredible concern—Look, this has got to go to committee. One of the things that really bothered me was that the scope of practice wasn't discussed in the legislation—was it, Mr. Zimmer? The scope of practice isn't considered at all, even though scope of practice was very much the consideration of any number of public reports here in the province of Ontario about regulation of paralegals.

As well, the broad definition of “practice of law” has caused great concern to any number of professions. I'm talking about schedule C—it's the paralegal regulatory framework—in particular part o.i: “...a person provides legal services if the person engages in conduct that involves the application of legal principles and legal judgment....”

“(6) Without limiting the generality of” that subsection, “a person provides legal services if the person does any of the following....”

“2. Selects, drafts, completes or revises,

“i. a document that affects a person's interests in or rights to or in real or personal property....”

That's why Steven Offer wrote the letter to any number of us on behalf of a coalition of organizations, saying, “Hey, real estate agents do this all the time. They draft contracts.” You understand what I'm saying, Mr. Marchese? But we certainly don't want them prosecuted for engaging in the practice.

The folks down at David Chev-Olds—wonderful people like Cathy Robertson, who sold me every car that I've owned for the last 30 years; a wonderful salesperson. This woman—look, I trust her absolutely. But she prepares offers to purchase; she prepares contracts all the time. I tell you, the mediation community—mediators—are incredibly concerned about the impact of this particular section. As well, we've gotten—I hope all of you have gotten—a letter from Jim Flood of the Ontario Real Estate Association. What I've assured these people—and I wish there were more time—is that this bill will indeed go to committee, and that their concerns about the very broad definition of what constitutes the practice of law will be addressed.

1610

I have concerns about workers' advocates from the Office of the Worker Adviser, who do excellent work. I have concerns about trade unions who, as part of their trade union responsibilities, advocate for their membership in front of tribunals like WSIB, workers' comp, or EI, unemployment insurance. I quite frankly have concern for any number of our staff in our constituency offices who do some of the same advocacy for our constituents. They are well-trained, skilled and talented, but I put to you that it was never the intention of anybody who advocated paralegal reform to have these people forced into a paralegal regulatory regime.

So New Democrats are going to pursue this bill into committee and actively involve ourselves in what should be extensive, broad-based and thorough committee hearings in the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): It's always a creative and rhetorical challenge to follow the member from Niagara Centre.

The member's agreement that the government of Ontario needed to reform the process by which justices of the peace are selected is certainly welcome, and we concur with the member from Niagara Centre. The status quo that our government inherited when we were elected was clearly unacceptable. To the obvious astonishment of the member for Niagara Centre, I'm not going to blame either him or his party. I'm not even going to point a finger at the former government.

Bill 14 may not be a gripping read, at 176 pages of often dense legal text, but it is a necessary bill. In addition to making long-overdue revisions such as setting out qualifications for the men and women who administer justice to the population as justices of the peace, it makes many more revisions in the administration of the courts. The bill amends the rules of the courts, the bill amends rules dealing with damages in medical malpractice and, finally, the bill makes many technical and other miscellaneous amendments.

Let's go back to justices of the peace. Over the years, justices of the peace were appointed at the pleasure of the executive council of the prevailing government. Many fine people have served their province, their communities and the cause of justice in Ontario as justices of the

peace, and perhaps others may have had less-than-stellar qualifications or track records.

If you had just taken over the responsibilities of a senior executive, such as the Attorney General did two years ago, what you would do is a thorough house-cleaning. In the case of justices of the peace, you'd say, "Let's get together a proper job description, a set of consistent criteria and a fair and impartial selection process." That's good management. That's what Bill 14 does, and that's why it deserves passage.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): It's my pleasure to add some comments on the member from Niagara Centre's hour-long leadoff speech on Bill 14, An Act to promote access to justice by amending or repealing various Acts and by enacting the Legislation Act, 2005.

What is clear is that we have a problem with access to justice because we don't have enough justices of the peace in the province of Ontario and the government has been lax in not getting enough new justices of the peace into the system, so we're seeing a backlog in the courts.

Now, the member from Niagara Centre is a lawyer, and the question I would ask is, what are the qualifications required to be a justice of the peace? I was speaking to the member from Lanark–Carleton last night, who is also a lawyer. He suggested that being a lawyer shouldn't be a requirement to be a justice of the peace; it's more important to be a member of the community in good standing and to have a good knowledge base and some common sense. But it is important that the government get on the job and get some more justices of the peace in place so that we can deal with the backlog in the courts.

This is a thick bill; it's 176 pages long. I've stated previously that if the section to do with the regulation of paralegals was separated out, that could pass quite quickly. I think it is very important that this bill go to committee. As the member from Niagara Centre pointed out, there are many questions to do with scope of practice. I'm sure there will be lawyers who will want to make comment; I'm sure there will be paralegals and others in the community. So I think it's very important that it go out to committee and that there be lots of opportunity for the public to comment on Bill 14.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): I congratulate my colleague from Niagara Centre for his thorough review of this bill. There's much more he could and would say, had he more time. I congratulate him for the competence with which he tackles some of these issues, and his consistency as well.

He argues, how can people have access to justice when the Attorney General's budget has been flatlined rather than having an increase that would allow the public, generally speaking, to get the kind of access to justice that we're looking for? It's been flatlined. That speaks to the problem this ministry has, and so many other ministries which equally have been flatlined by this government for the last year or so and will continue to be flatlined for the next year and a half or two that this government has in power.

The member from Niagara Centre argues, as he did last night and as he always does, that this bill which calls itself "Access to Justice" does nothing to address the plague of plea bargaining that is taking place in our courts because crown attorneys are understaffed and under-resourced. He has for years maintained that position while the Tories were in power and while this government has been in power. While it is true that, from time to time, they drop a couple of bucks by way of trying to deal with this issue, the problem is that crown attorneys are understaffed and under-resourced. He argues as well, as he always has for many years, and continues to do under the Liberal government, that there is nothing in this bill to address court backlogs, which put our justice system at the risk of having serious criminal charges withdrawn on a daily basis. He will continue to say it, as he's done in the past, until this government listens to what he is putting forth.

Ms. Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia–Lambton): I just want to convey to the members of the opposition and the third party that I believe it's been the practice of this government to send bills to committee for public input. I think that's extremely important and I know that the member from Niagara Centre will be glad to know that it is the practice of this government, which has every intention of sending this bill to committee for public hearings.

What will this bill, the Access to Justice Act, do? This legislation is about modernizing some aspects of the justice system, improving people's access to the justice system and providing greater openness and transparency. The member from Niagara Centre asks, "How?" One of the most important things you have to do in modernizing is, for instance, the amendments dealing with the justice of the peace system. It's a reform. The proposed reform to the justice of the peace system would ensure that there is a more open and transparent appointment process, and also establishes minimum qualification standards, ensuring the public's confidence that qualified candidates would be appointed. I think that's a huge step in the right direction when it comes to justices of the peace.

This also is about regulation of paralegals. Right now, there is very little regulating paralegals. The regulation of paralegals would, again, increase access to justice by giving consumers a choice in qualified legal services, while protecting people who get legal advice from non-lawyers.

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

Mr. Kormos: I appreciate the lecture, but there's still nothing that you've told us, ma'am, about this bill that's going to enhance access to justice. The fact is, people can go to paralegals now. We don't have regulated paralegals and people aren't assured of the standard of service that they're going to be provided. There's nothing in the bill that enhances access to justice. Please.

1620

But what I found most interesting—because we can reform the justice of the peace appointment process, but

what we've got to do is reform a government that is flatlining and reducing its budgetary commitment to the Ministry of the Attorney General. You can reform the JP appointment process, but how do you get the government to appoint an adequate number of justices of the peace to make sure that the services are being provided to make sure that the backlogs in those courts aren't resulting in Askov applications being granted left and right?

What I found remarkable is that during a series of questions from my colleague from Hamilton, Ms. Horwath, about JP shortages in her jurisdiction and similar questions from other members of this chamber, this Attorney General said, "Oh, I can't appoint more justices of the peace until we pass Bill 14." Hogwash, poppycock, bullfeathers. By God, it's not been since Charlie Harnick that this chamber has heard such things from an Attorney General. I've got a letter that the Attorney General himself wrote back on January 31, 2006, to the Municipal Law Departments Association of Ontario, which says, "I will continue to make justice of the peace appointments while this work with the court continues," that is to say, the work involving Bill 14. So, you see, the Attorney General very specifically contradicts what he said in this chamber. We were Harnicked, and I find that a most unpleasant experience. Let's have some candour and forthrightness in the course of this discussion, please.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Patten: The member from Niagara Centre always provides a degree of fervour, flower, enthusiasm and flair in his speech, in somewhat of a theatrical fashion, but I do wonder what he did with the money his mother gave him for his acting lessons.

However, he did make a few points. He said, "Where is access?" I know that it's part of the role of the opposition to always criticize and seldom acknowledge the strengths of a piece of legislation. Surely the member would appreciate that, with some modern forms of communications and activities in being able to provide statements to a court, which we already do in many instances—we provide closed-circuit opportunities for children so that children are not embarrassed or shy or exposed to being identified when they're not of age. We already use that kind of technology. The opportunity for people who may be disabled to speak through video conferencing, who, because of that disability or because of the distance and the costs it might require to make a statement for the court—surely the member would acknowledge that that provides access, more information. It's just one of the examples I wanted to identify as an attempt by a particular field—the justices in the courts, who are not the most rabid responders to radical change, and perhaps for good reason—to look at how we can be more transparent in our dealings and how we can provide for more ways in which people can participate in the experience, contributing to and having access to justice.

I think by this time that the member surely knows that indeed this bill will go forward to a committee. I have had a chance to review part of this, being a chair of one

of the cabinet committees. There's a fair amount of work in this. It touches on many aspects, in particular about five areas of amendment. From my point of view, having looked at this, it certainly tidies up and improves and places certain appointments on the basis of being judged on merit and not just on who someone may have known in the past related to the government of the day. For example, the selection of the justices of the peace, which heretofore had been on the basis of part-time responsibilities in different areas, was in some instances, I would say, pressing the point to an extreme, in seeing how some of the justices were in fact selected.

This will be more transparent. This will look at the background of people. This sets out criteria. It will provide justices on a full-time basis. There is a section, which of course the member from Niagara Centre will acknowledge, to provide opportunities for people who may have acquired disabilities during the course of their responsibilities. He says, though, that the legislation does not address encouraging or seeking those who may have disabilities as being eligible. I would humbly submit—because I know the member from Niagara Centre is a lawyer; I am not—that the Ontario Human Rights Code provides protection on the basis of not being able to discriminate on the basis of disabilities. Therefore, if there were a situation in which someone felt that was the case for those who may apply, it does not say that no one is eligible; it says, "those who are qualified." And if those who are qualified to serve in that particular position come forward, then it seems to me that they would be considered. That may have been part of the perception heretofore of both applicants and people in other areas.

Mr. Speaker, my time has run out. There are many, many aspects to this. But I will let the House know again that for sure this will be going to committee.

Mr. Kormos: Your time hasn't run out.

Mr. Patten: I'm sharing my time with some other members.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Marchese: I thought he was sharing his time.

The Deputy Speaker: He's not. Nobody stood up.

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): When Bill 14, the Access to Justice Act, came through, it came as quite a surprise. In my previous role as critic for the Attorney General, there had been a lot of discussion about these particular areas—justices of the peace, paralegals, different aspects of the legal system—but we never expected it to come in one complete bill. It was anticipated that it would be done in a much different format than what came out. Now, as it has come out this way, it has become much more problematic in terms of bringing about these major reforms with respect to not only access to justice but how justice is administered in this province.

I don't think the Attorney General has done himself any great benefit with respect to how he has brought this together, because there are problems with the administration of justice with respect to justices of the peace, and

the lack of them. Certainly, in my area of Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford and throughout Simcoe county, there is a shortage of justices of the peace.

I think it was commented on that the Attorney General said he wasn't going to make any more appointments of justices of the peace until Bill 14 came down. Well, he has, and he certainly hasn't been following the procedure in terms of what was envisioned by Ian Scott, who was the Attorney General who brought in the process with respect to the selection of provincial court judges in this province. Now we're dealing with justices of the peace, and the Attorney General used that transition time to plug a few of his cronies into these JP positions, which some people call the Senate of the Ontario Legislature. So the Attorney General has done what he wanted.

Mr. Kormos: In just around 25 minutes' time, Rosario Marchese, the member for Trinity–Spadina, is going to be speaking to Bill 14. He has an acute interest in the administration of justice. He has some serious concerns, as do all New Democrats, about the fact that this bill, which calls itself the Access to Justice Act, does nothing to enhance access to justice.

Look, when you've got family courts being run like sausage factories, when you've got litigants where the emotions run high, where there's been violence or the potential for violence or you have great fear on the part of one or another party, where you've got disputes over children, you've got them lined up—

Interjection.

Mr. Kormos: Mr. Gerretsen, don't say "Oh, come on." Visit some of those family courts anywhere in this province, whether you're in Toronto, whether you're in Brockville, whether you're down in Niagara. You see family court judges like Lloyd Budgell in Welland, down in Niagara, with dockets, page after page, trying to apply the law as best he, or in the case of many good women on the bench, she can—litigants sitting there, staring at each other across the hallway, ending up in the courtroom at 4:30 or 5:00 in the afternoon because the lists are so long and then the judge, because he's got staff to accommodate, court reporters etc., has to say, "We've got to adjourn this two more weeks, or you two people go out there and hammer out a deal."

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That's what is going on in our family courts. Go to some of our criminal courts. Go down to Mimico if you want to see sausage-factory justice: once again, provincial judges working with dockets, page after page after page, and bikers with the big tattoos and big biceps sitting side by side with the person who is going to be called as a witness against them, and then judges who can't handle the dockets and have to adjourn case after case. That's what this government had better start addressing.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton–Kent–Middlesex): There's no question that this is a large bill. I think in a lot of cases most people, when they see this sort of thing, are intimidated by it. That's the way a lot of people feel about the justice system as well.

They have certain expectations of us as legislators, that we will make sure their interests are protected. I think a lot of people would be very surprised to find out that there are no minimum requirements and qualifications for a justice of the peace. I think most people expect that there is some qualification, some consistency, across the province for the appointment of these people, because people rely very much on what justices of the peace bring to their communities, and that is access to justice.

Another thing that I find very interesting, and the member from Ottawa Centre brought it up, is the video conferencing and the use of electronic devices in order to allow witnesses to testify in communities and in courts. It's very important in rural and northern Ontario that we allow this kind of thing to happen. All too often we see small communities with a small police force, and the officer is required to testify in court farther away. That takes them out of their community. That means the community for a certain period of time has no police officer and no protection. We can't have that kind of administration of justice. Video conferencing means that police officers will be able to testify—without necessarily leaving their communities and having to travel long distances. That means all the officers in that community will be able to continue to do their jobs. That's very important for our people, and that is access to justice.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): I'm pleased to comment briefly on Bill 14, An Act to promote access to justice. That's something I want to talk about. There are so many things we could be talking about: the lack of justices of the peace in my riding, the county of Renfrew, where the Attorney General has made no move to appoint much-needed justices of the peace, whereas other places have had appointments. Earlier in the fall, due to a sickness issue and a personal leave issue, one of the justices of the peace was not available. The other justice of the peace worked 46 consecutive days in Renfrew county. I have spoken to the minister on many occasions about those appointments, and nothing is happening. I think it's unfortunate that access to justice is certainly being denied in Renfrew county.

I want to talk about one of the things that comes through my office on a regular basis: people who find themselves in need of the courts because that's the only way it can be remedied. They'll say, "Can you do anything for us on this, John?" I'll say, "In fact, there's nothing I can do. It is a legal matter, and you're going to have to get a lawyer involved." In the case, for example, of a wrongful dismissal or something, you've got John Q. Public—they can't get legal aid for this but they don't have the resources to challenge these kinds of things, and the company that may have dismissed them certainly has the wherewithal to ensure that if there is a challenge to it, it will be stalled long enough in the courts so that these people don't actually get a fair hearing. I think that's one of the problems with access to justice: For too many people who are not people of means, they really don't truly have access to justice.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Ottawa Centre, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Patten: I want to acknowledge the comments from the members from Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford, Niagara Centre, Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. It's interesting: We keep skirting around the whole concept of access. I would say to my friend from Niagara Centre that in fact he criticized the quality of other aspects of the court system but failed, on the other hand, to acknowledge what this bill is attempting to do, in particular with tidying up administration of justice, providing criteria and more accountability, the licensing of paralegals and the whole process of transparency of the justices of the peace. For the first time we'll have a transparent process. These people will go before a committee of this particular Legislature with their CVs and their background and have to justify that to a committee that is made up of all parties of this particular House. I think that's an improvement.

I would also go on to say—and my friend from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex underlined this as well—this was the aspect of how someone cannot say that by expanding the ways in which people can communicate and participate in the process of giving testimony, or of witness or opinion or what have you, this does not increase or improve access to justice.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Tascona: I'm very pleased to join in the debate on Bill 14. There are a number of aspects of the bill that have to be addressed. We've been focusing quite a bit on the Liberal government's failure to provide adequate justice of the peace coverage in a number of jurisdictions, but there are other parts of the bill that I'm going to mention.

One is in schedule A, medical malpractice damages. They're going to be setting up a new section 116.1 of the act which deals with medical malpractice actions: "In these actions, any damages awarded for the future care costs of the plaintiff must be paid as periodic payments under an annuity contract that satisfies specified criteria. Certain exceptions are specified." So certainly what they're doing there with respect to medical malpractice is trying to provide a more structured approach with respect to damages awards as opposed to a massive payout.

Also dealing with the legislation here, I'm going to comment on the Justices of the Peace Act, which is being proposed, and also the amendments to the Law Society Act dealing with paralegals.

Basically, a lot of it is just technical areas that we're dealing with in schedule A. I want to focus more so on dealing with the justices of the peace process, and also the paralegals. My colleague Bob Runciman is the critic for our party with respect to the Attorney General, and certainly not only himself but previous Attorneys General, who would have been Norm Sterling and Jim Flaherty, dealt with this paralegal issue, which is something that the law society has wanted to deal with. I met with the law society and I also met with the paralegal associations to deal with this particular area.

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It's an important area, because I think the strength of any society is to provide mechanisms for people to get legal advice. There are a number of mechanisms out there. Obviously, if you can pay for your lawyer, you're going to be able to get whatever lawyer you wish. But there are people that can't afford to pay for a lawyer, so we have the legal aid system, where people can go and get legal advice to deal with, generally, family law matters and criminal court matters, provided they meet the financial means test in those particular areas. Also, we have clinics where people can come and deal with their problems, community legal centres, which are throughout the province and provide people with representation and legal advice. Generally, you'd be dealing with landlord-tenant matters to provide people with some advice, where a lawyer would be acting out of that particular clinic. And any community that has a law school—I know that when I went to Queen's law school the students provided legal advice through the school and gained experience that way, but also provided legal advice in that particular community for the problems that came through the office. Also, there are other mechanisms in terms of lawyer referral, which the law society provides for people to get free advice for up to 30 minutes to deal with their legal problems. That creates a void; I think the member from Niagara Centre commented on the areas that aren't covered by legal aid, where people don't have the financial means, so they have to go to other areas to get that advice.

One of the areas where that's popped up is paralegals. I think everybody knows, whatever community you are in, there are paralegals out there doing—definitely, in terms of fighting traffic tickets, I think everybody knows about them in terms of that particular area of practice, which has proved to be filled quite adequately by the paralegals, to name one area.

Certainly, they provide advice in other areas—landlord-tenant, and civil matters in terms of debt collection. What we have there is an area where—we dealt with it earlier last year—you've had cases where paralegals have got themselves in trouble, and the client doesn't have the access and protection they would have with a lawyer. Certainly with a lawyer, if the lawyer is found to have misappropriated funds or provided negligent advice, there is an insurance scheme which will provide protection for the client where the lawyer has not met the standards of the law society. The protection is there with respect to an insurance fund, because all lawyers pay into it and it's something that's administered by the law society. That protection isn't there with respect to paralegals who get involved in that type of activity, and the clients are not protected.

I think it's long overdue that we as legislators take a look at this particular area and bring some stability to the area where paralegals are practising, in terms of what areas they're going to be practising in, what standards they're going to be practising under and what's going to be the overriding body to deal with how they deliver their

services to the community. It's very important that we have that debate here.

I know my colleague Bob Runciman, the Attorney General critic, is looking forward to very detailed and not lengthy hearings, in terms of delaying the process, but certainly thorough enough hearings in terms of making sure that all the parties are able to get their views across with respect to dealing with the complex issues that are in Bill 14. That's the only way we're going to be able to hear from the stakeholders in terms of the nuances that are going to be required for this to be amended properly.

Certainly, with respect to the paralegal file, that is something that has been the subject of extensive stakeholder discussion over the years. Obviously, I think it's going to lead to some lively presentations at the public hearings, because of what's at stake in terms of people's livelihoods and the quality of the justice system that we want to provide in this province.

That returns me to one other aspect of the bill. Schedule A deals with a lot of housekeeping matters regarding the administration of the courts, bureaucracy, the rules of court and giving the chief justice more leeway, but schedule B gets into the nuts and bolts of the justices of the peace system. I know that the members across the floor are having discussions and making comments about the system that their government inherited. Well, the fact of the matter is, the justices of the peace system has been around for many years. Certainly the selection process and the qualifications of justices of the peace are the subject of many debates.

I know that in the province of Alberta, that was the subject of some heated discussion in terms of how justices of the peace should be selected and what their qualifications should be. If I recall it correctly, that was the subject of a court challenge with respect to the approach that was taken in Alberta that to be a justice of the peace you needed a legal background and legal training, yet at the same time, they had a number of justices of the peace who didn't have that. So in order to protect their position and what the government was doing, they launched a court challenge with respect to what ended up protecting their position. The government did move forward in terms of reforming the justices of the peace provisions, but not in the direction they were initially headed.

Where we are now in the transformation of the selection process in Ontario is that we have a process where people apply, their qualifications are reviewed by a committee and those qualified people who applied are referred on to the Attorney General for the selection process, i.e., where they should go and who is selected. That's something that was brought forth in the latter 1980s. That's a process that I don't believe is the same at the federal level, if I recall correctly. In my reading, the Superior Court justices are not selected in the same process that provincial court judges are.

What we have here is that we're moving forward with a process that is being brought forth by the Attorney General at a time when their services are obviously in

great demand, when the review of the qualifications of justices of the peace is certainly under severe scrutiny, because there are varying opinions throughout the legal community and obviously throughout the community in general with respect to the quality of the role that the justices of the peace play per se in the court system. Some are positive, some are negative and some are just sort of mixed reviews about what they lend to the administration of justice in this province.

There is no doubt in my mind that we need a process in place that will make sure that we have the most qualified individuals put in place who will serve the needs of the various jurisdictions that are in need. That's one thing I've noticed about this Attorney General. We have an incredible need with respect to the fast-growth area in Simcoe county and in the area of my colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka with respect to justices of the peace. Where are we seeing justices of the peace being appointed? We're seeing them being appointed in the urban areas: Mississauga, Brampton, Toronto and Ottawa. That's been a steady stream from this Attorney General in terms of where he is appointing justices of the peace. He is continuing to do that even while we're dealing with Bill 14, which will provide for a procedure that he is not currently following, in terms of selecting the most qualified candidate to become a justice of the peace.

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This is a system that also requires dealing with justices of the peace who get out of line. There are some high-profile cases even recently dealing with justices of the peace who are being reviewed for their conduct.

This particular area where the Attorney General wants to take us, I believe, because of the great need we have to provide the best system we can with respect to the criminal justice system and the role that justices of the peace play should not have been part of a sort of omnibus bill with respect to the justice system. I just don't understand why the Attorney General chose the route he did with respect to justices of the peace. This is something that could have been dealt with by him a number of years ago in terms of the problems we have and making sure the justices of the peace, whatever type he wants to put in there, were put in there, as opposed to delaying it. Quite frankly, there's so much in this bill that it's going to require delay and extensive public hearings to go through this.

At the same time, I was surprised by the fact that he chose to bring in, in an omnibus bill, the paralegals, which is something that could have been dealt with separately as opposed to in this particular bill. But he chose to deal with a particular area that is highly controversial. I know the law society was very anxious to have a bill that dealt with paralegals as expeditiously as possible so they could get on with the task. That's not going to happen with this bill, because he has basically thrown in a number of different areas that are going to be commented on and are definitely going to be subject to public hearings.

The Attorney General knows full well that the lack of justices of the peace in this province, definitely in a number of areas, has caused incredible strains on the justice system. I think that's going to be part of his legacy. He can say what he wants with respect to reforming the justices of the peace system; it's the way he went about it, in terms of dealing with it in the manner he has and the delay, that is his failure. This government was elected back in October 2003. Instead of dealing with substantive issues, for almost a year and a half to two years this Attorney General was dealing with the pit bull issue, which he put on his plate, making that a priority. We see the problems with gun crimes and different issues dealing with safety in our streets. He decided to deal with something that was certainly not at the top of anyone's agenda with respect to law and order.

Now we're dealing with an omnibus bill, which everyone was surprised with. When my colleague from Niagara Centre and I were dealing with this with the Attorney General, we fully expected the justices of the peace to be dealt with in a separate act, and the same thing with the paralegals, as opposed to what we're dealing with here today, which is a very intensive and very complicated piece of legislation for anyone to comprehend in terms of what he is truly trying to accomplish here. People are saying this is streamlining and modernizing the justice system. Well, it's not. It's certainly not addressing and streamlining the administration of justice; the Access to Justice Act, as he likes to call it.

All I can say is that, as we move through the debate on this, I haven't heard anything substantive coming from the government. They're not even using the time they've been allotted to debate this bill. That's fine if the intent is that they want to get into public hearings and listen to the public, as we all do. There's a lot of meat in this bill in terms of dealing with fundamental reform with respect to justices of the peace and with respect to paralegals, among other aspects of this bill, as to what the Attorney General wants to accomplish.

My friend from Niagara Centre commented extensively on schedule A, which deals with amendments to the Courts of Justice Act. Over the years, there have been so many amendments to the Courts of Justice Act that it's almost like it happens with every new Attorney General, that they're going to put their stamp on changing the Courts of Justice Act, and it's never dealt with. It's amazing that with all the changes they've made to the Courts of Justice Act, they haven't got it right in a particular sitting and we continue to dabble with respect to technical amendments and changes to the rules with respect to the Courts of Justice Act. Maybe that's the flavour of the month with respect to this Attorney General in the event that he wants to put his approach on to the administration of justice.

Here we are, debating all kinds of different changes in an extensive bill dealing with access to justice and, at the same time, we're not going to see the most qualified, the most properly screened candidates become justices of the peace, if that's the intent of what this Attorney General

wants to accomplish. We're not seeing that in this bill because of the delays that are going to be caused by this approach of wanting an omnibus bill with respect to the justice system.

It's unfortunate that we have to deal with it in this way. It could have been dealt with years earlier in terms of dealing with a particular issue, which was access to justice with respect to the criminal court system as administered by the provincial government, particularly focusing on the roles and requirements of justices of the peace as opposed to dealing with so many different areas that we're just basically touching the surface in terms of getting into some legitimate debate in terms of this area.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Marchese: I will be speaking next, in approximately 10 minutes, and I don't want to go to too much length in talking about the omnibus nature of the bill, but in this regard I agree with the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford in light of the previous members of the Liberal Party, who were in opposition before, who used to attack the Conservative Party and others on any bill that was introduced that was omnibus in nature, i.e., tying in so many aspects of whatever it was you wanted to do. You threw it into a big, thick bill of this sort.

Mr. Bradley, who is now the House leader, used to be highly critical of the Conservative government when they brought in omnibus types of bills, except and unless when they get into government. It is amazing how you can change when you get into government. This is why I advocate that the Liberals be speedily sent back into opposition to remember what it is they said, so that should they ever get back into government, they won't do it again.

I mean this. We become cynical, both politicians and the public, when we hear opposition members say one thing and they get into government and quickly do another. We've got to learn from this. It appears the Liberals are not learning. This is why I say they need to come back into opposition quickly, and we can't wait. There will be an opportunity. There will be by-elections of course in due course—I would say very shortly—and there will be an election in October 2007. Some people can't wait. I believe the Liberals need to come back into opposition and be reminded of the promise they made. I'll speak to that in approximately five minutes.

1700

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): I have enjoyed the comments of both our colleagues on the other side of the House, and I can't wait to hear my colleague from Trinity-Spadina when he speaks to the bill on a more lengthy basis.

I was very much taken by the member from the very much growing community of Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford. He made a few comments that I think address exactly the content and the core of this bill. After all, it's a very small bill and addresses some very specific points. It addresses as well the need for making these changes.

There were a couple of important things that the member said. He says, yes, I guess they want to push this

bill, if you will, for second reading so we can send it for public hearings. Well, isn't that a wonderful thing, Speaker, that they understand the process, that we follow it through to go to the public and have even further consultation.

With respect to my colleague on the other side, this is far from being what we call an omnibus bill. This is so simple that they should be pleased we're discussing it in the House today. I would indulge the members of the House to say, you know what? Indeed, we should send it further, get it to public hearings, and if there is anything they don't like or the public doesn't like, then bring it back. But there are a number of major concerns the Attorney General has addressed. It would bring a lot of improvement to the legal system, the way we know it today.

Mr. Kormos: Which sections?

Mr. Sergio: Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, to my friends on the other side. Once we get to it, I'm sure this will be a good bill and will be worth approval.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): I would agree with the member opposite that hopefully at some point this will be a good bill, but in its present state, it is anything but a good bill.

When we talk about access to justice, there are so many problems with the justice system, and I don't say they are strictly in Ontario. We have national problems, and skepticism and cynicism are very evident in the public with respect to the justice system in this country. In terms of Ontario, you look at the minister getting up and puffing up his chest about all these issues, but we find out through the media that behind the curtains the government was preparing to gut the justice system of Ontario to the tune of \$339 million. We hear them get up and talk about this new challenge fund to help youth at risk. Well, the reality is that under the Harris government some years ago we established a program called Ontario's Promise, with \$30 million, significant commitments made by the private sector, a program that would have helped the very young children at risk in this province, which was simply shoved aside very quietly by the Liberal government. Now they're resurrecting a program that is quite comparable to Ontario's Promise in many respects and are saying, "Now we are the saviours. We are going to address the problem" that they ignored a little over two and a half years ago.

We can talk about a whole range of things they've done: the Crime Control Commission, which they closed down, but they kept a phone number. You'd phone up and someone would say, "Crime Control Commission." It's a false front like we used to have in those old Western movies: nothing behind it, because they gutted and closed the office. They had plans to transfer the sex offender registry to the federal government, which is a much weaker registry. We know they wanted to transfer the parole board responsibilities to the federal parole board, a terrible decision. They have a lot to answer for.

Mr. Kormos: Let's be very clear. This bill, Bill 14, contains, among other things, two very important pro-

posals. One is with respect to the regulation of paralegals; the other is with respect to a major reform of the justice of the peace appointments process.

It is imperative that members of this chamber participate in the debate in an effective and meaningful way. I believe their constituents deserve to know where they stand on this bill, that their colleagues deserve to know, and that the record ought to show. It is increasingly rarely the case that bills receive thoughtful consideration in this chamber, never mind in committee as they're rammed through with two or three days of committee—slots of 10 or 15 minutes for participants. It's embarrassing sometimes to sit and watch people who have worked hard preparing their submission being cut off after 10 minutes and being told to go away.

I call, please, for thoughtful consideration of this bill. I want this bill to be considered as thoughtfully as this chamber considered the repeal of the defined benefit pension plan and its replacement by a defined contribution pension plan back in 1996, when members voted to give themselves a defined contribution pension plan.

I supported that proposition thoughtfully. I know Mr. Runciman supported it thoughtfully. I know Ms. Pupatello supported it thoughtfully. Mr. Levac supported it thoughtfully. Mr. Marchese supported it, after thoughtful consideration. Was Mr. O'Toole here? Of course he was here in 1996. Mr. O'Toole thoughtfully voted in support of giving MPPs a defined contribution pension plan. We were ahead of the pack. We were leading edge. This has now become *de rigueur* across North America and indeed western Europe. I want that same sort of thought applied to other legislation as well.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Tascona: The member for Niagara Centre's topic is very depressing. I don't know how he got on to that, but I think getting into meaningful debate was his premise.

The fundamental issue here is that this bill is 176 pages. It's dealing with some fundamental changes where people in their daily lives come face to face with justices of the peace. If you're paying for a traffic offence, if you've done something to violate anything in the municipality you live in, if you're dealing with a paralegal, if you need some advice or whatever, these are fundamental issues.

One of the problems with this place is lack of respect for the members. You have an Attorney General who knows these are hot-button issues, big-time issues. He doesn't want any meaningful debate in the House. Even when we go out on public hearings, there's so little time to really get at the bill and try to get it right and meaningful.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Tascona: It's very disappointing when the member from York West says this is just a small, little bill. I don't know whether he just read the preamble—that may have been the extent of what he read—but it's 176 pages

and it's a very complicated bill. As the member from Leeds–Grenville has commented, here they are coming out with the Access to Justice Act, and the biggest joke of it all is that the Liberal government is gutting the legal system by \$339 million. They've been cutting back on the legal system ever since they came in, and they're saying, "We're going to promote access to justice." Well, how can you have that when you're taking money out of a system that requires it? It makes the best society we can have if we have a functioning criminal justice system and a court system. They have failed to do that.

The Deputy Speaker: I remind members that we have lobbies in which to carry on discussions while we're debating serious matters here in the Legislature.

Further debate?

Mr. Marchese: I'm happy to have this opportunity to speak to Bill 14. I just want to make a couple of comments with respect to what my friend and colleague the member for Niagara Centre said about meaningful debate. There used to be a time, before my time even, in the Peterson era, when bills were debated at length and sent to committee hearings for more than just a day or two; in fact, there were weeks of committee hearings.

To be frank and fair, New Democrats continued with that tradition from 1990 to 1995.

Mr. Kormos: Bill 40.

Mr. Marchese: Not just Bill 40, but so many bills for which we found friends and foes alike, beaten up often by our friends and foes alike on so many bills. But in my view, that did contribute to a healthy debate of bills.

Now it's all different. The Conservative government before this one rarely had meaningful debate on bills. In fact, we were lucky to get a day or two on many bills. Now you hear some of the Conservative members lament about the fact that we're not getting much time to debate some bills. It's a bit peculiar to hear them talk about meaningful debate, but it is a fact that we are not engaged as much as we should be on bills and don't have the time to be able to read them and time to be able to debate them.

1710

I will start by talking about the omnibus nature of the bill, and I will remind the Liberals, because they hate to hear it, that when they were in opposition, before 2003, they slammed governments for bringing in omnibus bills on a regular basis. Just to help you, Speaker, and to help those who are watching, because we're on live and it's 5:12, here's what some of them used to say.

Dalton McGuinty, December 6, 1999: "This omnibus, megabill approach to legislation makes for bad legislation.... We will not set a precedent that gives the government the green light to continue to ram omnibus bills down our throats. We want the bill split to allow separate votes on each piece of legislation."

Another one, Monsieur Duncan, May 30, 2001: "There has been an increasing tendency to be concerned about the nature of omnibus bills, the relevance of everything that is contained in them and the linkages between them. It's apparent to me, sir, and I know to many other

members in this House, that increasingly bills have become, to use the member for Niagara Centre's words, more omnibus; that is, the scope and breadth of the legislation contained in them is less related, except in very loose fashion, than it had been in the past."

There's more. Steve Peters, October 23, 2002: "Another famous trademark of the Harris government, unfortunately, is going to be their unrelenting support for omnibus legislation. It's a bill that's in front of us this evening, that talks of efficiency, but I don't think it's in the interests of the taxpayers of Ontario, whom all 103 of us here represent this evening. I don't think that the taxpayers of Ontario are looking at us to be efficient in the manner of ramming through omnibus legislation.... It's not responsible, it's not efficient to deal with them in the manner of an omnibus bill."

Mr. Kennedy, June 8, 1996: "This government, rather than take an appropriate and responsible form of action, has decided to do this in an omnibus way, which we have to suggest from this side occurs for one reason only: Just as there's a convoluted title to this piece of legislation, so is there a convoluted piece of reasoning, and the piece of reasoning is simply to throw as much stuff at the public as possible, as quickly as possible, before it realizes what is happening."

Monsieur Bradley, mon ami Jim, said on November 18, 2002: "What we look at in a bill of this kind is the fact that it's an omnibus bill. That means it has so many components to it that it should probably be broken down into four or five different bills. As is the case with many omnibus bills, some of the provisions in this bill are supportable; others are not. What the government usually does is put a hostage in the bill so the opposition won't vote for it, and then they can say about the good and popular things in the bill, 'The opposition voted against it.' But you really can't fool people with that."

They do this all of the time. In fact, the Liberal government does it to New Democrats and Tories on a regular basis. It appears that when you're opposition you can say one thing, and when you get to the other side, you immediately do another. I've become cynical, voters are becoming cynical, and the electorate, generally speaking, condemns us all. It isn't helpful, to politicians or to the political process, to be doing this. This bill is about that. It's an omnibus bill. It's a thick one that the member from Niagara Centre mercifully has read, because he is the critic and loves these issues. We're lucky that we have some members who on a regular basis read thick bills of this sort so that we know what is being talked about. The member from Niagara Centre dealt with a lot of legal issues, and I want to make comments in relation to this that maybe are not legal but are certainly very political and appropriate.

That's why I want to begin by talking about this being an omnibus bill, that the Liberals when in opposition attacked the Tories on a regular basis in this regard, and they're doing the same, et rien ne change. It's just the nature of the things, it seems.

The other comment I want to repeat and emphasize is that this government has flatlined this ministry. When you flatline a ministry, it means you get no extra money. “Flatlining” means that you’re not even getting inflation as a way of helping your ministry to deal with some of the issues you’ve got to deal with. “Flatlining” means that the government is giving that minister and that ministry less. Flatlining demonstrates a lack of commitment to that minister and to that ministry. So they can talk about access to justice with this bill, but flatlining belies that commitment, meaning that there is no commitment to justice when you are not giving it the financial support it desperately needs.

The government won’t speak to that. They’ll say oh, how much they’re doing. But in our humble view they’re not doing very much. That’s why we point out, and the member from Niagara Centre regularly reminded the Conservative government and reminds this Liberal government of the same thing: They speak to issues of access to justice, and we say there is nothing in this bill to address the plague of plea bargaining that is taking place in our courts because the crown attorneys are understaffed and under-resourced. What it means in layman’s terms is this: Lawyers and crown attorneys who don’t have the time to deal with the barrage of court issues that are before them have to bargain with the lawyers of malfeasance, and bargain in such a way as to get it out of the way, and getting the issue out of the way means that you’re not getting access to the justice that we desperately need for deeds that are sometimes abhorrent to us as politicians and to people often in the public arguing that sometimes people get away with relaxed justice.

When crown attorneys have to plea bargain on a regular basis in order to expedite the number of dockets, what lawyers often use as the term for “cases,” it isn’t the justice that people want to see. They’re not getting the justice that people want to see. Plea bargaining happens because crown attorneys are understaffed and under-resourced. It doesn’t matter how often the member for Niagara Centre says it; the Tories didn’t hear him and the Liberals are not hearing him.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: It started under the NDP.

Mr. Marchese: Mon ami M. Bradley can say what he likes and mon ami M. Bradley can have a double Liberal approach to the issues, but when he’s in government, he’s no different than the Tories who have left us and have left so many people behind. Jim is a good guy; that’s not the issue. When he’s on the quiet and quiet, Jim says, “Yeah, you guys had a hard time economically. I understand. I can’t say that publicly.” But he wants it both ways. He says that, oh no, if they were in government there would have been a balanced budget; oh no, they wouldn’t have cut any services; oh no, not the Liberals, no siree, not in a bad economy, not in a recession. Jim wouldn’t do that. He’s not that kind of Liberal. Yes, Jim would have spent the \$5 billion on social assistance because that’s what it took when those people were unemployed. Jim would have found the money somehow. He would have found the money not to cut services.

1720

Mr. Bradley, the House leader, is well aware of these things. He knows. This so-called access-to-justice bill does nothing to address the court backlogs that put our justice system at risk of having serious criminal charges withdrawn on a daily basis. It does nothing. When you flatline this ministry, it means you’re not dealing with the issues I have raised that would bring about greater access to justice to those who perpetuate misdeeds and serious crimes.

Another matter has been raised by the member from Niagara Centre, and I want to repeat it because as a critic on issues of disability he made some excellent points. On page 21 of this bill there is “Accommodation of needs” for certain individuals. I’ll read you what it says:

“5.2(1) A justice of the peace who believes that he or she is unable, because of a disability, to perform the essential duties of the office unless his or her needs are accommodated may apply to the review council for an order under subsection (2).

“Duty of review council

“(2) If the review council finds that the justice of the peace is unable, because of a disability, to perform the essential duties of the office unless his or her needs are accommodated, it shall order that the needs of the justice of the peace be accommodated to the extent necessary to enable him or her to perform those duties.”

What this says is that if you are a justice of the peace and you are found to be disabled for whatever reason, then it is an obligation of the Attorney General and the ministry to accommodate that individual. We believe that’s fair. That is good for people who have a disability because they have the ability to do the job. Having been disabled in some way or other doesn’t mean they’re not able and capable of performing their duties, but they need to be accommodated in order for them to perform their duties. We believe that’s fair.

The member from Niagara Centre made a few other points that I think bear repeating and emphasis: This government does nothing to encourage individuals who are disabled to in fact become justices of the peace. It does nothing to support them by saying, “You will be accommodated.” It does nothing to do with recruiting people with disabilities in order to be justices of the peace. While on page 21 of this bill accommodation is made to those who are justices of the peace who become disabled—while that is true—we do nothing to recruit, we do nothing to encourage and we do nothing for people who are able and have a disability to become justices of the peace so that we in Ontario could genuinely reflect the kind of society we’re living in, where 15% of the people have a disability of one sort or another. Why wouldn’t we recruit people who have a disability to be justices of the peace? Why wouldn’t we say, “We will appoint more”? I am convinced that Mr. Lepofsky, who is an incredible advocate of people with disabilities, will pursue this matter and will press this government, including the House leader, mon ami Jim Bradley, on this

very issue. Not just him; he will impress upon the Attorney General and others that accommodation needs to be made in our court system and that recruitment needs to happen in order to get more justices of the peace who have a disability. It was an important point and something that can be so easily overlooked when you deal with such a bill—this omnibus bill, thick as it is—which has so many components to it, mostly legal. But the one I raised is not a legal matter at all. It has to do with reflecting and recruiting people, so that when they get to be a justice of the peace, they can reflect the true nature of our society with the sensitivities that are so needed in that position, so that they can tackle issues of disability when they come before them. I think it would reflect our people in our court system much more effectively.

Another issue of importance that has been raised, and I repeat it for emphasis, has to do with access to justice as it relates to what the government wants to do. The government wants to short-circuit the system to the point of denying someone who has been charged with a traffic offence the right to confront their accuser in court. They will teleconference; maybe they can do it by telephone. We think it's wrong. The member for Niagara Centre pointed this out, and he's not the only one that believes it's wrong. We believe a whole lot of people out there want to be able to confront, face to face, the person who is going to judge him or her, or evaluate him or her, or deal with him or her with respect to an offence. It should be a matter of access to justice that we are able to confront the person who is going to have a strong say as to the future of our lives. This bypasses it.

This needs to have serious debate. This particular part of the bill needs to have an adequate hearing. Yes, we hear from the Liberal members that it will go out for committee hearings. We understand that, and we hope it isn't just one day or two. The bill is too big for the one-day-or-two response. So we expect that the government will adequately deal with this particular bill.

We want this bill to go to committee. We want the government to reflect on its own position vis-à-vis the omnibus bill. We want the government to reflect on why they're flatlining this ministry that desperately is under-resourced and understaffed. We want the government to reflect on why the court system is backlogged and how they're going to fix it. In spite of the claim they make that they're hiring a couple of more judges here and there or a couple of justices of the peace, it's just not going to solve the backlog. We need to seriously deal with it and they need money, and the lack of it is not helping.

Thank you for your attention.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Delaney: It's always a pleasure to follow the member for Trinity–Spadina, and to talk about Bill 14. Bill 14 is really about access to the justice system. Bill 14's key points are openness, transparency and accountability. This causes the member for Trinity–Spadina to chuckle a little bit. In fact, he even expressed a problem

with teleconferencing and video conferencing, expressing the opinion that perhaps one may not be able to “confront your accuser,” to use his own words.

What it does mean is that litigants, defendants or crown witnesses who may not otherwise be able to get to court to present evidence that could be crucial in resolving a case now can. It means that someone who could be offering, for example, very technical evidence could appear in court through video conferencing or teleconferencing and be able to present that. We all know that with the rapid advances in technology, we're pretty soon going to be able to offer high-definition television in court, so if the member for Trinity–Spadina really wants to see the witness sweat, he may actually be able to see the pores of his skin live. There's no problem with cross-examining him because, by definition, with video conferencing, he'll be able to ask for and hear a response, and do it in real time. Indeed, right now, most of us take for granted the fact that on our instant messaging applications, we can plug in a little videocam and get a very small image, 175 by 300 pixels or something. We can do that with our family and friends overseas.

What this is telling us is that our court system will pretty soon be able to join the 21st century, will be able to have access to people in the same way we do as individuals. I think this is a good advance, I think this is progress, I think this is forward-thinking and I think this is one of the attributes of Bill 14 that deserves support.

1730

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments? The member for—

Mr. Yakabuski: Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. Thank you very much. It's getting close to shutdown time, I know, but I'm sure those people out there are still tuned in, bright-eyed, waiting for something really profound to emit from this chamber.

Mr. Kormos: We're competing with Springer; you know that?

Mr. Yakabuski: Are we? Jerry Springer. Okay. Well, I don't think we can compete with Jerry—at least not verbally.

I spoke earlier, just for a short moment, about access to justice and the problems we have in my county, for example, with the shortage of justices of the peace and the failure of this government to address that. I recall some time where the Attorney General made some comment to the press that he would be hiring scores, huge numbers, of justices of the peace. They were just around the corner. That hasn't happened. When we don't provide the tools for the justice system to work efficiently, and by that I mean when the dockets are so full that the people who are expected to render judgments in these cases are simply—there's no ability for them to even properly consider some of the matters; they simply shove them off to another day or whatever.

When we don't have the proper personnel or enough personnel in the justice system, that amounts to a denial of justice for the people who are, usually against their own will, involved in that justice system. Even if they

possibly may be seeking to plead guilty to the charges, it still takes them a long period of time to actually be able to get those court dates arranged because of the backlog in the system. That's caused by inaction on the part of the government and this Attorney General with regard to the shortage of justices of the peace. I'm sure that my riding is no different than other places in the province of Ontario. It's something that has to be addressed as soon as possible.

Mr. Kormos: I join those in thanking the member for Trinity–Spadina, Mr. Marchese, for his astute comments, especially his interest in the issue of accessibility and support for persons with disabilities. I'm hopeful that during the course of committee hearings Mr. Marchese will be present to advocate again at that level in this regard. I'm encouraged by the fact that he will bring with him people from the community who share his strong views.

I want to make it very clear: New Democrats support the role of paralegals in our justice system. We think paralegals play, continue to play and can play a very important role in delivering legal services. I'm a fan. I've got to tell you that POINTTS, which, as you know, has offices across Ontario—in particular Bruce Scott, a former justice of the peace, is the POINTTS person down in Niagara, somebody I have the highest regard for; does incredibly capable work. I refer a whole lot of people to him. He is an illustration of an exceptional paralegal, one who, quite frankly, doesn't have to be regulated, but one who similarly understands how important regulation is. Mickey Parker is another very effective paralegal advocate, one I trust absolutely and to whom I refer and, even before I came here, had referred a whole lot of people. People like Bruce Scott of POINTTS, Mickey Parker, who's with POINTTS as well, are examples of good paralegals.

My concern is that this legislation is so skeletal when it comes to paralegal regulation that we're not going to have an opportunity to discuss, for instance, eligibility standards, scope of practice, grandparenting of people who are already in the practice. That is an incredibly serious omission and oversight by this government, one I hope they will correct.

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): I'm pleased to rise to speak to this and to clarify for people who are listening right now what Bill 14 is all about. Essentially, what it is doing is modernizing, bringing up to date in relation to today's technological advances and realities what we have available to us to make the justice system more streamlined. It will improve people's access to the justice system, and it will provide greater openness, transparency and accountability.

Importantly, as was suggested by the member for Niagara Centre, it will regulate paralegals. This is something that has been discussed and talked about, and there is tremendous concern around this area. There is a need to regulate this sector, and many in the sector agree with that. So we are going to regulate paralegals, and we'll reform and streamline the justices of the peace system as

well, something else that's been called for for quite some time. Essentially, we're just making sure we're getting on with those things.

The proposed reforms to the justices of the peace system would ensure a more open and transparent appointment process, which I think everybody can agree would be a good thing, and would establish minimum qualification standards to ensure public confidence that qualified candidates are being appointed. That is a very important point in this.

These amendments would also permit witnesses to be heard by video conferencing, which has been mentioned. That's going to allow police officers to provide evidence from locations outside the courts. This is just a matter of expedience that will allow for better proceedings and also prevent delays in proceedings. It will also permit alternative mechanisms for resolving disputes arising from municipal bylaw infractions such as parking. Again, those very straightforward, common-sense sorts of measures are being taken in this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Trinity–Spadina, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Marchese: I personally have no problem at all with some of the changes that are being made. When Liberal members talk about justices of the peace, for example, and establishing minimum qualifications, I think that's a good thing. It's good that having a university degree or community college diploma is part of a minimum requirement. I think that's a very good thing. Where there might be some questions around this particular issue has to do with including life experience. I think there might be a whole lot of people who have questions about what that means or what that might entail. We agree with minimum standards. There may be questions in committee about what life experience might include.

On the whole idea of regulating paralegals, we have no problem with regulating. We think it's important. But the member from Niagara Centre talks about the need to speak about the scope of practice and grandparenting. There may be questions by other lawyers and people in the community about these issues, including so many other questions that are raised in this omnibus bill that many people want to speak to.

I just want to repeat, as it relates to the issue of access to justice, that there is nothing in this bill to address the plague of plea bargaining that is taking place in our courts because crown attorneys are understaffed and under-resourced. There is nothing in this bill to address court backlogs, which puts our justice system at the risk of having serious criminal charges withdrawn on a daily basis.

I repeat that the government wants to short-circuit the system to the point of denying someone who has been charged with a traffic offence the right to confront their accuser in court. We believe that a lot of people believe this is a good thing. If there is a problem with getting cops into court to testify, then we have a problem with the number of police officers working in any given

community, which speaks to the fact that this ministry is under-resourced and we should be dealing with that. Because it's flatlined, there is a problemo in this regard.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Delaney: It is certainly a pleasure, as one whose undergraduate degree is in physics and whose post-graduate degree is an MBA, to be able to have so many opportunities to weigh in on such an important bill from the Ministry of the Attorney General.

I recently heard my colleague from Trinity–Spadina complain that the budget of the Ministry of the Attorney General had been, and I use his own word, flatlined. While I could not agree with him more that one measure to follow a balanced Ontario budget would be a nice increase in the budget of the Attorney General, I must take issue with the member's contention that the Ministry of the Attorney General has been flatlined. When you're flatlined, it means you're dead. It means the lights are out. "Flatlined" means that the next step is the Pearly Gates of the hereafter. So, of all the expressions to use, "flatlined" is not one of them.

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I've had the pleasure of knowing our Attorney General, the member from St. Paul's, for more than six years. Our Attorney General is nowhere near flatlined. In fact, he is very much alive, vibrant and active. Far from being what the member from Niagara Centre referred to as "Harnicked," the Minister of the Attorney General has in fact been Bryantized. Our Attorney General is in every way a Bryant among men and women.

Let's look at what this high-energy approach has yielded. The wild, wild west of the judicial system is the body of people who give you advice on the law—people who are not lawyers; they're paralegals. I must confess that when I first heard the term, when I was very young, I always thought, "Does paralegals mean that they're guys with briefcases who jump out of aircraft?" No, in fact; a paralegal means that while you aren't a lawyer, you are offering advice on the law. Currently, the Latin expression of caveat emptor, which means "buyer beware," has never been applied better. That's why Bill 14 provides regulations to bring some order to the paralegal profession. Bill 14 provides some protection for people who get legal advice from non-lawyers.

Before proceeding with this bill, the minister sent his hard-working parliamentary assistant, our good colleague the member from Willowdale, to meet with the legal community, business groups, consumer protection groups and many others. If there is one thing that the member from Willowdale did, he piled up the paper. He read it all, digested it, grasped it and boiled it down to its very essence in producing a bill that makes a measurable, tangible improvement to Ontario's legal system; and I, for one, applaud him for those efforts.

Right now, in regard to paralegals, there are no rules at all. Other than not having standing in the court, anybody can offer advice on pretty much anything and charge some money for it. So what Bill 14 sets out is a series of

measures to allow those who are not lawyers to offer advice in specific areas of the law.

Why would anyone want to do this? Perhaps someone with a lot of experience in a specific area of the law, such as landlord-tenant disputes or drafting legal documents such as contracts, wishes to offer services to a client. You could do it by joining a law firm. You could do it by working as a non-lawyer for other lawyers who pay you, perhaps very well, and re-bill their clients for your fees. This actually could be a win-win for both the client and the lawyer. For the lawyer, you get the benefit of someone who knows the area of the law and knows it cold. As a client, you may not be paying very hefty legal fees, which could be in the order of \$200, \$300, \$400 an hour or more to have someone who is a lawyer research documents and write something that someone who is a paralegal knows backwards.

Now, you could be a retired or a non-practising lawyer. You could subcontract your services to other lawyers or you could work out of your home almost as a sub-consultant to other lawyers or indeed directly to the clients who consume your services because you may be all that they really need. It could come to pass that in your narrow field of specialty you might know as much as or more about it as the best lawyer.

Indeed, it brings to mind the definitions that I learned in my science degree on the words "specialist" and "generalist," and I'll offer them to the House right now. A specialist is someone who knows more and more about less and less until, pretty soon, he or she knows almost everything about almost nothing.

Interjection: He'll become Liberal leader for sure.

Mr. Delaney: A generalist is someone who knows less and less about more and more until it seems that he or she knows almost nothing about almost everything, which may or may not describe the Leader of the Opposition; I'm not sure.

But that's the situation in which many lawyers and other professionals often find themselves. In looking after a project, in resolving a problem, or perhaps in managing a file, there may be an area that is very, very narrowly defined; very, very specialized.

I know that in my former field of IT this was often the case, and indeed many of the very best programmers I knew were self-taught. You could go to what is considered to be the Harvard of the IT world, which is the University of Waterloo, and you could spend several years getting your degree in computer science, which wouldn't be a bad idea at all. But many people, especially people who began in IT when they were in their 30s or their 40s or even their 50s, learned their craft by picking up the books and reading the books and learning how to program. Many of them turned out to be absolutely gifted in certain narrow areas.

In the past, you would have to write a computer application in a language called assembler, which was something that very, very few people learned to do, and some of the people who kept up their expertise in assembler

code turned out to have a very narrow specialty that many people wanted, but only for certain things.

As it is in IT, where you can be self-taught in something that's very, very narrow in scope, so too you can be in law, where you can learn—and I used the example of either landlord-tenant disputes or contracts earlier. You could know how to write a contract with every permutation and combination, and you could have done it over and over again. Indeed, as a consultant, you often learn that the most profitable consultants aren't the ones who do a broad range of contracts, but the most profitable and successful consultants are the ones who have learned to do a very narrow range of contracts and essentially do the same class of project over and over again. It allows them to offer predictable results and good value to their clients, and it allows their clients equally predictable results and the fact that they may not be paying a sky-high fee for someone to learn the craft that this person has mastered. So too for paralegals.

But how does the public have confidence that a paralegal is doing quality work? Bill 14 sets out a set of checks and balances that are close to the set that circumscribes professions that we're more familiar with, professions such as lawyers, doctors, engineers, accountants, architects and others. We know when we go and see our CA, whether it be for something as simple as our income taxes or whether it be for something that's real value-added such as, "How in my business do I accomplish this, that or the next thing?", what you're getting is the benefit of the expertise of someone who you know has written his—if you're using the example of a chartered accountant—uniform final examinations. You know that they've cleared a whole set of hurdles that say, "I am qualified to offer you advice," in such and such an area.

So too the case with paralegals, and this is the way the Attorney General is trying to move the system forward, to say that it's no longer the Wild West, where anyone can hang out a shingle. Now you're going to have to show that you have a minimum set of qualifications, that you can write a series of examinations, and that when someone comes to see you, they have some idea of what they're likely getting and what you're likely charging and what value you're going to add for the effort that you put into the project. Bill 14, by regulating paralegals, provides that set of checks and balances. It allows it to come into place.

Again, as a former IT person, there's a final point I'd like to make on Bill 14. Bill 14 clarifies how laws are published, how they're used and how they are cited. It allows statutes and regulations published on the e-Laws website to be used as the official version. It's like etching the official version on silicon rather than on paper. If it does nothing more than save some trees from being turned into seldom-read paper, then it's certainly an effort well worth the while.

While we're on the subject of technology, among the things that Bill 14 enables the legal system to do is to use technology to provide witnesses access to court. Among the benefits that this can deliver to many of us is in the

resolution of disputes. Rather than physically having to take a person from wherever they may have to be to wherever the hearing is taking place—or perhaps an examination for discovery or something else—it allows video conferencing or teleconferencing to take the person there. In dispute resolution, which is often a very informal process, the ability to use video conferencing or teleconferencing could be the difference between bringing some crucial information from where it is to where it may be inaccessible to both parties, perhaps someone residing in another country, another province or another time zone, where for both parties it would be uneconomic, infeasible or perhaps even impossible to get the individual from where they are to where the dispute resolution meeting is being held. This way, the person can either plug in at home or go to a central place where, presumably in the future, some smart entrepreneurs will evolve the ability to sit people down in front of a television camera and enable an interactive exchange to take place. Although the person may not be physically present sitting at the meeting, he or she is visible on the screen, just as if the meeting were taking place right there, and can be asked and can answer questions live and in real time. This provides access to the courts for people with disabilities, for example, a point brought up by my colleague from Trinity-Spadina.

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Should we have confidence in this? I think we should. We routinely use technology to provide access to our bank accounts. Most of us by now have made at least one financial transaction over the Internet. If you're like me, even as an IT person, the first time I did it, I grasped my credit card and looked at it and typed it all in and I thought to myself, "Gosh, I hope this works." Then I did it and it worked and it was secure. Then I thought to myself, "I routinely have given out my credit card—admittedly to vendors I trust—and my expiration date on the telephone. What is to prevent someone on the telephone from writing down that information and then using it for his or her own ends?" And the answer is, nothing. By putting it in through the process of software, I know that the information has been encrypted, sent and decrypted and then it's been used, and that it's been used only once. So this is much the same level of technology and security that I imagine we're going to be providing here.

Bill 14 enables the justice system to catch up to technology. Bill 14 enables the justice system to enter the 21st century. Bill 14 is far enough ahead of technology that it can anticipate evolutionary advances, such as wireless broadband for AV use. Bill 14 is a software upgrade to Ontario's justice system. It's an intelligent piece of legislation. It's a thoughtful piece of legislation. It's not merely the kind of housecleaning that's long overdue, but it's an evolutionary advance into the 21st century. It's well worth support, and I ask my members to stand and support it when it comes to a vote.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to a motion of the House earlier today, the debate on Bill 14 is now adjourned.

FAMILY STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE
DES QUESTIONS FAMILIALES

Mr. Bradley moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 27, An Act to amend the Arbitration Act, 1991, the Child and Family Services Act and the Family Law Act in connection with family arbitration and related matters, and to amend the Children's Law Reform Act in connection with the matters to be considered by the court in dealing with applications for custody and access /
Projet de loi 27, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur l'arbitrage, la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille et la Loi sur le droit de la famille en ce qui concerne l'arbitrage familial et des questions connexes et modifiant la Loi portant réforme du droit de l'enfance en ce qui concerne les questions que doit prendre en

considération le tribunal qui traite des requêtes en vue d'obtenir la garde et le droit de visite.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Debate?

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

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I have a quick point of order, Mr. Speaker: I know I speak on behalf of all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario when I wish a happy 85th birthday to Mayor Hazel McCallion of Mississauga.

The Deputy Speaker: I'm sure we'll join you in that wish, particularly on Valentine's Day, at which time all of us here, no doubt, want to wish a loved one a happy Valentine's Day. I know I do.

It being close to 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1756.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

| Constituency Circonscription | Member/Party Député(e) / Parti | Constituency Circonscription | Member/Party Député(e) / Parti |
|---|---|--|---|
| Algoma–Manitoulin | Brown, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (L) Speaker / Président | Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant | Barrett, Toby (PC) |
| Ancaster–Dundas– Flamborough–Aldershot | McMeekin, Ted (L) | Haliburton–Victoria–Brock | Scott, Laurie (PC) |
| Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford | Tascona, Joseph N. (PC) Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative | Halton | Chudleigh, Ted (PC) |
| Beaches–East York / Beaches–York–Est | Prue, Michael (ND) | Hamilton East / Hamilton–Est | Horwath, Andrea (ND) |
| Bramalea–Gore–Malton– Springdale | Kular, Kuldip (L) | Hamilton Mountain | Bountrogianni, Hon. / L'hon. Marie (L) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique |
| Brampton Centre / Brampton–Centre | Jeffrey, Linda (L) | Hamilton West / Hamilton–Ouest | Marsales, Judy (L) |
| Brampton West–Mississauga / Brampton–Ouest–Mississauga | Dhillon, Vic (L) | Hastings–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington | Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales |
| Brant | Levac, Dave (L) | Huron–Bruce | Mitchell, Carol (L) |
| Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound | Murdoch, Bill (PC) | Kenora–Rainy River | Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique |
| Burlington | Jackson, Cameron (PC) | Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles | Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement |
| Cambridge | Martiniuk, Gerry (PC) | Kitchener Centre / Kitchener–Centre | Milloy, John (L) |
| Chatham–Kent Essex | Hoy, Pat (L) | Kitchener–Waterloo | Witmer, Elizabeth (PC) |
| Davenport | Ruprecht, Tony (L) | Lambton–Kent–Middlesex | Van Bommel, Maria (L) |
| Don Valley East / Don Valley–Est | Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy government House leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement t | Lanark–Carleton | Sterling, Norman W. (PC) |
| Don Valley West / Don Valley–Ouest | Wynne, Kathleen O. (L) | Leeds–Grenville | Runciman, Robert W. (PC) |
| Dufferin–Peel– Wellington–Grey | Tory, John (PC) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition | London North Centre / London–Centre–Nord | Matthews, Deborah (L) |
| Durham | O'Toole, John (PC) | London West / London–Ouest | Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (L) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités |
| Eglington–Lawrence | Colle, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (L) Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration | London–Fanshawe | Ramal, Khalil (L) |
| Elgin–Middlesex–London | Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (L) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail | Markham | Wong, Tony C. (L) |
| Erie–Lincoln Essex | Hudak, Tim (PC) | Mississauga Centre / Mississauga–Centre | Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports |
| Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke–Centre | Crosier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative | Mississauga East / Mississauga–Est | Fonseca, Peter (L) |
| Etobicoke North / Etobicoke–Nord | Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (L) Minister of Energy / ministre de l'Énergie | Mississauga South / Mississauga–Sud | Peterson, Tim (L) |
| Etobicoke–Lakeshore | Qaadri, Shafiq (L) | Mississauga West / Mississauga–Ouest | Delaney, Bob (L) |
| | Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (L) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement | Niagara Centre / Niagara–Centre | Kormos, Peter (ND) |
| Glengarry–Prescott–Russell | Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L) | Niagara Falls | Craiton, Kim (L) |
| Guelph–Wellington | Sandals, Liz (L) | Nickel Belt | Martel, Shelley (ND) |

| Constituency Circonscription | Member/Party Député(e) / Parti | Constituency Circonscription | Member/Party Député(e) / Parti |
|--|--|--|---|
| Nipissing | Smith, Monique M. (L) | Stormont–Dundas– Charlottenburgh | Brownell, Jim (L) |
| Northumberland | Rinaldi, Lou (L) | Sudbury | Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines |
| Oak Ridges | Klees, Frank (PC) | Thornhill | Racco, Mario G. (L) |
| Oakville | Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L) | Thunder Bay–Atikokan | Mauro, Bill (L) |
| Oshawa | Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC) | Thunder Bay–Superior | Gravelle, Michael (L) |
| Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre | Patten, Richard (L) | North / Thunder Bay–Superior- Nord | |
| Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud | McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Research and Innovation / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation | Timiskaming–Cochrane | Ramsay, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones |
| Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean | Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L) Minister of Health Promotion / ministre de la Promotion de la santé | Timmins–James Bay / Timmins-Baie James | Bisson, Gilles (ND) |
| Ottawa–Orléans | McNeely, Phil (L) | Toronto Centre–Rosedale / Toronto-Centre–Rosedale | Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée |
| Ottawa–Vanier | Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (L) Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones | Trinity–Spadina | Marchese, Rosario (ND) |
| Oxford | Hardeman, Ernie (PC) | Vaughan–King–Aurora | Sorbara, Greg (L) |
| Parkdale–High Park | Kennedy, Hon. / L'hon. Gerard (L) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation | Waterloo–Wellington | Arnott, Ted (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Parry Sound–Muskoka | Miller, Norm (PC) | Willowdale | Zimmer, David (L) |
| Perth–Middlesex | Wilkinson, John (L) | Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest | Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine |
| Peterborough | Leal, Jeff (L) | Windsor–St. Clair | Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L) Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre des Finances, président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement |
| Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge | Arthurs, Wayne (L) | York Centre / York-Centre | Kwinter, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (L) Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels |
| Prince Edward–Hastings | Parsons, Ernie (L) | York North / York-Nord | Munro, Julia (PC) |
| Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke | Yakabuski, John (PC) | York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston | Cordiano, Hon. / L'hon. Joseph (L) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce |
| Sarnia–Lambton | Di Cocco, Caroline (L) | York West / York-Ouest | Sergio, Mario (L) |
| Sault Ste. Marie | Oraziotti, David (L) | Nepean–Carleton | Vacant |
| Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre | Duguid, Brad (L) | Toronto–Danforth | Vacant |
| Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est | Chambers, Hon. / L'hon. Mary Anne V. (L) Minister of Children and Youth Services / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse | Whitby–Ajax | Vacant |
| Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest | Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L) | | |
| Scarborough–Agincourt | Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L) Minister of Government Services / ministre des Services gouvernementaux | | |
| Scarborough–Rouge River | Balkissoon, Bas (L) | | |
| Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord | Dunlop, Garfield (PC) | | |
| Simcoe–Grey | Wilson, Jim (PC) | | |
| St. Catharines | Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L) Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader / ministre du Tourisme, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées, leader parlementaire du gouvernement | | |
| 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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