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Wednesday 29 March 2006

Mercredi 29 mars 2006

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 29 March 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 29 mars 2006

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): On Monday, this House passed Bill 210, designed to offer greater protection and certainty to children under the care of children's aid societies. Our caucus voted for this bill. It did not contain every feature it could have, but it was a good bill, and we support every effort to better the lives of children.

Passing a bill is only the first step. The ministry has to implement the bill. Training staff or setting up programs like alternative dispute resolution costs money. Where is the McGuinty government going to find the money when it has cut the budget for the Ministry of Children and Youth Services by \$82 million? How can they pay to implement a new law when they have cut funding for existing programs? Which programs will the government cut: children's mental health, child protection, early years centres, children with disabilities? Ontario's children deserve an answer.

It's time for the Minister of Children and Youth Services to start speaking up on behalf of children. She needs to tell the Premier and the Minister of Finance to halt their \$82-million cut to children's services.

CONANT FAMILY

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): It is my honour and pleasure to welcome the family of Ontario's 12th Premier to this Legislature today. Mr. Gordon Conant, who is named after his grandfather, is joined by his wife, Marsha; his son, Geoffrey; his father, Premier Conant's son, Douglas, who is turning 92 on April 8; his stepmother, Sydney; and his sister, Sandra Manning. Three generations are represented here today.

I have been friends of the Conant family for years, and until I was elected, I had no idea of their amazing connection to Ontario's history. I have since walked past the fine painting of Premier Conant and have also learned of his remarkable support for women, as reported in the Daily Star of 1942. Premier Conant said, "I think there should be women in every deliberative and legislative body," a truly remarkable statement and well ahead of its time.

Born outside of Oshawa, Ontario, in 1885, called to the bar in 1912, and an admirer of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, he became a lifelong Liberal. He was elected deputy reeve and the youngest mayor of Oshawa. Elected to the Ontario Legislature in 1937 by an overwhelming majority, Premier Mitch Hepburn made him Attorney General and, when he resigned, he appointed Gordon D. Conant his successor, the 12th Premier of Ontario. Unmoved by the furor and controversy surrounding his appointment, Premier Conant put the now-famous sign on his desk which read, "How to escape criticism: Do nothing, say nothing, be nothing."

Gordon D. Conant died in 1953, and was hailed by the press as a man of integrity who lived an admirable and useful life. Today his grandson, my friend and constituent who carries his name, visits this chamber for the first time, and Premier Conant's son remembers this building from his last visit almost 40 years ago. Please join me in welcoming the Conant family.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Welcome.

BROCKVILLE GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): Yesterday, residents in my riding were greeted with news that the Brockville General Hospital is being forced to lay off staff, strip services, close beds and close its outpatient lab in the community of Prescott. This is an alarming example of taxpayers paying more and getting less under the McGuinty government and this government's disdain for smaller urban centres in rural Ontario.

After getting elected on a promise not to raise taxes, Mr. McGuinty brought in the largest tax increase in Ontario history under the guise of improved health care. What my constituents have received in return for that deception are the removal of services like physiotherapy and eye and chiropractic care, and now these job losses and further service cuts. This is not only the loss of important health care services for our region; it is also the loss of almost 30 good-paying jobs, and that has a long-term economic impact.

The bitter irony here is that the former PC government just three short years ago invested millions of dollars in the expansion and renovation of the Brockville General Hospital so that it could better serve the region. Yesterday's announcement is a significant blow to my riding and that corner of eastern Ontario and a disturbing indicator of the McGuinty government's "pay more, get less" approach to the province's health care system.

TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Tony C. Wong (Markham): Last Friday in Markham, I had the privilege of meeting with a number of my constituents as well as community leaders and representatives from York region in order to provide them with a detailed account of our government's 2006 budget and to receive their feedback. I'm happy to report that the feedback was positive, particularly for the commuters of Markham and York region.

As regional chair, Bill Fisch said, "The Ontario 2006 budget provided significant news for Markham and York region residents and businesses, and we will continue to work with the provincial government on these important transportation and public transit initiatives."

Our \$1.2-billion investment in Move Ontario will strengthen transportation infrastructure, resulting in less gridlock and shorter commute times. Move Ontario will enhance public transit in Markham, provide a new subway to York region and invest \$7 million to support phase 2 of Viva rapid transit. For Markham residents, these major investments will mean more time with family and less time commuting, reduced business costs, a cleaner environment and a better quality of life.

I am proud that our budget addressed transit infrastructure needs in Markham, and I know that together with our municipal partners we will continue to provide a variety of public transit options for all York region communities.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): Yesterday, the Premier, when asked in a press scrum whether or not he would extend the deadline for the appeals process of the Municipal Property Assessment Corp., responded with a deer-in-the-headlights look. But lo and behold, under pressure from the opposition and the third party, they announced yesterday that they would extend the deadline by 90 days. If the Liberals remain true to their character, this will be a 90-day extension of their deadline to do nothing.

While we're very pleased that property owners who have been living under a system that does not address the reality of property values in today's Ontario will be given this extension, much more must be done. The McGuinty government must do more than retreat to its burrow and hibernate for three months on this issue. It has been clearly shown that major reforms to the assessment system are needed. It is imperative that the government ensure that, within this 90-day period, a concrete, long-term solution to this problem be implemented. My colleague from Erie–Lincoln has already done the ground-work for them.

1340

It is no small irony that the government has ensured that the appeals extension will go beyond the life of this session, making it impossible for the opposition to question them in this chamber. Significant recommend-

ations have been made by the Ombudsman, and the government must act quickly. The shame of it is that they promised to overhaul this system almost two years ago and chose to do nothing. In fact, the Premier said it was working fine. He saw the draft of this report several weeks ago and knew what the recommendations would be.

Premier, you're the one with the big office; you're the one with the car and driver. Stop sitting on your hands—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Members' statements. The member for Hamilton East.

WOMEN'S ISSUES

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I rise to acknowledge all of the young women who are here in the gallery today from universities and communities across the province. They are part of the Miss G Project, an Ontario-wide movement that's pushing to have women's studies included in the secondary school curriculum. I want to commend all of the young women involved, particularly the four founders of the Miss G Project: Sarah Bhabrial, Lara Shkordoff, Sheetal Rawal and Dilani Mohan. A special welcome as well to Dr. Rebecca Coulter of the University of Western Ontario, who is the project's grand matriarch and a continuing source of guidance and inspiration.

Today the Miss G Project hosted a lunch for MPPs as a first step to getting this government to deliver results. It shouldn't be very difficult to bring women's studies into the high school curriculum. Really, it's a no-brainer, and we should just do it.

There hasn't been enough action on women's issues by the McGuinty government. Liberals seem to say all the right words, but when you look behind the words, there's little of substance: no action on stopping the claw-back; no action on the comprehensive program for domestic violence that was promised; no provincial dollars for a child care program for which they promised \$300 million; no funding as promised for children with autism and other special needs; no action on passing Bill 45, my bill, which would make workplace harassment a violation under the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

I'm proud to be a New Democrat representing a party that fights every day for the issues that mean the most to women. I only wish the government would do the same. I would gladly trade the ministerial speeches for timely and concrete action.

Welcome, all young women. I'm very proud to be here with you today.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): I'm very pleased to rise today to talk about some of the very positive things that were announced in last week's provincial budget for Huron–Bruce. All of the municipalities in Huron–Bruce will be receiving almost \$10 million in total. I can tell you, this is much-needed funding for our

roads and bridges. This will allow our municipalities to determine their own roads, their priorities. This is welcome news to the municipalities that are having a very difficult time repairing crumbling infrastructure. For 10 long years, there were very few provincial funds available for maintaining our roads and bridges, and combined with our severe winter climate, this played its damage.

Roads are the arteries of rural Ontario. They bind our communities together. Our commodities such as milk, eggs and manufactured goods from Volvo and Westcast need good roads to get in-time delivery, and it's vital to keep our area attractive to new business.

This government has not forgotten rural Ontario. I am proud to be part of a government that is committed to working together with municipalities, treating them as true partners and recognizing the contribution they make to our rural communities. This was recognized in our budget, the contribution that rural communities give to this great province of Ontario.

Mr. David Oraziotti (Sault Ste. Marie): I'm very pleased with the recent budget because it means more great news for Ontarians and certainly more great news for Sault Ste. Marie. We've listened to Ontarians and made responsible choices to deliver on their priorities, namely better health care, better education and better infrastructure, while ensuring transparent and accountable fiscal planning to reduce our deficit to \$1.4 billion, down 75% from when we took office.

What our budget means for Sault Ste. Marie is that we can move forward with the construction of our new hospital. It means \$4.7 million more for roads, \$1.2 million more in gas tax funding, greater funding for the Algoma Health Unit, more funding to train new physicians, and more spaces at Algoma University and Sault College.

What it means for my community is greater hope that the future will be brighter, that the youth will find opportunities in our community, that health care will improve and that access to a doctor will be easier, that support for our students from the earliest grades to the post-secondary level will be available, and that our local economy will continue to grow.

Ontarians will not forget the TV-game-show-style budget that was the Magna budget at an auto parts plant.

While the previous Conservative government left us a \$5.5-billion deficit and the NDP ran yearly deficits in the \$10-billion range, we're on track to eliminate the deficit within one to two years, but we will only make this claim when it's a fact and when it's confirmed publicly by the Provincial Auditor.

Most of all, this budget shows Ontarians that we're responsible with their financial resources and respect their priorities.

ROBERT COSTALL

Mr. Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay–Atikokan): I rise today to pay tribute to a courageous young man who died while attempting to bring peace and stability to a region and country so desperately in need of both.

Private Robert Costall, stationed with the first battalion of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry in Edmonton, was killed while engaged in a fierce firefight with Taliban forces overnight.

Robert Costall was born in Thunder Bay, living in our city until he moved west with his father at the age of eight. At 19, he returned to Thunder Bay and lived with his grandmother before going to Quebec for military training.

A proud new father, Robert Costall was just beginning life's full and rewarding journey. Robert has been described by family members as being "strong in his belief for the Canadian military and what Canadians stood for."

There are no words I or anyone can offer that will help ease the excruciating pain or dull the aching loss of this exemplary young man, nor are there words that can truly or properly express the devastating death of a young person taken in life's prime. The tragic death of one filled with enormous potential and brimming with unlimited possibility is hard to comprehend and difficult to accept.

Too often we have a tendency to use words like "brave," "courageous" and "dedicated" with an almost indifferent frequency and without proper context, and thus they tend to lose some of the magnificence of their meaning. In recognizing Private Robert Costall, these words fit the example and aptly eulogize this gifted and complete young man.

He gave the ultimate sacrifice, his life, for the freedoms and improved quality of life for others—others he did not know and, sadly, would never meet. His efforts in bringing stability, peace and harmony to a country and its peoples, in defending his fellow soldiers and his devotion to duty will always be remembered.

To Private Costall's family, his wife, Chrissy, and their one-year-old son, Colin, we offer our deepest sympathies on the loss of a loving and devoted husband and father.

In recognizing Robert's efforts to help others gain a better quality of life today, let us remember his sacrifice and dedication always.

Speaker, I would ask that we all rise for a moment of silence in recognition of the life of Private Robert Costall.

The House observed a moment's silence.

VISITORS

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to introduce in a non-partisan way the energetic, intelligent, dynamic women of the Miss G Project who are joining us in the Legislature today. I would like all men and women in this Legislature to welcome these fine women, leaders of the future.

1350

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I want to welcome three bright young women to this Legislative Assembly, students from St. Kevin School in Welland: Sharon Michalak, Madison

Hamilton and Marley Kajan, and Marley's dad, Rodney Kajan, too.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated March 29, 2006, from the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to standing order 106(e)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MORE TIME TO APPEAL ACT, 2006 LOI DE 2006 PORTANT PROROGATION DU DÉLAI D'APPEL

Mr. Duncan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 85, An Act to amend the Assessment Act / Projet de loi 85, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'évaluation foncière.

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

The minister may wish to make a brief statement.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): This bill extends the deadline for appeal on MPAC decisions until June 30 of this year. It was provided to the opposition this morning at 10 o'clock. My understanding is that there is agreement with that.

I seek unanimous consent to put a motion to give second and third reading to this bill immediately so that we can implement it today.

The Speaker: The Minister of Finance has asked for unanimous consent. I heard a no.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. The member for Niagara Centre will come to order. Minister of Finance, order. This isn't necessary. The deputy government House leader.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker: Mr. Caplan seeks unanimous consent to move a motion regarding private members' public business. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following change be made to the ballot list of private members' public business: Ms. Di Cocco and Mr. Lalonde exchange places in order of precedence such that Ms. Di Cocco assumes ballot item 59 and Mr. Lalonde assumes ballot item 34.

The Speaker: Mr. Caplan has moved that, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following change be made to the ballot list of private members' public business: Ms. Di Cocco and Mr. Lalonde exchange places in order of precedence such that Ms. Di Cocco assumes ballot item 59 and Mr. Lalonde assumes ballot item 34.

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

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

FIRST NATIONS REVENUE SHARING PARTAGE DES RECETTES AVEC LES PREMIÈRES NATIONS

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): It is indeed a great pleasure that I rise today to inform all members of the House of an historic day for the government of Ontario and for Ontario's First Nations.

Earlier this morning, Premier McGuinty signed an agreement in principle that sets out a new partnership for sharing the economic benefits of gaming with Ontario's First Nations. It's great news. I want to underline the word "partnership." Our government is committed to taking a new approach to aboriginal affairs and to strengthening the partnership that we value greatly.

The agreement in principle commits the parties to negotiate a binding legal agreement by December 31 of this year, which will provide over 130 Ontario First Nations with more financial stability and a brighter future than they currently have. First Nations communities will be able to invest in important areas such as their people's education, their skills and their health care.

Let me briefly outline a few elements of the agreement.

Right now, Ontario's First Nations receive provincial gaming revenue from a single gaming source, and that's Casino Rama. That contract runs until the year 2011. Under the terms set out in today's agreement in principle, as of 2011, First Nations would be provided with 1.6% of gross revenue from all provincial gaming, and before 2011, Ontario First Nations would also receive approx-

imately \$155 million over the course of the next six years.

This was a huge piece of work. It took almost one full year for the provincial government and the Ontario First Nations Limited Partnership to arrive at this historic agreement. It happened thanks in large part to a highly dedicated group of individuals. I want to express my gratitude and the gratitude of this entire province to the negotiators for their very valuable leadership. Those people include former Ontario Premier David Peterson, who acted as the province's representative, as well as the following members of the Ontario First Nations Limited Partnership, or OFNLP, and I'd like to read their names: Gord Peters, Joe Miskokomon, Linda Commandant, Don Morrison, Mike Mitchell, Ernest Sutherland and George Kakeway.

I want to point out that a number of people from OFNLP are here in the Legislature with us today to witness history in the making. I want to introduce to you Steve Williams, the vice-president of OFNLP; Don Morrison, board member and treasurer; and Leroy Dolson, another OFNLP board member. Gentlemen, thank you for being here.

In closing, let me say that our government is committed to building opportunity for all Ontarians, and that includes Ontario's First Nations. We will continue this road together, working with our First Nations partners toward a goal that all of us share: healthy, prosperous communities.

I want to thank all members of this House for being here to witness this historic day.

L'hon. David Ramsay (ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones): Je suis heureux de prendre la parole devant cette Assemblée aujourd'hui pour féliciter les représentants de l'Ontario First Nations Limited Partnership, l'ex-premier ministre de l'Ontario, M. David Peterson, et mon collègue M. David Caplan, ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, pour la conclusion aujourd'hui avec les Premières nations de l'Ontario d'un accord de principe relatif au partage des retombées économiques des jeux de hasard.

It is a pleasure for me to rise in the House today to congratulate representatives of the Ontario First Nations Limited Partnership, former Ontario Premier David Peterson, and my colleague David Caplan, the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, who just made his statement, for the signing of today's agreement in principle to share the economic benefits of gaming with Ontario's First Nations.

This agreement in principle is another milestone in our government's relationship with the aboriginal peoples of Ontario, a relationship sustained by mutual respect and that will lead to improved opportunities and a better future for aboriginal children and youth.

1400

Since the launch of our government's New Approach to Aboriginal Affairs in June 2005, the McGuinty government continues to build a constructive, co-operative relationship with First Nations.

Ensemble, nous pouvons améliorer le potentiel des peuples autochtones de l'Ontario.

Earlier this month, our government delivered a key commitment under the new approach through the launch of the Northern Table, a political-level forum dedicated to addressing the unique challenges and opportunities of northern First Nation communities. The Northern Table represents a partnership between our government and the Chiefs of Treaties 9 and 5 and will be dedicated to bringing greater economic opportunities to aboriginal communities in northern Ontario. It is a step that will help enhance First Nation participation in the benefits of resource development and boost the long-term sustainability of the northern economy. Over time, it will include other First Nations in the north.

Today's agreement once again reflects our government's commitment to help close the socio-economic gap between aboriginal peoples and other residents of Ontario.

Significant progress is being made and will continue to be made by the McGuinty government in improving relations with First Nations leaders and communities throughout the province. Our government is also making significant progress through land claim negotiations and the development of new programs and initiatives that are aimed at strengthening aboriginal communities.

Gaming revenues can play a significant role in strengthening the economies of First Nation communities and improving the quality of life for First Nations.

In closing, the final legal agreement that Ontario and the First Nations will develop, based on the terms of the agreement in principle, can help shape a better future for the First Nation communities in this province.

EMPLOI DES JEUNES

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

L'hon. Christopher Bentley (ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités): Aider les jeunes à acquérir les compétences et l'expérience dont ils auront besoin à l'avenir est une priorité de notre gouvernement.

With that in mind, I'm pleased to announce the launch of Ontario Summer Jobs 2006.

Our government is investing almost \$52 million in Ontario Summer Jobs to help over 56,000 young people find work this summer. I firmly believe that a summer job is a learning and growing experience. It provides young people with opportunities to test the job market and to try out a range of potential careers, many they may never have considered or known about.

Helping our young people acquire the skills and experience they will need for the future is a priority for our government. Through Ontario Summer Jobs, we are giving young people an opportunity to find rewarding and productive summer work.

L'année dernière, nous avons dépassé notre objectif en aidant presque 61,000 jeunes à trouver un emploi et à

recevoir un soutien grâce au programme Emplois d'été Ontario. Nous espérons faire de même cette année.

Ontario Summer Jobs provides a range of services, including a \$2-per-hour hiring incentive for businesses and community organizations to hire young people so they can gain valuable work experience.

I know it's challenging for young people to make decisions about careers and further education and training. It's also challenging for young people to get their first job. Students who are beginning their job searches can access services through community-based youth employment agencies and our colleges in more than 100 sites in 80 communities across the province. They can call the toll-free JobGrow hotline at 1-888-JOB-GROW to find the location of the organizations closest to them that can help them find a job or even start a career.

Creating a summer business is also an important part of Ontario Summer Jobs. This year, the government will continue to encourage and help young people start their own summer business through the Summer Company component of Ontario Summer Jobs. It provides hands-on business coaching and mentoring from local community business leaders. It's a great opportunity for enterprising young people who want to start and run their own summer business.

Starting a business or learning from others in the workplace are important experiences for young people. That is why Ontario Summer Jobs provides young people with a wide range of employment opportunities. For example, through the summer experience component of Ontario Summer Jobs, students can work as Ontario Rangers with the Ministry of Natural Resources. The rangers work in wilderness camps maintaining trails, parks and camp buildings, as well as helping in fish and wildlife projects. All of these experiences encourage young people to learn about the job market, explore potential careers and expand their job skills.

Notre gouvernement estime que les jeunes représentent l'avenir de la province. En appuyant l'emploi d'été, nous aidons la jeunesse à se prévaloir de possibilités qui pourraient contribuer à son succès futur.

By making priority investments like the one we are announcing today, we are helping to build the best educated, most highly skilled workforce in North America. This way, we will enjoy a strong and prosperous economy in which all people will find themselves sharing in our province's prosperity. If we can do that, we will build an Ontario with a quality of life that is second to none.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Response? The member for Parry Sound–Muskoka.

FIRST NATIONS REVENUE SHARING

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): It was my pleasure to attend the smudge ceremony this morning. I want to recognize the work of former Premier David Peterson in this agreement that has been reached. I note that Mr. Peterson did his work pro bono as a volunteer and I think he should be thanked for that.

I would also like to recognize the negotiating committee, including Harvey Yesno, president of the Ontario First Nations Limited Partnership, and the other members of the negotiating team: Gord Peters, Joe Miskokomon, Don Morrison, Mike Mitchell, Ernest Sutherland, George Kakeway, and especially from Wahta First Nation in Parry Sound–Muskoka, Linda Commandant, who I understand is not able to be here today.

I'd also like to recognize Chief Angus Toulouse, who was at the ceremony—he's the Ontario regional chief of the Chiefs of Ontario—for his work. At the announcement, Chief Toulouse said that he hopes the funding will in, in his words, "eradicate poverty" on First Nations and "break the cycle of dependency." These are certainly very worthwhile goals. Obviously more work has to be done, and this is an agreement in principle.

This government has been very good at making announcements; not necessarily so good at delivering results. It is my hope that this agreement will be implemented successfully and that the deadline of December 31 will be met.

EMPLOI DES JEUNES YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

M. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): Aider les jeunes et appuyer les compétences et les expériences dont ils auront besoin à l'avenir est une priorité de tous les membres du Parlement ici et de toute la province.

Minister, I would like to comment briefly about your statement in the House today. You say you're committing almost \$52 million. What you don't tell us is that this is a cut over last year's summer experience program for the province of Ontario. That is distressing news at a time when the students in our colleges have had to extend their school year by a further three or four weeks, not without thanks to you for taking over 10 days to even contact the parties to try and bring a resolution. In fact, the sum and substance of your contribution in the first 10 days of the strike was to announce a tuition increase for these very same students who are seeking employment this summer.

You state here that you know it is challenging for young people regarding their further education, and clearly that is the message the Ontario students' federation has given you, with your conduct during the recent strike.

You say in your press release that students who are beginning their job searches can start accessing these services. Minister, last year you made these announcements well in advance so students could prepare to seek summer employment, and I want to commend the former minister because she did it in a timely manner. You are one full month later. Take a look at the fact that the summer job services program you're announcing today has four business days left in which young people can apply in Ontario. Your summer company program for young people to start up their own summer businesses—you've left them with six business working days to put

together a company and to make application for your program. You've given the summer experience program, which is the program that you've cut the most—and I'm glad that you, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and the minister for MNR are here today, because you've cut this program by almost 300 jobs for junior rangers, junior forester programs and other programs.

1410

You've left them with two business days. The cut-off for this program is March 31. The Ontario government regular summer student programming is open-ended, but this one is the kicker. We appreciated any effort to support the exchanges between Ontario and Quebec because the program you announced today was cut off on February 28, a month and a bit ago.

Minister, it's hard for the students in this province to take seriously your commitment as the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. You were late getting to the table to help them with the community college strike, you were disappointing in terms of having them at the table to assist you with a framework for tuition, and now, with two days left for your main summer student employment program, many are left wondering just what your intention was and why they can't apply with two days left.

FIRST NATIONS REVENUE SHARING

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): I will say first of all to the First Nations communities, to Chief Angus Toulouse and all of his team, congratulations for being tenacious in holding this government's and the former government's—under Mike Harris and Ernie Eves—feet to the fire to try to get what was the historical agreement in the first place.

Where are we at? There was a deal made between the NDP government and the First Nations back in the early 1990s that they would be into their own casino. They would be able to get revenues of almost, at today's dollars, \$1 million a day. Imagine what we could have done from 1995 up to now if First Nations had received that up to \$1 million a day that we get in profits from a casino like Casino Rama. We would have been able to deal with much of the infrastructure problem that we have in communities across northern, central and southern Ontario. We could have dealt with issues such as housing and water. We could have dealt with issues such as putting recreational facilities in those communities and giving First Nations families, their kids and the communities some of the things that we take for granted.

This government stands in the House today and says "historic." Hardly. I give you credit for having gotten to where you are, but it's nowhere near where they would have been if they had had the deal that was given to them in the first place. I say to the former Conservative government, shame on you for having put First Nations in this position in the first place; and I say to this government, it's hardly historic. We have a government that's asking, "How are we able to negotiate our way out

of this and minimize the exposure of our treasury towards the First Nations of this province?" I, along with others in this House who represent First Nations communities, know full well how First Nations communities are faring when it comes to their part of Ontario. When it comes to their share of Ontario, it is nowhere near what everybody else takes for granted.

We have communities such as Kashechewan. We all know what happened last fall, where the water was tainted and people couldn't drink the water. That is not just an isolated incident; that is what's happening across over 60 communities in the province of Ontario when it comes to First Nations. We have communities like Kashechewan, which doesn't even have a jail to lock somebody up in should there be a charge in that community, because their jail burned down. People were killed—two inmates—and an officer was injured, and this government has yet to find a lock-up facility for that community to make sure that, should somebody need to be arrested, there is somewhere to put him. Now what are you going to do? Are you going to arrest somebody and tie them to a tree? That's all you're going to allow that community to do.

I say to this government, you have to take your responsibilities and take them well. I give you some credit for what you've done today, but don't think you're off the hook, because all this is is a commitment towards a negotiated settlement that you say is going to be signed by next fall. Well, I've seen Dalton McGuinty's promises before, and they've been broken. We will be here as New Democrats—Howard Hampton and myself, who represent First Nations—to make sure that, at the very least, you keep this promise.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): I would like to explain why Mr. Bentley's announcement is a positive one. The students who are here watching these debates would probably understand it better than I, Mr. Bentley, or dare I say, Monsieur McGuinty.

I suspect some of these students are paying incredibly high tuition fees. If some of those young men and women are going to the law school here at the U of T, they will be paying, this year alone, \$17,000. Courtesy of Monsieur Bentley, next year they're going to get whacked with an 8% increase, which amounts to, more or less, a \$1,500 hit.

The ministers on that side think this is okay. In fact, even the U of T thinks it's okay. If you're going to medical school, you're probably going to be paying 15,000 bucks here at the U of T. You're going to get whacked this September with an 8% increase. Mr. Bentley thinks this is okay. Maybe that is why he is providing a little help—less than last year, but any help is better than a kick in the teeth. Yes, summer jobs are going to be helpful indeed, and required to be able to pay these kinds of hefty tuition increases. Young men and women going to the U of T, just in a general program, are going to be paying \$200 more, added to the 5,000 bucks

they pay already, excluding books, transportation, and if you've got to live outside of your own city, you've got to pay for rent and housing, wherever you're going.

Monsieur Bentley, thank you so very much for the summer jobs. They're going to need them, because come this September they're going to get whacked in a very serious way. I just wanted to point that out.

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. On November 30, 2005, I made the following inquiry of the Ministry of Finance: "Would the Minister of Finance provide a date when he or his Deputy Minister Colin Andersen will be available to meet with Simcoe–Grey constituents from the Collingwood Condominium Ratepayers Association as requested in my letters dated August 19, 2005, and September 19, 2005, and would they also provide details as to why they have not responded to this request in a timely manner?"

I believe the response to that inquiry of the ministry is overdue.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): It's my understanding that the answer to the member's question was due on Monday. Minister, could you indicate when you will be replying to the request of the member?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Later this afternoon.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): A question today for the Premier: Roger Anderson, the chair of Durham region, had the following to say about your recent budget: "Durham is one of the fastest-growing regions within the GTA, and yet there was no mention at all for transportation."

Premier, Christine Elliott wants to know, the members of the assembly want to know and the taxpayers of Durham region certainly want to know, why was there no assistance for the region of Durham—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. We're not getting off to a good start.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): Tell her to pick up the phone.

The Speaker: Order, the Minister of Community and Social Services. The member for Ottawa Centre will come to order. The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will come to order. The member for Erie–Lincoln is patiently waiting to complete his question.

The member for Erie–Lincoln.

1420

Mr. Hudak: To the Minister of Community and Social Services, why doesn't she pick up the phone? Well, she'll be here soon enough to ask these questions right here in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, let me tell you.

Let me say one more time, Premier: Christine Elliott wants to know today, the members on this side of the House want to know today and Lord know the taxpayers in Durham region want to know, why did you ignore the region of Durham in last week's budget?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Let me say what, in fact, we have done for Durham. The member opposite may feel that 22 million additional new dollars for roads and bridges is unworthy of comment, but we think it's very significant from a taxpayer and constituency perspective. In Clarington, they're getting \$1.4 million. The Durham region itself is getting \$10.8 million: Kawartha Lakes is \$5.8 million, Oshawa is almost \$3 million, Scugog township is \$857,000, and Uxbridge township some \$560,000.

Again, I could say that we are very interested in supporting not just this particular community, but communities throughout the province of Ontario.

Mr. Hudak: I suggest the Premier check his atlas. I don't think Kawartha Lakes has too much to do with the region of Durham, and certainly not the riding of Whitby–Ajax.

It's not just me, Premier. This is the chair of Durham region who has basically said that your budget had small potatoes for the region of Durham. It's almost as if when the Premier takes the Whites Road exit off the 401 in Pickering, he thinks he's gone into another province.

While you go on a hot spending spree in your budget, you basically gave Durham taxpayers the cold shoulder. The durhamregion.com news site states, "And all this time, we thought the province ignored Durham's needs. This is one of those times when it hurts to be right."

Premier, answer the question of durhamregion.com when it says it hurts to be right, that Durham was left out. Premier, what do you have against the taxpayers of Durham region?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: In addition to the \$22 million I referenced earlier for roads and bridges, the community of Whitby is receiving \$1.8 million as a result of our last budget, Ajax another \$1.5 million. Unlike the previous government, which closed a hospital, we are actually rebuilding and expanding the hospital in Ajax.

I'm also pleased to report that we have a wonderful pilot project for the JobsNow program that's under way in Durham as we speak.

We are working very well with the people in that particular community, and we will continue to work well with them long into the future.

Mr. Hudak: Premier, it's not only Roger Anderson, the chair of the region, who is criticizing you; it's not only the news website for Durham region. You know what? It's actually also your Liberal Party candidate who's trying to distance herself from you. If you look on her website, it's long on Judi but awfully short on Dalton

McGuinty. In fact, we couldn't find a single picture of Dalton McGuinty in any of her brochures. On her website you're not in the picture gallery. You don't even show up in her list of endorsements.

I've got to ask you, Premier, are you not supporting your candidate, and is she running from you because of your reputation as a tax-hiking promise-breaker or is she exiling you from her website because she's mad at you too because you totally left Durham out of the recent budget?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Judi Longfield, our candidate, doesn't need to hang her hat on any one particular individual or any particular organization. She's standing on her own two feet. She has a wonderful record of community service and we are proud to have her run under our banner.

I can tell you, one of the reasons she is being so well received at the doors, quite apart from her own record of personal service for her constituents in that riding, is because of our investments in the new courthouse there, because of the JobsNow program, because of the expansion of the 401 that's taking place there, because of the investment that we're making in the new hospital, the expansion of the hospital there. It's because of the new teachers we've hired in that community. It's because of the new doctors and new nurses that are working in that community. It's because of the ongoing commitment our government has to that community, which is far and wide different from the kind of record they were left with as a result of the previous government.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): My question is also for the Premier. We do not agree with your government's decision to spend \$1.4 billion in order to avoid balancing the budget. However, since you have made this decision, why have you forgotten Ottawa? I believe the Ottawa Sun summed up Ottawa's place in the Thursday budget—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Interjection.

The Speaker: I'm going to warn the Minister of Community and Social Services. You need to come to order.

The member for Lanark–Carleton.

Mr. Sterling: They are pretty sensitive about what they do to Ottawa, Mr. Speaker.

The Sun said, "Ontario Finance Minister Dwight Duncan rolled out the municipal gravy train yesterday. Unfortunately for Ottawa, the line seems to stop just a few miles out of the Big Smoke.

"Mind you, with recent polls showing the McGuinty government's" so weak in eastern Ontario, it's not surprising he has dealt eastern Ontario another blow.

Premier, you are from Ottawa, and yet you managed to largely ignore Ottawa in last week's budget. Can you explain why the city of Ottawa, the second-largest city in Ontario, will receive less than 2.4% of the funding you have allocated to transit and transportation, through

Move Ontario and one-time funding for the Toronto Transit Commission—2.4% of the total, that's what you gave Ottawa.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Let me seize this opportunity to better inform the members opposite of some of the good news we continue to bring to the good people of Ottawa. In our recent announcement, we are sending \$33 million for roads and bridges alone to the people of Ottawa. The community has received \$30 million in gas tax and \$10 million for special municipal assistance. We're investing \$200 million in a light rail program, \$11 million for arts coming out of the recent budget, and \$140 million for a regional cancer centre. We are doubling the size of the Montfort Hospital, a hospital that organization tried to shut down. We've invested in two more MRIs, we're expanding the cancer centre, and we're investing in a newborn screening program at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario. It's all good news in Ottawa.

Mr. Sterling: It's not only I who thinks Ottawa got the raw end of the stick. Ottawa Mayor Bob Chiarelli, a former Liberal MPP from this particular Legislature, said, "(Toronto) got the lion's share. Again." What an incredible understatement.

At a time when your party is fighting a by-election in Ottawa in the riding of Nepean–Carleton, you still seem to have forgotten that Ottawa exists. While Toronto, Vaughan, Brampton and Mississauga will receive \$838 million for transit funding for Move Ontario, Ottawa will receive less than \$33 million. It seems you do not want Ottawa to improve its transit and public roads. Premier, let me ask you this: How is it that a city like Brampton, which is half the size of Ottawa, receives three times the funding?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: This is more of the same. It's an old approach where you try to divide and conquer and pit one community against another. We just don't see the great province of Ontario that way.

1430

Let me just reassure the members opposite that we have not lost sight of my hometown of Ottawa. We are again investing \$33 million for roads and bridges, which we've just provided to the city of Ottawa; \$6 million for the Ontario municipal partnership fund; \$30 million in gas tax. Let me just dwell for a moment on that particular investment. Under that government, there was no support of any kind for public transit in Ontario. What we have done is put in place a new apportionment of our gas tax, which we are now turning over to our municipal partners. That is 30 million new gas tax dollars for the city Ottawa. That is stable, it is growing year after year and it's something that the people of Ottawa—

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Sterling: The Premier should really examine history, because he is unaware of what the previous government did for the city of Ottawa. I personally delivered a cheque for \$17 million to the mayor for new buses in 2001. In 2000, the former government gave over \$45 million for roads in the city of Ottawa. But under this \$1.4 billion of largesse, which you have given mostly to

the greater Toronto area, you have given us \$33 million—2.4% of the total.

Mr. Premier, you promised the city of Ottawa \$200 million for their rapid rail system. I ask you, why didn't you include the \$200 million in your Move Ontario trust fund so that you can't break that promise—

The Speaker: Thank you. The question has been asked.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Let's just take a look again at that government's record when it came to the community of Ottawa: First of all, they shut down the Grace Hospital; they shut down the Riverside Hospital; they tried to close the Montfort Hospital; they tried to remove the cardiac unit from the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario; they took over the Ottawa Board of Education; they fired the board of the Ottawa Hospital—of course, they would have nothing to do with the gas tax—and they downloaded all kinds of social services onto the city of Ottawa which are now being picked up by property taxpayers.

That is the legacy. That is the record. I will stack our record any day against that record in terms of our investment, our commitment, our support, our championing of the city of Ottawa.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The Minister of Natural Resources. The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Stop the clock. It's getting way too noisy in here. I'm going to be forced to start naming people if we don't bring this place into some kind of order. I don't want to do that; you don't want to leave. So let's get on with it in a business sort of fashion.

NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. On Monday, I asked about your government's failure to keep your promise to Ontario's most vulnerable citizens, our poorest children. You didn't have a good answer then, so I'm going to ask you the question again. Premier, why is the McGuinty government still clawing back the national child benefit supplement from Ontario's poorest children?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'm sure that in his supplementary the leader of the NDP will want to correct the record and indicate to all present, and to ensure it's recorded on Hansard, that I was not in this House on Monday. I'm sure he's going to want to do that, Speaker.

Having said that, he has raised an important issue, and that is the national child benefit. What we have done with respect to providing additional support for our families is, first of all, increased social assistance by 5%. Beyond that, we have made permanent now, effective 2004, the additional benefits we are receiving from the federal government.

As a result of the investments that we have made and continue to make, what that means in practical terms is

that a single mother with two children is now receiving on an annual basis \$1,620 more than she would have received under the previous government. Is there more work to do? Of course there is.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, just two and a half years ago you said that clawing back the national child benefit supplement to Ontario's poorest children was wrong and you promised to end it. Today, under the McGuinty government, there are 443,000 children living in poverty. That's one in six kids in the province. That is a human tragedy and a black eye on a wealthy province.

Here's the situation. You had a \$3-billion budget revenue windfall. It would cost only \$220 million to eliminate the clawback. Tell the poorest children in Ontario why, when you have the money, you haven't eliminated the clawback of the national child benefit supplement which affects the poorest kids in this province.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: It may not be significant to the leader of the NDP, but the additional revenues were \$2.4 billion, and they were not permanent in nature. They were one-time revenues, so we made one-time investments and we did that specifically in infrastructure, something that is durable and does not require ongoing support. That's why we did that.

Beyond that, we also did other things for children in this budget. We continue to invest heavily in education. We are reducing class sizes, specifically in the earlier years to ensure that more children receive more individual attention. We've invested, again, heavily in health care. We are also continuing with our program to provide immunizations free of charge to Ontario families. We are also the first Canadian province to cover costs for insulin pumps. We anticipate that program will cover 6,500 children affected by type 1 diabetes. So we continue to invest in more programs, more—

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

Mr. Hampton: Tomorrow working families will have the opportunity to send Dalton McGuinty a message about his broken promises to kids, about the shameful way he's punishing poor children by taking away money that was given by the federal government, intended to improve the quality of life for those children.

Premier, you say it's one-time money, but those who looked at your budget say that you're consistently underestimating your revenues and consistently overestimating your costs, just as Paul Martin used to do with his budget. You had no trouble finding the capacity to extend a capital tax break to banks in your budget, but suddenly when it comes to the poorest kids, they don't seem to matter any more. If you can afford to give and accelerate a tax break to the banks, which are raking in multi-billion dollar profits, then surely you can afford \$220 million for the poorest kids in the province. Are you going to keep your promise, Premier, or was that just another insincere group of words?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The minister would like to speak to this.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I want to remind the member opposite what we have done with annualized dollars. Almost every single new annualized dollar available in this budget went to health care, education and vulnerable people, and let me tell you where. I want you to tell me which of these is inappropriate: intellectual disabilities and supporting those people who desperately need it, after you cut their services; or perhaps it's the intervener or interpreter services, after you cut their services. These are the kinds of decisions that we make in this ministry and that children's services makes in that ministry. Virtually every single new annualized dollar available in this budget went to two ministries: community and social services and children's services. That is what we place as priorities: those vulnerable people.

1440

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): To the Premier: The banks and insurance companies that are raking in billions of dollars in profits can afford to wait a couple years while you keep your promise to the poorest kids in the province.

But I want to ask the Premier this: Ontario's Ombudsman wants you to make two key changes to fix your arbitrary, capricious and secretive property tax assessment system. André Marin has directed you to make it mandatory for MPAC to tell the taxpayer how it came up with the assessed value of their property and for MPAC to justify its assessed value on appeal, to protect taxpayers from subjective and unfair property tax hikes. Will you commit to implementing those two recommendations of the Ombudsman immediately, Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I want to take the opportunity to thank the Ombudsman for the work he's done in this particular regard. He has very helpfully placed before all of us some of the real challenges. In fact, he's confirmed those very real challenges associated with MPAC. I want to thank him for his work and thank him specifically for the recommendations that he's put forward.

Some of the good news here is the tremendous goodwill demonstrated by the leadership at MPAC, who say that they are looking forward to moving ahead on those recommendations. My Minister of Finance has specifically said that we welcome these particular recommendations, but we feel we have a responsibility to consult on them, and that's what we intend to do.

But again, there is a real issue here. I think we all recognize the inherent failings associated with the MPAC system that our government has inherited, and we look forward to moving ahead with those recommendations we received from Mr. Marin.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, the Ombudsman describes MPAC as an elitist operation with a "superiority complex" and "questionable practices" that result in thou-

sands of incorrect evaluations each year. The Ombudsman has directed you to make it mandatory for MPAC to tell the taxpayer how it, MPAC, came up with the assessed value of their property and for MPAC to justify its value on appeal, to protect taxpayers from subjective and unfair property tax hikes.

Premier, this is already in place in other provinces. Manitoba does this with their assessment system. Your government is in its third year. You own this system; it's your system, and you are running out of excuses. Are you going to implement the Ombudsman's recommendations or are we simply going to hear more excuses from the McGuinty government?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I think, in fairness to the process here, we just received this report. The member opposite is telling us that we should move quickly, and yet when the Minister of Finance just a few moments ago sought unanimous consent to move ahead with a bill that would bring immediate relief to property taxpayers who were seeking more time to appeal their assessments, they were not prepared to move quickly in that particular regard.

We think we've got a responsibility to speak to taxpayers and to municipalities about these specific recommendations. We think that's the responsible thing to do, and that's what we will do.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, we gave your House leader a letter indicating we were prepared to move forward tomorrow. But it's your Minister of Finance who wants to play trickery with this. We're prepared to move forward.

But again, I want to ask you about what the Ombudsman says. He says your property tax assessment system is David versus Goliath. It's "The average citizen, with scant information on his property and very little additional useful information to make his case, facing an adversary ... with a full bank of relevant data—collected at taxpayers' expense."

All the Ombudsman is asking is for you to make it mandatory for MPAC to tell the taxpayer how it came up with the assessed value of the property. It seems to me that's very reasonable. What's your problem in not acting on that recommendation? It's transparent; it's open; it means everyone knows the rules. What's your excuse for not acting now?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The leader of the NDP is hot and cold on this stuff. On the one hand, he says he wants us to move quickly, but when it comes to providing immediate relief to those who are seeking to extend the time for their appeals, he's not prepared to move ahead with that.

Again, we welcome the recommendations. The particular recommendation just referenced by the leader of the NDP sounds to me to be sensible. But I think we've got a responsibility to speak to our municipal partners and to speak to taxpayers to make sure that we're moving on this both expeditiously and in a responsible fashion, and we look forward to doing so.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I have a question for the Premier. When the issue of skyrocketing property assessments came up this past fall, you're quoted on October 1, 2005, as saying you're not going to address the issue because "We didn't run on that." I remind the Premier that you didn't exactly run on pit bull bans or hiking taxes either.

You seem to have set the tone, because the Ombudsman's review found that there were three reports—one in 2003, one in 2004 and one in 2005—that showed major problems with the MPAC assessment process that apparently the McGuinty government sat on. Secondly, the previous finance minister, Greg Sorbara, appointed Mike Colle, now the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, to review the MPAC system. No report has yet been tabled. Premier, when will you publicly table Mike Colle's report?

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

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): We were pleased to receive the Ombudsman's report yesterday. I was quite pleased that MPAC has already responded on 17 of the recommendations. There are two specific recommendations aimed at the government. I think, as the Premier said a moment ago in his response, it's prudent now to take those and discuss them with the municipalities that will be affected, with, by the way, the Information and Privacy Commissioner. Some of the information that will be released will be impacted by information and privacy legislation.

I think what's important to note is this—and we have acknowledged that there have been problems with this system since we took office. We have taken a number of steps in the past to address them. We have done a number of things already to respond to just the Ombudsman's report, which is only the most recent response.

So, we are moving forward. We're moving forward immediately on 20 of the 22 recommendations. Regarding the other two recommendations, the ones that require legislative change, I look forward to the opportunity—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Hudak: I find it rather passing strange that the minister ignored my very simple question about whatever happened to Mike Colle's secret report, the then parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance. Your predecessor, Minister Sorbara, said that he would be taking on the next phase of reforms in property tax. Yet his report to the finance minister has disappeared.

You've had some time to address this issue. I have three proposals for you. First, for our debate on the bill you introduced today, please table Mike Colle's secret report on property assessments. Second, along with your 90-day extension, waive the \$75 fee for appeals.

The third thing: Just last night the North Bay council endorsed the Homestead Act, which would put real caps, at 5%, on property assessment increases. Will you include real caps on assessment increases as part of your bill?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: This is awfully rich, coming from a party that brought in eight pieces of legislation and still

got it all wrong. We're determined not to make the same mistakes.

With respect to the member opposite, I enjoyed the Welland Tribune article on March 2. Its headline read, referring to the irony—"irony" because I think anything else is not parliamentary—"Hudak's Party Created Tax Problem." It was you who created the problem, and we are responding to that problem. Even in the St. Catharines Standard: "Hudak acknowledged ... the problem is an unexpected result of the legislation."

There is one thing we can do today, and we can do it immediately. We shared the legislation with the official opposition at 10 o'clock this morning. Pass the bill today to extend the appeal. Don't say no any more. The time for this kind of childish debate is over. It's time for real answers to a difficult—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

1450

ONTARIO HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. You have proposed changes to the Ontario Human Rights Commission that are opposed by most individuals and non-government organizations that have worked with the human rights commission. Will you scrap these unfair changes that you are proposing, go back to the drawing board and work with Ontarians with disabilities, new Canadians and visible minorities to draft a plan for reform that will work at the human rights commission?

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

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): Yesterday, I met with members of the human rights commission, and we talked about these changes, these reforms, that are so long overdue.

I know the member will remember, because he was the Attorney General at the time, that Mary Cornish filed a report with the NDP government of Ontario, calling for direct access to the human rights tribunal, which we are seeking to move forward on, and a number of reforms which we're seeking to move forward on. These change are long overdue. They've been gathering dust throughout the time in which the NDP were in power and throughout the time the Conservative government was in power.

I think everybody understands that the delays that are inherent in the system do not serve human rights in Ontario. Ontarians deserve to have the best human rights system possible, and we intend to move forward with reforms to make that human rights system all the better.

Mr. Hampton: Well, Minister, the people who know the human rights commission the best are those Ontarians who have to go to it: Ontarians with disabilities, new Canadians, visible minorities. These are the people who say that your proposed changes are wrong and will make the situation worse. They say your cutbacks may mean

certain victims of discrimination will have to hire their own lawyers or suffer the loss of their rights and their dignity.

As a province, it is our duty to stand up for the vulnerable, not tell them to fend for themselves. These groups who are among the most vulnerable are asking you: Will you scrap your unfair and prejudicial plans, go back to the drawing board and work with Ontarians with disabilities, with representatives of new Canadian communities and visible minorities? Will you work with them to draft a plan that works, rather than your plan, which will make matters worse?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: On the contrary, we've been working with those very groups that the member just refused to for well over a year, and consulting with them. If we piled up the reports of recommendations as to how the reforms should take place and what the reforms should be, you would see a consensus, and you will see that they're long overdue. That's why the Toronto Star, in their editorial of last month, said that the long-overdue reforms are welcome. That's why the chair of the Ontario Bar Association said that the changes proposed are timely and well designed to solve current system problems. That's why Ruth Carey, the executive director of the HIV/AIDS legal clinic, said that the government should be widely applauded for the proposed reform initiative, as giving people the right to a hearing is a matter of simple justice and fairness.

I'm sure the member doesn't want to have a situation where he says go back to the drawing board, which means a step backwards. I'm sure what the member wants is that we, together, take a step forward to improve our human rights system. It's long overdue. You had a chance to do it, and you didn't; we are.

AGRICULTURE FUNDING

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. I was dismayed to read today in the press that the member for Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey has decided to not only appear publicly with the vocal minority in rural Ontario who spread a message of misinformation, fear and the implied threat of violent confrontation, but now, according to press reports, he is an active participant in confrontation.

The leader of the official opposition, desperate to avoid the consequences within his own caucus of losing formerly safe Tory seats in the by-elections tomorrow, has resorted to attempting to pander to farmers who are hurting. The leader of the official opposition is quoted today in the media as saying, "The Liberals, in effect, have cut back in the amount support they give farmers."

Minister, my farmers in Perth–Middlesex want to know the truth in this matter. They need your answer.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: Is it appropriate to pre-empt the time of question period to engage in a personal attack on—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I thank the honourable member for the question, because I know how hard he works on behalf of the farmers in his riding. I am very happy to have the opportunity to stand in this House and talk about the truth about what our government has committed to farmers in Ontario.

We have listened to the farmers of Ontario and we have provided them with \$125 million—\$80 million for grains and oilseeds, \$35 million for fruit and vegetable growers—along with our commitment—and this has been consistent with what we have said to farmers for months. We agree with them; we need a multi-year partnership with the federal government. We are committed to working with the federal government to achieve that for the agricultural community in Ontario.

I encourage members opposite to pick up the phone and encourage their federal members to push the Prime Minister, the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Finance of Canada to act expeditiously. The needs in this community are urgent.

Mr. Wilkinson: I know that my farmers are increasingly frustrated with the multiple positions taken by the Leader of the Opposition just over the last few days. One day he dives in with us, calling for the Prime Minister—whom he actively campaigned for—to come to the table; the next day he backflips and says that he's not with us. On the one hand, he has called the \$125 million in short-term support we are delivering, as requested by real farm organizations, inadequate; on the other hand, he has clearly stated that he would not have used the additional revenue available to the government for this purpose, but would rather have balanced the books ahead of schedule.

My farmers are getting whiplash watching John Tory. Minister, what do you say to Ontario farmers?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: What I say to Ontario farmers is that we think it is very important that we have been able to provide \$125 million to them so they will have cash in their hands to do their planting this year.

I want to say as well that I'm very grateful to have received the letters that I have from farm representatives. I have a letter here from Ontario Pork:

"This letter is to thank you for the recent funding announcement by your government of \$125 million for ... agriculture. In particular, Ontario Pork is pleased that you have included farm-fed grains in the amount allocated...."

I also have one here from Ray Duc: "We're grateful for the announcement. It shows the minister has listened to our concerns and has acted on them."

The Ontario Potato Board has said, "On behalf of Ontario's potato producers, I would like to express our deepest appreciation for the financial support you announced last week on behalf of the government of Ontario."

There are producers and farmers in Ontario who—

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a question for the Minister of Finance. Your budget was not the only budget that was presented last week. The province of Quebec presented their budget, and there were some big differences. The biggest difference is that Quebec presented a responsible, balanced budget. Also, Quebec did not forget about the north. Quebec invested some \$1 billion in the forestry sector, on top of the \$450 million earmarked last fall and \$167 million in the previous year's budget.

Why have you ignored the north? What new dollars does this budget provide for forestry?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): To the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): In fact, it's to the contrary. This government understands the unique needs of the north and is addressing those needs in very, very real ways: for example, \$114 million in operating grants for the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, up \$3 million from last year; in capital infrastructure, \$357 million, an increase of \$60 million. Over the course of the next five years, the government will invest \$1.8 billion in northern highways. This includes \$357 million in 2006-07 for rehabilitation and expansion projects. This represents the largest annual investment ever. Unlike the previous government, which cut, slashed and burned northern Ontario, we're investing in northern Ontario.

1500

Mr. Miller: How can anybody believe anything you say? I'm looking at the budget papers; it shows the budget of the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines went down \$10 million, \$357 million to \$347 million.

Let's look at what people in the north are saying:

—"I'm fuming right now ... all they've done is thrown a bunch of hush money at us," said Papineau-Cameron Mayor Robert Corriveau," in the North Bay Nugget.

—"Doug West, a political science professor at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, said the Liberals clearly had next year's provincial election in mind when they drafted the budget, which he said offered virtually no help to northern Ontario."

—Sault Mayor John Rowswell: "... the single biggest disappointment for the north, failure to adequately address the crisis in Ontario's forestry sector."

—James Wallace, writing in the Sudbury Star: "Nor was there anything new or tangible for northern Ontario's troubled forestry sector."

What about mining? What about the number two industry in northern Ontario? Quebec allows tax credits that provide incentives for mineral exploration; in Quebec, a company can be reimbursed for up to 45% of exploration costs. Beyond the \$10 million for the mining centre of excellence, what new dollars does this budget provide for mining in northern Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Bartolucci: I only have a minute to answer the question, so let me say that the province announced \$10 million for the mining centre in Sudbury. This is a good-news budget for Timiskaming; this is a good-news budget for North Bay. Timmins applauds the provincial budget. There's all kinds of good news.

Let's talk about mining for a second: \$15 million over three years for geological mapping in the far north; \$60 million over six years for cleanup of abandoned mines; a mining tax rate reduction from 10% to 5% for new remote mines; a three-year Ontario mining tax holiday on the first \$10 million of profits generated by a new mine or a major expansion. There's all kinds of good news for the mining industry. There's all kinds of good news for infrastructure projects. There's all kinds of good news for the forestry industry. There's all kinds of good news for northern Ontario, thanks to a government that is committed—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I know the member for Trinity–Spadina is waiting patiently. We'll try to provide a quiet, sensible forum for his question.

EDUCATION

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): I believe that being the Minister of Education is a full-time job. If you agree with that, Mr. Minister, I think parents and students would like to hear you answer this question: Are you running for the leadership of the federal Liberal Party?

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): That question is out of order. It is not within the competence or responsibilities of the Ministry of Education to respond. Do you have a new question?

Mr. Marchese: Speaker, I have made the assertion that being the Minister of Education is a full-time job. What I have seen of the minister of late is that he's been busy meetings the Liberal organizers in Alberta; he's been busy meeting the Liberal organizers in BC; busy talking to the Toronto Star's editorial board about the sorry state of the federal Liberal Party. If you're so busy trying to become the federal Liberal leader, I'm saying step aside, talk to the Premier and say, "I want to step aside for the good of this government," so that he can appoint a full-time Minister of Education to do your job. That's what I think you should do. Will you do that?

Hon. Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): I'm very proud of being the Minister of Education in the McGuinty government. And let me tell you, when we were in opposition we asked questions about students, we asked questions about dropout rates, we ask questions about curriculum casualties, about people who were being left behind, about people in this province not served by that government or the one before that thought about a social contract ahead of the needs of students that let us lose our march on the world.

Under the McGuinty government, this cabinet, this caucus is making sure that every student in Ontario gets paid attention to. I'm very glad to be addressing the francophone teachers, very glad to be working with the people in Kingston, in Sudbury with Rick Bartolucci, advocating for the people of the north, and for the first time we're getting the same results for students in the north as we are for any part of the province, because we have a focus. I'm very proud to be one part of that focus, making sure that every student in this province gets an Ontario education advantage under a McGuinty government, and we intend to do that for some time to come.

Mr. Marchese: I appreciate what the minister is saying, that he has been focused very much on education. Of late, what I have seen his focus to be is the leadership of the federal Liberal Party. Why else would a Minister of Education meet with the editorial board of the Toronto Star if not to talk about his leadership? I didn't see any comment coming out of that editorial meeting with the Toronto Star saying, "We're worried about the fact that this minister is still dealing with a Conservative funding formula." I didn't see the Toronto Star editorial board coming out and saying that this government, this minister in particular, is still underfunding the educational system to the tune of millions and millions of dollars. Teachers are still being paid with 1997 dollars. The Toronto Star editorial board talked only about you and your desire to deal with the federal Liberal Party problems and your interest in running as leader. That's all I saw.

Hon. Mr. Kennedy: There was at one time some sympathy on this side of the House for why the critic never got to ask questions. I have to say, speaking for my colleagues here, that that sympathy has evaporated, because I spent an hour and a half talking to the Toronto Star about education, about the need for education partnerships. We invite the member opposite to not lose sight, as he has today, of the needs of students in this province. You ought, sir, to be focused on the needs of students. That's your job in this province, and you shouldn't be like the odd Toronto Star reporter who might want to ask a question on the way out of an editorial board meeting.

We talked about an education partnership being formed in this province. For the first time, teachers and parents, and students and school board trustees are all part of an education partnership that is deciding to provide a 15% increase in just two years in reading, writing and mathematics. All of that improvement is coming from the kids who have the toughest time reading, and it's coming because we have a government, we have a Premier—

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: As the education critic for the official opposition, I want to publicly state that I endorse the Minister of Education for leader of the federal party.

The Speaker: New question, the member for London–Fanshawe.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I need to hear the member for London–Fanshawe. Order. The member for London–Fanshawe wants to ask a question.

1510

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Over the last few days, several opposition members have said that our government has ignored those most vulnerable in our society; namely, those on social assistance. We all remember the Harris government and those mean, mad days when social assistance rates were slashed by over 21%. They froze minimum wages for eight years. We remember when Harris ministers told needy Ontarians to eat dented cans of tuna, as if scrounging around for dented cans was a dignified way to exist. We know that is the Conservative record. Minister, can you clear up for those who need to hear the truth and tell us what we have done to help those on social assistance?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I think many of us in this House remember the Conservative years of government. What they did to the Ministry of Community and Social Services was cut the staffing by a full third over their decade here. They slashed agencies across the board by over 5%. But since we came in, yes, we're digging out of the huge hole that they left us in, a \$5.5-billion deficit, and we have to remember that that's where we've come from.

Yet in two and a half short years, in our very first budget, we made increases of 3% to those who are on social assistance, and again an additional 2%. Those who are getting special benefits received an additional increase in this recent budget. We are proud of the fact that we are moving forward and doing better for people who are on social assistance today. As the Premier reported in an answer to the question earlier, mothers with two children who are on social assistance today have benefited from \$1,620 more today than they did under the previous government.

Mr. Ramal: Minister, I'm happy to hear that we have done so much in such a little amount of time. So much has in fact been done, but we all know that more needs to be done. It's not easy to turn around the tragedy of the last government. I know that it will take more time to undo all the damage done by that former government.

Minister, we know that many people on social assistance, if given the chance, would gladly leave social assistance for the workforce. Can you give me some information on what initiatives we have taken to help those on ODSP and Ontario Works to get off social assistance and enter the workforce?

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: We in fact have a long row to hoe because our job in our ministry is to be certain that people who have an opportunity to work get every opportunity to take that job. People shouldn't have to be on social assistance when there's employment available. We need to help them get over the barriers to get that work.

What we've done was to make significant changes to break down those barriers for people who are on social assistance. The most significant is likely allowing people to keep that drug card. For moms with children who told us, "I'm one asthma attack away with one of my children from being out on the street," we knew that maintaining the drug card was important.

Recent announcements for ODSP recipients—being able to allow a \$100-a-month transportation benefit is a very important measure to allow them to go and find work and be able to keep work because transportation is so critical for people who are on disability.

We have made a host of changes in the system to make it easier for people to get back in the workforce. We intend to do more in that regard. It will be a far better place when we're through—

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

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): To the Premier, your caucus has adopted the Farmers Feed Cities messaging. We saw them wearing the yellow T-shirts at the plowing match, and on at least two occasions members of your caucus have agreed to unanimous consent for MPPs in this House to wear the Farmers Feed Cities pins. Today, I've been asked by legislative security to remove two Farmers Feed Cities signs that are on the inside windows of my automobile.

Premier, do you agree with this directive? A second question, Premier: Did this request come from your caucus?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Speaker, I'm in your hands in this matter, but I think this is something that falls entirely within your purview. It has to do with how security is governed on the precinct here, which has nothing to do with me or my government.

The Speaker: Supplementary, if there is one—I'm trying to understand the question. If the problem is with security in this place or on these grounds, the person you need to see is me. New question.

DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is for the minister for democratic renewal—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): If the initial question was out of order, the supplementary, by definition, is out of order.

The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Prue: My question is to the minister for democratic renewal. Madam Minister, a couple of days ago you announced that you were setting up a citizens' assembly. I think what we need to know, and all the members of this Legislature need to know, is that the all-party select committee recommended that, for any recommendation they make, it should be approved by 50% plus one of the people voting, that there should be no threshold on the turnout and that the bill should set out

in its body that it be of a binding nature upon this government.

To date, the questions that have been asked in this Legislature and the statements that you have made to the press have been, I would think, not very clear. They remain unanswered, whether or not your government is going in that direction. My question is a very simple one: Will you enshrine the recommendations of the all-party committee in writing to ensure that your government and subsequent governments are bound by the democratic will of the people of Ontario?

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I thank the honourable member for the question, for the suggestions and for his work on the select committee, as I thank the members of the select committee for their excellent work and for the document they produced. It was an honour to make the announcement two days ago that we will have a citizens' assembly to look at electoral systems, and if they so choose, to recommend possibly a change in our electoral system. The suggestions you brought forward will be considered very carefully, as will all the recommendations of the report by the select committee.

Mr. Prue: The reason I've asked this question is a very serious one, because on February 13, 2002, the Premier of Ontario, then in the opposition, wrote to the people of Victoria county, and I quote him: "I have committed that a Liberal government will ensure a binding referendum is held to allow local citizens to determine whether or not to dismantle the amalgamated city." On November 10, 2003, the people, some of whom are here today, voted yes on the ministerial approved question. The Premier, the cabinet, your colleagues, your caucus, have all said that they're not going to be bound by that democratic will of the people, in spite of what the Premier had to say. The citizens are here today. Two veterans are here today, two veterans who fought for democracy, two veterans who saw their colleagues go down.

I want to ask you, how can these citizens and all the citizens of Ontario believe you will respect the democratic will when you have a policy and a procedure already of not doing so?

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): As we've always said to the people from Victoria county, or Kawartha Lakes or all the other people who are involved in these kinds of issues, it's the will of the council that this particular government listens to. If the proposal the council puts forward is fair to all the taxpayers, demonstrates fiscal self-sustainability, we will take a look at those proposals in order to look at the delivery model of the various services in a municipality.

Now, I noted that the people of Kawartha Lakes this week are extremely happy with the fact that in the budget last week they received, in one-time funding for roads

and bridges, \$5.8 million. The Ontario municipal partnership funding: The people in Kawartha Lakes received \$7.1 million this year, which is an increase of \$1.3 million over last year. That is in addition to the gas tax money they've received of \$1.3 million—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

1520

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): My question is for the Minister of Energy. I've been following the work of this minister and the previous one with regard to conservation and creating a culture of conservation in our province. I was with the justice policy committee during the public hearings on this and we heard time and again that we have a culture of waste in our society, not a culture of conservation. Much is needed in the way of education. There are those who have lived through wars or they've lived through depressions, so they understand the intrinsic need for conservation and its importance in any kind of a program. But there are other problems that we face in terms of financial incentives. Again, we heard a number of times during the hearings concern for people who are living in social housing, the fact that they don't have the same control to maybe buy a refrigerator that's more energy efficient. I just want to get some details from you about what you are doing for that sector of our society to help them conserve.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): I'd like to thank the member for Stoney Creek for her continued involvement in the social service areas, not only in her community but in all of our communities.

We were very fortunate to announce a directive that went through to the power authority, to the conservation bureau, working with the social housing corporation and communities right across Ontario that says that 100 megawatts would come from those communities in terms of energy efficiency. So we will be using interest-free and paying down loans to enable the providers to go into about 250,000—ultimately 750,000—low-income homes to help them deal with replacing refrigerators, stoves and other appliances that aren't working, weather-caulking their windows, changing their doors, putting in insulation and enabling them to deal with those energy costs that they have to absorb.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. This completes the time allocated for oral questions.

PETITIONS

LANDFILL

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): “Whereas there is currently a proposal to more than double the size of the Carp landfill in west Ottawa; and

“Whereas this site has been in operation for some 30 years and had been expected to close in 2010; and

“Whereas the surrounding community has grown rapidly for the past 10 years and is continuing to grow; and

“Whereas other options to an expanded landfill have yet to be considered; and

“Whereas the municipal councillors representing this area, Eli El-Chantiry and Janet Stavinga, and the MPP, Norm Sterling, all oppose this expansion;

“We, the undersigned, support our local representatives and petition the Minister of the Environment not to approve the expansion of the Carp landfill and instead to find other waste management alternatives.”

I have signed that.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I have a petition, which reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty, MPP, as leader of the official opposition, made the following commitment: ‘I have committed that a Liberal government will ensure a binding referendum is held to allow local citizens to determine whether or not to dismantle the amalgamated city’; and

“Whereas, in the interest of true democracy, the Minister of Municipal Affairs put the following question to the voters of the city of Kawartha Lakes: ‘Are you in favour of a return to the previous municipal model of government with an upper-tier and 16 lower-tier municipalities?’; and

“Whereas the voters, by a clear majority on a provincially mandated ballot, answered in the affirmative; and

“Whereas the council of the city of Kawartha Lakes has demanded that the province of Ontario honour the results of the 2003 election as it pertains to the minister's question;

“The undersigned demand that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario act to honour the commitment made by Dalton McGuinty and to respect the will of the people as expressed in a democratic vote, and restore the former municipal structure as stated in the minister's question.”

I'm in total agreement and would affix my signature thereto.

SPECIAL CARE HOMES

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas hundreds of vulnerable adults live in homes for special care that provide them a warm and secure, stable and friendly environment which allows them to lead fulfilling lives; and

“Whereas the alternative for many of these individuals is a life of homelessness on the street; and

“Whereas special care homes have had only a single 3% increase since 1999, which in no way matches the rising costs they face; and

“Whereas the Liberal government promised Ontario in the election they would ‘significantly increase supportive housing options for those suffering from mental illness’;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, call on the government to bring in an immediate increase in funding to homes for special care.”

ORGAN DONATION

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas 1,920 Ontarians are currently on a waiting list for an organ transplant; and

“Whereas the number of Ontarians waiting for an organ transplant has virtually doubled since 1994; and

“Whereas hundreds die every year waiting for an organ transplant; and

“Whereas greater public education and awareness will increase the number of people who sign their organ donor cards and increase the availability of organ transplants for Ontarians; and

“Whereas the private member’s bill proposed by Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees will require every resident 16 years of age and older to complete an organ donation question when applying for or renewing a driver’s licence or provincial health card, thereby increasing public awareness of the importance of organ donation while respecting the right of every person to make a personal decision regarding the important issue of organ donation;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 67, the Organ and Tissue Donation Mandatory Declaration Act, 2006.”

I support this petition.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward–Hastings): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Where it has been shown that crossing control arms on school buses reduce or virtually eliminate instances of students being struck by their own bus; and

“Whereas 91% of all front-bumper fatalities involve buses not equipped with crossing control arms; and

“Whereas the safety of the children of Ontario is our number one priority;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to require that all future school buses be equipped with crossing control arms and that all existing school buses be required to be immediately retrofitted with crossing control arms.”

I am pleased to add my signature to this petition.

ORGAN DONATION

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas 1,920 Ontarians are currently on a waiting list for an organ transplant; and

“Whereas the number of Ontarians waiting for an organ transplant has virtually doubled since 1994; and

“Whereas hundreds die every year waiting for an organ transplant; and

“Whereas greater public education and awareness will increase the number of people who sign their organ donor cards and increase the availability of organ transplants for Ontarians; and

“Whereas the private member’s bill proposed by Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees will require every resident 16 years of age and older to complete an organ donation question when applying for or renewing a driver’s licence or provincial health card, thereby increasing public awareness of the importance of organ donation while respecting the right of every person to make a personal decision regarding the important issue of organ donation;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 67, the Organ and Tissue Donation Mandatory Declaration Act, 2006.”

I support this petition. I sign it and I send it to the table through Sharmarke.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): Thank you for this opportunity. I met with three organizations of long-term-care facilities and they wrote a petition to the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“Whereas long-term-care funding levels are too low to enable homes to provide the care and services our aging seniors and parents, who are residents of long-term-care homes, need, with the respect and dignity that they deserve; and

“Whereas, even with recent funding increases and a dedicated staff who do more than their best, there is still not enough time available to provide the care residents need. For example, 10 minutes, and sometimes less, is simply not enough time to assist a resident to get up, dressed, to the bathroom and then to the dining room for breakfast; and

“Whereas those unacceptable care and service levels are now at risk of declining;

“We, the undersigned, who are members of family councils, residents’ councils”—whom I met with—“and/or supporters of long-term care in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase operating funding to long-term-care homes by \$306.6 million, which will allow the hiring of more staff to provide an additional 20 minutes of care per resident per day over the next two years (2006 and 2007).”

I affix my name to this petition, support it wholeheartedly and hand it over to Ben.

1530

ORGAN DONATION

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas 1,920 Ontarians are currently on a waiting list for an organ transplant; and

“Whereas the number of Ontarians waiting for an organ transplant has virtually doubled since 1994; and

“Whereas hundreds die every year waiting for an organ transplant; and

“Whereas greater public education and awareness will increase the number of people who sign their organ donor cards and increase the availability of organ transplants for Ontarians; and

“Whereas the private member’s bill proposed by Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees will require every resident 16 years of age and older to complete an organ donation question when applying for or renewing a driver’s licence or provincial health card, thereby increasing public awareness of the importance of organ donation while respecting the right of every person to make a personal decision regarding the important issue of organ donation;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 67, the Organ and Tissue Donation Mandatory Declaration Act, 2006.”

I am in full agreement with this petition and will affix my signature as well.

IDENTITY THEFT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition that is addressed to the Parliament of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas identity theft is the fastest-growing crime in North America;

“Whereas confidential and private information is being stolen on a regular basis, affecting literally thousands of people;

“Whereas the cost of this crime exceeds billions of dollars;

“Whereas countless hours are wasted to restore one’s good credit rating;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that Bill 38, which passed the second reading unanimously in the Ontario Legislature on December 8, 2005, be brought before committee and that the following issues be included for consideration and debate:

“(1) All consumer reports should be provided in a truncated ... form....

“(2) Should a consumer reporting agency discover that there has been an unlawful disclosure of consumer information, the agency should immediately inform the affected consumer....

“(4) The consumer reporting agency shall investigate disputed information within 30 days and correct, supple-

ment or automatically delete any information found unconfirmed, incomplete or inaccurate.”

Since I agree, I am delighted today sign this petition.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

“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 agree with this petition; I’ll sign it. I want to thank Dennis Smith of RR2, Stayner, for sending it to me.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): Last Friday, I had the opportunity to meet with the family councils of Riverview Manor, Pleasant Meadow and Springdale County. They’re long-term-care facilities in the great riding of Peterborough. They gave me a petition. It said,

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas long-term-care funding levels are too low to enable homes to provide the care and services our aging seniors and parents, who are residents of long-term-care homes, need, with the respect and dignity that they deserve; and

“Whereas, even with recent funding increases and a dedicated staff who do more than their best, there is still not enough time available to provide the care residents need. For example, 10 minutes, and sometimes less, is simply not enough time to assist a resident to get up, dressed, to the bathroom and then to the dining room for breakfast; and

“Whereas those unacceptable care and service levels are now at risk of declining;

“We, the undersigned, who are members of family councils, residents’ councils and/or supporters of long-term care in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase operating funding to long-term-care

homes by \$306.6 million, which will allow the hiring of more staff to provide an additional 20 minutes of care per resident per day over the next two years (2006 and 2007).”

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have here a petition signed by a great many citizens from the city of Kawartha Lakes, and it is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty, MPP, as leader of the official opposition, made the following commitment: ‘I have committed that a Liberal government will ensure a binding referendum is held to allow local citizens to determine whether or not to dismantle the amalgamated city’; and

“Whereas, in the interest of true democracy, the Minister of Municipal Affairs put the following question to the voters of the city of Kawartha Lakes: ‘Are you in favour of a return to the previous municipal model of government with an upper-tier and 16 lower-tier municipalities?’; and

“Whereas the voters, by a clear majority on a provincially mandated ballot, answered in the affirmative; and

“Whereas the council of the city of Kawartha Lakes has demanded that the province of Ontario honour the results of the 2003 election as it pertains to the minister’s question;

“The undersigned demand that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario act to honour the commitment made by Dalton McGuinty and to respect the will of the people as expressed in a democratic vote, and restore the former municipal structure as stated in the minister’s question.”

I affix my signature to this petition, as I believe that all politicians, and particularly the Premier, should honour their commitments.

COMMUNITY MEDIATION

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): “Support Community Mediation

“Whereas many types of civil disputes may be resolved through community mediation delivered by trained mediators, who are volunteers who work with the parties in the dispute; and

“Whereas Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services established the Peel Community Mediation Service in 1999 with support from the government of Ontario through the Trillium Foundation, the Rotary Club of Mississauga West and the United Way of Peel, and has proven the viability and success of community mediation; and

“Whereas the city of Mississauga and the town of Caledon have endorsed the Peel Community Mediation Service, and law enforcement bodies refer many cases to the Peel Community Mediation Service as an alternative to a court dispute; and

“Whereas court facilities and court time are both scarce and expensive, the cost of community mediation is very small and the extra expense incurred for lack of community mediation in Peel region would be much greater than the small annual cost of funding community mediation;

“Be it therefore resolved that the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of the Attorney General, support and fund the ongoing service delivery of the Peel Community Mediation Service through Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services.”

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The time for petitions has expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI A TRAIT À LA GESTION DES SITUATIONS D’URGENCE

Mr. Kwinter moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 56, An Act to amend the Emergency Management Act, the Employment Standards Act, 2000 and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 56, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la gestion des situations d’urgence, la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d’emploi et la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l’assurance contre les accidents du travail.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Kwinter.

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I’ll be sharing my time with my new parliamentary assistant for community safety, the member from Scarborough–Rouge River.

I rise this afternoon to speak about Bill 56, legislation that, if passed, will make Ontario even safer for residents. It is important to remember that Ontario is the only province in Canada that doesn’t have emergency powers legislation, and that leaves us vulnerable.

In an ideal world, there wouldn’t be a need for this legislation but, unfortunately, as everyone knows all too well, the world as we know it is now far from ideal. The tragic events of 9/11, as well as SARS and the power outage in 2003, clearly showed a review of provincial emergency powers legislation was needed. We needed this bill because we must be prepared for emergencies. SARS presented us with a new and unknown threat. One of the most important lessons learned from it was that the challenge is not in planning for the knowable, but in planning for the unknowable.

The people of Ontario deserve effective measures that will allow their government to best protect them during times of emergency, and they deserve to have them as

soon as possible. We need to have this type of legislation in place now, before something happens that would require us to build the boat in the middle of a storm on the ocean. The question isn't whether the province is ready for an emergency; it's whether or not it has the tools it needs to ensure that it can act quickly and effectively when an emergency occurs, because there is no doubt this province is vulnerable to another emergency.

1540

We introduced Bill 56 last December because we were encountering unacceptable delays in getting all-party approval in getting Bill 138, the forerunner to the current legislation, to second reading. Many of the details in Bill 56 have been carried over from the previous Bill 138, which was drafted by an all-party committee of this House and introduced on November 1, 2004, by the chair of that committee.

The Emergency Management Act, passed by this House in 2003, deals almost exclusively with emergency preparedness as opposed to emergency powers. It authorizes cabinet to assign planning responsibilities to ministers by order in council. The ministries identified as the lead ministries in the case of emergencies were required to develop emergency response plans to address their designated risk. It was a good first step, but it didn't go far enough to protect Ontarians in the case of emergencies.

By introducing Bill 56, the McGuinty government has taken a giant step forward in protecting Ontarians. Bill 56 would amend the Emergency Management Act to provide a comprehensive strategy for emergency powers, making Ontario's legislation more consistent with modern emergency powers legislation in other provinces and in other jurisdictions worldwide. The bill would be used only during defined provincial emergencies that would not relate to everyday occurrences in the province. So the powers used would apply specifically to the defined emergencies.

Provincial emergencies, by definition, are not, nor should they be, dealt with through statutes designed to address normal situations. The tools that Bill 56 would give us are the tools we may need in order to save lives when other measures are unavailable or inadequate. If passed, these emergency powers would allow the Premier and cabinet to make emergency orders that would promote the public good by protecting the health, safety and welfare of the people of Ontario in a manner that respects the rights of individuals.

We're talking about emergency orders such as those that would provide for evacuation, the establishment of emergency shelters or hospitals or the immediate purchasing of needed supplies such as bottled water. We have had only two provincial emergencies in the history of this province: SARS and the power outage, both in 2003. Bill 56 sets out a list of powers that can only be exercised in a declared provincial emergency.

The 14 order-making powers outlined in the bill include such things as evacuation, controlling travel, establishing facilities, requisitioning property, price-fixing and

authorizing service. The order-making power is conferred on cabinet, which in turn can delegate that power to a minister or to the Commissioner of Emergency Management for a maximum of two days. The bill also contains strict criteria that must be met for issuing an order and limitations on the making of each order. These orders could be enforced for a maximum of 14 days, but may be extended with the approval of cabinet. The bill contains significant penalties for failing to comply with an order or obstructing a person carrying out an order. The legislation would amend the Employment Standards Act to provide for job protection during a declared provincial emergency.

Although there have been just two provincial emergencies declared in the history of Ontario, there are numerous examples of smaller emergencies occurring in municipalities across the province. The Peterborough flood in the summer of 2003, the Barrie tornado 10 years ago and the tornadoes that tore through southwestern Ontario a year ago are all examples of natural disasters.

Every emergency situation needs to be managed. Bill 56 would give the government the authority and the tools it needs to effectively manage provincially declared emergencies. Those tools, the emergency orders in the bill, are ones that we hope we never have to use.

Even legislation designed to deal with events such as an environmental spill deals with situations that can be reasonably anticipated. Such legislation does not really address the catastrophic event that would call for a provincial emergency to be declared. It is the nature of an emergency that no one can plan for all eventualities or anticipate all possible scenarios or individual issues that may arise.

Another reason for considering general powers rather than changing existing legislation is that powers in existing legislation may not go far enough to cover the emergency situation at hand. The government currently has some of the powers included in the proposed legislation. For example, we have the ability to establish facilities, to construct works and to procure goods. The problem is that, in order to do many of these things under existing legislation, we need to follow sets of rules that in many cases are very onerous. Existing legislation is simply not designed for the quick response needed in an emergency. Having one act clarifies the existing powers. Clarifying the powers available to emergency officials in advance would help them carry out their functions quickly and with assurance in an emergency. Bill 56, if passed, would improve the province's ability to act quickly, decisively and in the best interests of the public.

Tony Clement, the former Ontario Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, pointed out in his testimony before the standing committee on Bill 138 that the next pandemic or public health crisis will have elements of similarity with the SARS outbreak, but also many differences. "The response structure must be flexible enough to meet any new situation," Mr. Clement said, "and that's why any emergency legislation must be broad to include powers of evacuation, cordoning off, price stabilization, resource control and so on." Bill 56 has those provisions.

We have said all along that, if passed, Bill 56 would make the government accountable for its decisions and would ensure transparency in its handling of emergencies. As I mentioned earlier, there are stringent requirements the government must follow. The bill would require the government to report to the public during an emergency. It also would require that the Premier table a report in this House within 120 days after determination of a provincial emergency. That report would have to specifically address any emergency orders made and provide justification for those orders.

This House has an important role under the bill. The bill provides that the assembly may disallow a cabinet declaration of emergency. Further, only the assembly can continue a declaration of emergency beyond the time limits set out in the bill. Bill 56 would make the government accountable for its actions prior to, during and after an emergency. Accountability and transparency are the necessary complements to the exercise of emergency powers. We are all accountable for our actions. Accountability is paramount in Bill 56 as well.

The powers listed in Bill 56 have been well considered, and have appropriate checks and balances in place. This is a balanced bill that offers similar protective measures to those in other jurisdictions. Bill 56, however, is not the McGuinty government's only initiative in the area of emergency preparedness. Under the Emergency Management Act, every Ontario municipality must have an emergency response plan and have filed it with Emergency Management Ontario by the end of last year. I'm proud to say that virtually every Ontarian lives in a community where such a plan exists, and a majority of communities have achieved what is referred to in the emergency planning business as the essential level and many are well on their way to achieving the enhanced level of preparedness.

But it didn't stop there. Last July, the Premier, after consultation with key government officials, mandated that all provincial ministries develop business continuity plans by December 31, 2005. I'm pleased to note that every ministry in the government met the deadline, and some ministries already exceed the minimum requirements. This year, ministries will be making all Ontario government employees aware of their plans and practising them to ensure they are complete, effective and understandable. In this way, should an emergency occur, whether it be natural, human caused or even an act of terrorism, the government will be well positioned to continue to provide citizens with continuity of services—something they have a right to expect and something they deserve. We need to learn from our past experiences and be even more prepared for the next time, because you can be sure there will be a next time.

1550

Bill 56 is a fair and equitable bill that will protect the citizens of Ontario while ensuring the government is held accountable for its actions. Since the legislation was introduced last December, we have met with many stakeholders, including the Ontario Medical Association,

the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the Ontario Nurses' Association and the Coalition of Family Physicians. We have heard their views and are committed to continuing to meet with them to ensure that they are comfortable with the legislation. We know that we all share the same goal: to ensure the safety and well-being of the people of Ontario. The McGuinty government is always open to making legislation better. With that in mind, we will continue to talk to various medical and health care groups, and we look forward to hearing from other stakeholders as we move this bill through the Legislature.

Again, I'd like to underline the need for this legislation. None of us in this House wants decision-makers second-guessing themselves in the middle of a major emergency about whether they have the right power and authority or whether they don't. The residents of Ontario deserve to know that their elected officials are in control, that they know what they're doing and that everything possible is being done to keep them safe. Bill 56 enables us to fulfill that commitment and obligation.

I believe my parliamentary assistant for community safety, the member for Scarborough—Rouge River, will now speak to this bill.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon (Scarborough—Rouge River): I would like to thank the minister for sharing his time and allowing me the opportunity to say a few words on Bill 56.

As the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services said earlier, Bill 56 is a valuable piece of legislation and deserves all-party support in this House. Bill 56 is all about making Ontario an even safer place to live and work. If we're going to protect the interests of the people of the province, Ontario must catch up to the rest of Canada when it comes to dealing with provincial emergencies. Bill 56, if passed, would give government officials the authority to make tough decisions quickly, in the best interests of the people as a whole, with the knowledge that legislation exists to support them.

The government's current emergency response powers and responsibilities are set out in the Emergency Management Act, but that act is designed primarily to ensure that appropriate municipal and provincial infrastructures are in place to deal with a local or provincial emergency. It ensures that communities and provincial ministries have emergency programs and plans in place and that they are tested and updated regularly. But that isn't enough to protect Ontarians in their greatest time of need. An important point to remember here is that this legislation would give the government certain powers to respond to a provincially declared emergency. It is our hope that should an emergency occur, everyone affected will do their very best to minimize the impact of the emergency and allow the proper authorities to deal with the emergency as best they can.

The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services outlined the benefits of this legislation and why it's needed. I would like to talk specifically about the contents of the bill.

In the past, we've seen examples of private concerns taking advantage of the public when demand exceeds supply. For example, in the power outage the province experienced in August 2003, no gas was available because the pumps weren't working. That left thousands of motorists in the lurch. When the power finally did come back on, prices went through the roof for a short period of time because of the high demand. That shouldn't happen, and Bill 56 will help to ensure that it won't happen again. Bill 56 would enable the government to fix prices to prevent increases owing to the emergency and would allow the government to prohibit exorbitant prices being charged, thus protecting Ontarians from price-gouging. Alberta, British Columbia, New Brunswick and Saskatchewan all have legislation to allow price-fixing, but Ontario will be the only province that would have legislation prohibiting price-gouging.

We know that the health care sector has expressed concerns about the provision in the legislation regarding authorization authorizing a person or a class of persons to render services. Let me be clear about what the proposed legislation would not do. It would not force any worker, health care or otherwise, to work if they choose not to. Bill 56 would not compel physicians to treat patients during an emergency, nor would it give the province the power to conscript workers—far from it. In fact, the last thing we want is to make it more difficult for health care workers to do their jobs in an emergency.

What the legislation would do, if passed, is allow for reasonable, qualified persons to provide services where willing. And that is the key: where willing. It does not compel service; it allows service. For example, it would enable Ontario to reach out to Manitoba, Quebec or other jurisdictions to send us qualified physicians to help the province deal with an emergency for the duration of the emergency only. It would also permit licensed drivers to operate vehicles such as full-sized buses even though they're licensed only to operate an ambulance or a small bus. That's not conscription; that's co-operation.

Other provinces, including Alberta, British Columbia, New Brunswick, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Quebec and Saskatchewan, all have this type of legislation. This bill will permit the government, if necessary, to close public and private places where large numbers of people routinely gather; for example, closing all public beaches or parks, or shutting down businesses or schools situated close to an emergency site.

During the SARS emergency, the lack of specific legislative powers to deal with a number of issues that arose at that time required passage of SARS-specific legislation. Such targeted legislation, however, may not always be feasible in circumstances when the Legislature is not in session and it is not possible to quickly enact legislation. Or, if a mass evacuation of one community became necessary, the powers of Bill 56 could be used to establish an emergency shelter at, for example, a community college gym in another community.

Alberta, BC, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Quebec, Manitoba and Saskatchewan all have

this authority in legislation. Ontario does not. Orders under Bill 56, if passed, could be used to prevent people from entering or passing through a specified geographic area. Orders could prohibit vehicular and pedestrian traffic on a given highway within a specified distance from a particular facility. This would be particularly useful in the case of a nuclear emergency. In this regard, Ontario legislation lags behind the federal government, British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Newfoundland.

Ontario is the country's economic engine. It drives the national economy and is home to a significant segment of the Canadian population. We're also on the border of the United States and have to protect our interests in that area as well.

Bill 56 is critical to our future. While we can all hope that we won't experience another emergency, we should be prudent enough to be prepared to deal with it. It might not be tomorrow, next week, next month or even next year, but it may happen. Since no one can predict the next emergency or the magnitude or the impact of the next emergency, Ontario needs legislation that provides flexibility and powers to mobilize and take action to respond to any and all emergencies. We need to be ready.

The federal government and the other nine provinces and three territories have enacted strong emergency powers legislation. Ontario needs to be better prepared for the future. Bill 56 will help us take a giant step in that direction. I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Just before questions and comments, I would draw the members' attention to the presence of Doug Reycraft, former member for Middlesex in the 33rd and 34th parliaments, in the east gallery.

Questions and comments?

1600

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): I'm pleased to have a moment to respond to the speeches that were made this afternoon in support of this bill by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services and his parliamentary assistant.

The minister in his speech made reference to an emergency that took place last year, a tornado that went through the riding of Waterloo–Wellington and affected a number of our adjacent communities. I want to stand in my place and once again express public appreciation to the minister for his very prompt response to my invitation to come to our riding to tour the devastated area and, of course, there was an announcement a while after that of some provincial assistance to support our communities with their cleanup costs. It wasn't enough, but I continued to raise the issue in the following weeks and I'm sure the minister in some way was supportive of ensuring our communities were treated fairly. I would still argue that more money should have been forthcoming, but at least I do want to express my appreciation for the interest he showed and the support he gave to our communities.

In terms of Bill 56, what is missing is an important issue affecting rural Ontario, and that is support for double-hatter firefighters. The minister is not surprised

that I'm raising this, I'm sure, after four years, but the fact is that there continues to be need for support for double-hatter firefighters. As most of the members know, double-hatter firefighters typically are full-time professional firefighters who are employed by a city fire department but live in a small town nearby, and on their days off and their time off, in many cases they want to serve as volunteer firefighters protecting their neighbours in their home communities.

I would like to ask the minister a simple question. Why is it that every other province in Canada with the exception of Ontario and Newfoundland have legislative protection for double-hatter firefighters, and why is it that the Ontario Fire Marshal continues to request there be legislation brought forward to protect double-hatter firefighters so that they can continue to protect their home communities and the government continues to ignore their own fire marshal?

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I'd like to respond to the comments that were made by the minister and the parliamentary assistant. The minister is right in terms of the history of this bill. It was in committee in a draft form and it came to this Legislature, but it came without the unanimous support of the committee because my colleague, Mr. Kormos, raised very serious concerns about the bill during the course of those proceedings. He wasn't the only one who raised some serious concerns with respect to Bill 138. In the SARS commission second report that was tabled in 2004, the Honourable Mr. Justice Archie Campbell said the following of Bill 138:

"The essence of the commission's concern is that the unusual process of proceeding to a draft bill of such profound legal importance, without prior policy and operational analysis by departments of government and without prior legal and constitutional scrutiny by the Attorney General, deprived the bill of the solid underpinnings that ordinarily precede the development of any important piece of legislation.... A sober second thought is now required."

I assume that part of the concerns raised by my colleague Mr. Kormos on that committee and part of what Justice Archie Campbell had to say led to Bill 56. The problem I see is that many of the concerns that were raised with respect to Bill 138 have not been addressed in Bill 56. My colleague Mr. Marchese later on this afternoon is going to highlight some of those.

This bill requires further work. There are concerns that continue to be raised by health care professionals. I'm aware of concerns, for example, of the Ontario Nurses' Association. I would say that this bill needs to go back to committee for public hearings so we can get it right.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It's a pleasure for me to have the opportunity to have a couple of minutes to speak on Bill 56. This bill, of course, has direct relevance to the riding of Peterborough. On July 15, 2004, we experienced a rain storm that dropped in excess of 196 millimetres of rain in our community, creating a devastating flood. I was most appreciative that on the afternoon of the flood, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services for Ontario, my colleague Monty

Kwinter, came to Peterborough to survey the damage, along with his colleague Dr. James Young, who was then head of Emergency Measures Ontario. They got the wheels in motion to start the flood recovery and provide assistance to the community of Peterborough. I must say, the minister at that particular time was awaiting his hip operation. He was in very serious pain and did climb aboard the OPP vehicle that afternoon and insisted that he visit all the various spots within the community to get a first-hand view of the devastation that hit my community on that particular day. We'll be forever grateful for the minister coming so quickly on that day. It was a very quick response, as opposed to when Peterborough had a previous flood in 2002, when the government of the day waited some six months to start the relief for the community of Peterborough. The minister, working with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, at the end of the day brought about some \$24 million of relief for the community of Peterborough.

Bill 56 is so very important to coordinate quickly, to make our response quick when communities across this great province are in times of need. I salute the minister's leadership in bringing this forward, because I think it's a bill that will respond to future emergency needs in Ontario.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I'm pleased to comment on Bill 56 and the minister's comments and those of his assistant. Any emergency management has always been anathema in a democracy. They have been misused by tyrants throughout history. It's a bill that is absolutely necessary; however, it is imperative that this assembly and the committees that will take a look at this bill ensure that it is drawn up in such a way as to limit the powers given thereunder and for limited periods of time.

One of the safeguards already built into the bill is, of course, that an order made by the Premier would run for a matter of hours, 72 hours, whereas if it was the Lieutenant Governor in Council performing the order, it would last, I believe, for 14 days. Under section 7.0.11, the resolution declaring an emergency can be superseded by the assembly. I think we have to explore that difficulty if the assembly is not sitting, especially in a case where an order was made inappropriately and the assembly had to act. We have to ensure that there is a mechanism through which that could happen very quickly. I look forward to further debate in regard to the safeguards surrounding this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Response?

Hon. Mr. Kwinter: I want to thank the members for their comments, particularly my parliamentary assistant, the member for Scarborough–Rouge River, the member for Waterloo–Wellington, the member for Nickel Belt, the member for Peterborough and the member for Cambridge.

I just want to respond to a couple of things that happened. The reason that this bill has taken the unusual sort of journey of being drafted as an all-party bill is because of the seriousness and the importance of this bill. We were really anxious to get everybody into the drafting of it so that we could, in fact, expedite this particular piece

of legislation. Emergency just by its definition is unpredictable. We don't know when it's going to happen, and we have a responsibility to the people of Ontario to make sure that we have this legislation in place so that we can act. We don't have the time to sit down and debate it when everything is falling around us. We've got to be able to say that we have legislation that allows us to protect the lives and property of the people of Ontario. Because of the urgency of this and because of the inability to get all-party consent, we had no other choice but to, in fact, bring forward another bill, which is Bill 56.

1610

But that wasn't really wasted—all the time before—because we had public hearings, we had comments by Judge Archie Campbell and we incorporated many of the suggestions that were made. One of his comments—and the member from Nickel Belt talked about it—was that he was critical of the process, feeling that it should have been brought through the House, had an opportunity for legislative counsel to take a look at the bill, which we've now done. There will be hearings, and we are now ongoing.

As I said in my opening remarks, we are still talking to stakeholders, people who will be impacted, to make sure we get it right. I want to thank all of you for participating and encourage you to support it.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I want to begin by informing the table that we'll be standing down our leadoff speaker, if I could get unanimous consent.

The Deputy Speaker: Do I have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Interjection.

Mr. Wilson: Well, that sort of sets the tone, I guess, eh?

I'm pleased to spend the next 20 minutes making a few comments about the Emergency Management Statute Law Amendment Act, 2006, or Bill 56. Of course the long title of the act is An Act to amend the Emergency Management Act, the Employment Standards Act, 2000 and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

I just want to say as a general comment that I'm generally supportive of this legislation. Having been a former Minister of Health—thank God we didn't have SARS during my time, but certainly one of the first briefings I had, and I think one of the first briefings that any minister gets or should get, was what to do in case of an emergency, and that was back in 1995 to 1998, roughly.

Also, though, I did serve as Minister of Energy during the ice storm in 1999, in which I spent about three and a half weeks solid, beginning the day after the ice storm—as soon as we knew that it was bad—in eastern Ontario touring around the sites. I'm glad to compliment the Minister of Community Safety for what he did, and some member just complimented him for his response, even after a hip operation, to the Peterborough floods last year. But that's what you have to do. You have to be seen; you have to make decisions.

Clearly, there are parts of the province's emergency powers that do need to be adjusted because I can tell you that, during the ice storm, it was difficult to make a decision right on the spot. One of the decisions after the major crisis was over, for example, that I could make as energy minister, cost us about half a billion dollars, and that was, unlike the province of Quebec, that we decided to pay for the hydro poles in front of people's houses and the wires going to their hookup in their houses and barns. In other provinces during emergencies such as that, the precedent had been that the local farmer or homeowner had to pay for the wires going into the house from the roadside, which at times could cost several thousand of dollars for local homeowners.

That was something you could do as an energy minister under the old act, but it wasn't clear. I didn't have to have a conference call cabinet meeting, although we did have several from my cellphone getting a quorum of four people in cabinet, trying to make decisions on the spot so that we didn't have to come back to Toronto and convene a full cabinet. We did that several times, and I do agree under this legislation that the Premier or his designate will now be able to do that and that those orders will last for 72 hours, as I understand this legislation, and then be reviewable by cabinet. Cabinet has to either endorse the order for it to continue or change the order or cancel the order and make it null and void.

There are some safeguards, but I would say that there are some reservations, as the member for Nickel Belt pointed out: the nurses' association; Justice Archie Campbell, from whom I will quote in a moment. So this bill has to go to committee.

I'll say at the beginning that it's unfortunate—the minister did it again today. He did it back—and I just quote from Hansard—when this bill was introduced for first reading on December 15th, 2005. The minister, who normally is quite a gentleman, again today blames the opposition parties for slowing down or not bringing forward Bill 138, which is the predecessor draft legislation to this Bill 56. That's just not our recollection of what was happening. There were major concerns expressed, as the member for Nickel Belt just said, last year when this bill took the form of Bill 138, and the government wouldn't listen.

In fact, I'm going to quote my colleague from Leeds-Grenville, Mr. Runciman, who is our critic for community safety, and what he said on December 15 after the minister—you know, it's a heck of a way to make friends, when the first remarks you make are that the opposition has been slowing this process down. It kind of gets our backs up. Mr. Runciman said at the time, when the minister made the same accusation:

“I'll respond briefly to the Minister of Community Safety. It's truly unfortunate that he comes into the House today and suggests that the opposition parties were the cause of Bill 138 not being called for second reading. That is ludicrous, and anybody who knows the workings of the House knows it is ludicrous. In fact, our party offered to work in a collaborative way to come up with a government bill that addressed these urgent issues

in a timely manner, and that was rejected out of hand. There was never any response”—that is, from the government—“and then we get comments like we heard today from the Minister of Community Safety, which do a disservice to the members of this House and put the lie to the positions they’ve taken in the past with respect to an open and collaborative Legislative Assembly. It’s truly unfortunate.”

I know Mr. Runciman will speak at some point this afternoon, and I’m sure he’ll want to reiterate those comments for the record, because this is a bill that we’ve been trying to work on. We all know that avian flu could touch our continent at any time. That’s what is spurring the urgency of this legislation.

Nonetheless, it has such sweeping powers that we’ve not seen in Ontario before given to one person called the Premier. You just hope he’s responsible, but he hasn’t been responsible. There’s one other piece of legislation that comes to mind that has sweeping powers for the Premier, and that’s the Members’ Integrity Act, but he has never, ever imposed a penalty on his ministers who have funnelled money through their riding associations, of which they used to accuse Mr. Harris for golf memberships. Well, they’re doing it here all the time apparently, and get caught for it and refuse to even apologize for it. Or Mr. Takhar, who clearly—his blind trust of his transportation businesses and health care businesses has been in question, and in fact was the subject of a rather scathing report by this province’s Integrity Commissioner, Justice Coulter Osborne. The one guy who has all the power under that act to impose a penalty on cabinet ministers—it’s his duty under the law—refuses to exercise his duty under the law in a proper, responsible, fair and democratic way.

Mr. McGuinty is the Premier today, when this bill passes. He will be the Premier at least until October 2007. I hope he has a fair and reasonable approach to this legislation that gives him all the power, at least for brief periods of time. Certainly, with other legislation that is strictly his purview he has failed in the past.

I was just thinking back. I was a driver to George McCague back in the summer of 1985, George McCague being a former member for what was called Simcoe West back then, and Chair of Management Board for almost a decade under Premier Bill Davis, and was chairman of cabinet for the same decade under Premier Bill Davis. I certainly remember very well the tornado of 1985 in Barrie. In those days, cabinet ministers didn’t even get a briefing on their first day about the emergency role they would play. In fact, as I drove along—and George would kill me for telling you this—we had the Solicitor General in the back seat, we had me as a young driver for the summer, George in the front seat, and everybody was trying to read their emergency manual to see what their role was during that horrible tornado, which flattened big parts of the city of Barrie and certainly our riding of Simcoe West at the time.

I mentioned the eastern Ontario ice storm in 1999 and, of course, 9/11 in 2001. I can remember 9/11 in 2001. Thank goodness I had Judy Hubert with me, who was the

assistant deputy minister for energy at that time. We were actually at a federal-provincial conference in Quebec City at the Château Frontenac when that happened. I can remember that Ralph Goodale was chairing the conference, because he was energy minister along with natural resources at the time federally. I can remember going out for a washroom break and seeing a short replay—I guess it had happened a few seconds earlier—of the first plane going into one of the towers of the World Trade Center, and going back in and saying to Mr. Goodale, “I think we’ve got a problem here.” We certainly did have a problem. One of the problems we had was, the police weren’t clear what to do with a roomful of federal and provincial cabinet ministers, so they held us in the room for an hour while they made sure there were no terrorists outside of the hotel, because no one knew what was going on in those days.

1620

In the future, I think somebody needs the ability to override the police in those situations and say, “We’ve got duties to do, statutory duties,” particularly as energy minister, “to keep the lights on in New York City.” As people know, to this day—in fact, I got an award from the chamber of commerce, and I think they call it the board of trade there, one time when I was energy minister, because we sell power to New York City every noon hour and every dinner hour, and have for decades in this province. We provided their peak power and we still do. So one of the roles an energy minister has is to make sure that in something like a 9/11 situation the power still flows and that we actually curtail our power use here. So that involved our driving from Quebec City to Toronto, using the power that the minister had under the old act and phoning companies like Stelco and Inco and saying, “Shut down. We need your power on standby.”

So there is an active role for cabinet ministers and an active role for the Premier, and this attempt to revamp the laws is, I suppose, a good thing as long as you don’t go too far and impinge upon the civil liberties of Ontarians to an extent that it becomes ridiculous.

Certainly, we remember the power outage of 2003. We all remember SARS in 2003. Those were our only two official provincial emergencies ever declared. I mentioned the Peterborough flood. We’ve had northern Ontario floods, and we had the tornado, of course, in Mr. Arnott’s riding last year. Those are just some of the reasons why, of course, I agree with the government that they need powers to respond to these things that happen from time to time.

One of the criticisms of the bill is that this bill is all about giving more emergency powers to the province, but it gives nothing to emergency services personnel. No necessary equipment will be bought as a result of this bill passing. No new training is to be automatically provided, or funding for that, and no new education for emergency service personnel. That’s something the government will want to look at. I didn’t really hear whether the minister was sending this to committee, but he needs to send it to committee for a short period of time anyway so that some

of these groups that are directly affected and who we expect to—

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): He agreed.

Mr. Wilson: He agreed to send it to committee?

Mr. Marchese: Yes.

Mr. Wilson: So, for the record, it's going to committee.

These emergency service personnel obviously need the tools to do their job. There is a greater onus on them now than ever to work overtime and to follow whatever orders the Premier may issue in the early stages of an emergency. They have to have the tools to be able to do that.

One of the other criticisms of the bill is that there needs to be more of a focus on emergency planning rather than emergency powers. The bill contains nothing to help Ontario better coordinate emergency preparedness efforts.

Another criticism that has come up is that instead of raising its fees, because the Liberals are doing that on the police side, the Liberals should give the Ontario Police College a more significant role in emergency preparedness. The college currently offers no training in emergency management, which I found astounding when I first read this the other day, that the Ontario Police College doesn't have the funds to have the courses for our recruits. They don't get any training in emergency management. It's no one's fault, I guess. It's an oversight over the years. I didn't know about it and I've been here 16 years. So clearly something has to be done on that front.

Other key messages about this particular bill: Of course, we've said that it will grant extraordinary powers to the Premier and give the cabinet authority to override almost all Ontario laws when an emergency is declared. So it's not something that should be handled lightly. Proposed powers include the authority to compel anyone to disclose any kind of information it wants—the government takes this new power unto itself. People, particularly Progressive Conservatives, tend to want to hold personal information dear and near. Of course, the type of personal information we'll be talking about here is in many cases health information. If there is a disease outbreak, you may be forced to be tested for a disease. God forbid it be AIDS or something. That's not what's contemplated under here, but I'm sure there might be some AIDS groups that come forward saying, "Jeez, if you can do it during an emergency, there are other situations where you may declare a disease to be a pandemic or certainly a serious matter and you will start to compel people to give up their health records." So we need to make sure that's clarified under the act and that the government doesn't get the authority to go too far.

For instance, we do know—it's clearly stated in the bill—that citizens could be forced to be vaccinated against their will if there is a disease spreading into our area in which that would be required. So there may be some civil liberties people who have problems with that.

The government would have the power under this act to close down any public or private place that they deem necessary, prohibit travel and force the removal of a person's personal property. They can also regulate the use and distribution of goods and services, including water and electricity, and fix prices on goods and services, which the minister and I believe the parliamentary assistant spoke about. They gave the example of gas-gouging after a serious situation we had. I don't disagree with it on one hand; on the other hand, it is a pretty extraordinary power.

While proper planning for emergencies is imperative, this bill seems more about giving the government broad additional powers than proper emergency planning procedures. We've offered, as the PC caucus, to work in a collaborative way to improve this bill and address the issues that are being brought to us by some of the interest groups, and of course front-line workers themselves.

Just in talking about front-line workers, I want to commend my colleague Mr. Arnott for once again putting forward legislation that supports double-hatter firefighters. It seems to me that Mr. Kwinter is spending a great deal of time on this issue of emergency management—and that's good—but Mr. Arnott, myself and many others have brought to the attention of the minister the need to bring some fairness into this double-hatter firefighter situation. I've had it affect about four firefighters—I think the number is right, off the top of my head—who have had to leave their job in Springwater township over the last couple of years. I've met with their chief over this. They've had to leave their job, because they volunteer there during their five days off and their five days on. They either work in the city of Barrie or the city of Toronto Fire Services. Of course, they won't be participating in Springwater township if there is a need for emergency-measures people like firefighters because they're not allowed to volunteer anymore. Talk about a non-democracy. Because one union called the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, which is the firefighters' union, deems that they cannot work in their own communities, on their own time, they get fired, and no one on the government side—we're trying on this side of the House—will bring justice to these people and this issue.

What you do after 5 o'clock or after work in this country and in this province is your own darn business. I believe that. Whether someone wants to go door to door in a by-election and they're a public servant, that's fine, as long as they're not a senior public servant who is required under law to stay neutral. We certainly see that with some political parties and some of our public service unions. They regularly campaign for the NDP candidate, presumably after 5 o'clock, when they are no longer statutorily required to be at work here. But we don't let our firefighters have freedom on their own time. They have several days on and several days off, so they have time to do it.

I will note, though, that against this government, those who support Bill 44, the Volunteer Firefighters Employment Protection Act, are the Ontario Association of Fire

Chiefs, the Fire Fighters Association of Ontario, which is the umbrella group for the volunteer firefighters, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario—AMO—and Bernard Moyle. As the honourable member pointed out in his remarks a few minutes ago, Ontario's fire marshal very much supports this legislation.

I would ask the minister, while he is doing committee hearings on Bill 56, which is dealing with the emergency powers of the province, that he allow firefighters who want to help out in an emergency in their home community to volunteer to do that.

It also affects the township of Clearview in my riding. I know of one firefighter—and there might be two—who has had to quit because he works on the Toronto Fire Services. He's had to quit the New Tecumseh Fire Department, which is Alliston and area, because his union has said, "If you continue to volunteer back home in your own free and spare time, we will make it very rough for you in your full-time job with the Toronto Fire Services."

I think, first of all, that Mr. Arnott is to be commended, and the government should once again revisit that issue and stop saying no. To me, it's a no-brainer. At some point, someone has to stare down the union, and he hasn't had the courage to do it.

Having said that, there are some flaws in this legislation that need to be addressed. I said I would mention Justice Archie Campbell's comments. He was the investigating judge, as everyone knows, on the province's response to SARS. He stated that the power of the Premier and the cabinet in this legislation is "awesome." He noted, "It would literally give the provincial cabinet the authority to override any other ... laws when an emergency is declared."

Again we ask the government to send this to committee. I think you should deal with the double-hatter issue too. It's just a question of fairness.

I want to end on a balanced story from the *Barrie Examiner*, which is the paper read up my way, of Wednesday January 4, 2006. It said, referring to this legislation, "The question is whether Ontario's Premier really needs 'extraordinary' powers during an emergency." It goes on to say that this needs to be clarified. Does he really need to see personal health records? Does he really need to restrict travel? Does he really need to force people to have vaccinations or inoculations against their will? It raises questions, but it also gives Mr. Kwinter the benefit of the doubt in saying that maybe at certain times you have to suspend individual rights, but it notes that you shouldn't be doing that for a prolonged period of time. The safeguards in this legislation need to be clarified so that the public understands what their rights are during an emergency and what their rights aren't.

I look forward to the brief comments from my colleagues, and I look forward later this afternoon to our critic Mr. Runciman's comments.

1630

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms. Martel: Let me follow up on concerns that were raised by the member for Simcoe—Grey, specifically with

respect to emergency services personnel. He noted there's nothing in the bill that provides funding for emergency services, be they fire, be they police, by they paramedics, and certainly no money for training; no training in many cases was even available for new recruits in some of these emergency professions. That's the first problem: There's nothing in the bill that addresses funding to ensure that folks involved in emergency preparedness are actually appropriately and adequately trained.

Secondly, there was a serious concern raised during the course of the hearings the committee had about whether or not emergency services—fire, paramedics, police—actually had the human capacity available to deal with emergencies. There were clear concerns expressed by the OPP, by the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, by the EMS specifically that in the event of an emergency they didn't feel they had the surge capacity that would be necessary to actually deal with a full-scale emergency and the planning and the response that had to go with all of that. I don't see any response in this bill about ongoing work by the government with respect to dealing with that very difficult issue. It's one thing for the province to have plans. It's one thing for the Premier and the Lieutenant Governor to be able to order a number of things. It's an entirely different matter to have the personnel on the ground in the broad range of emergency services to actually respond to crises. Many groups that came before the committee made it clear that those resources were not in place.

So as we deal with the bill that sets in place what powers the government has to deal with emergency services, we'd also better be dealing very carefully with what is the surge capacity and what are the human resources we need to appropriately respond?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): It's a pleasure to have an opportunity to say a few words about Bill 56. I want to commend the minister and the staff for bringing forward this bill. I think Bill 56 is an important bill. One needs only to look at what has happened in the United States, at what happened recently with Katrina and the hurricane situation there. I was watching that on television, as probably most people were periodically. You see the mayor of New Orleans get up and blame the Governor of the state. The Governor, in turn, blames the President. The President turns around and blames FEMA, the organization that was set up to deal with emergencies. So it's a vicious cycle of blame.

I think what the bill here today does is set the responsibility square on the Lieutenant Governor in Council and the Premier, which is basically the Premier and the cabinet. It allows them the power to deal with emergency situations, should they occur. We hope that something of that nature would never happen here, but if something ever did happen, the first question that would be asked is, "Who is in charge?" The second question would be, "What are they doing about it?" You know, there are so many attempts to organize and prepare and do things properly, but when that emergency actually hits, the last thing you want to do is to be pointing the finger at

somebody else. You don't want in Ontario, if there's a problem, for the Premier to be saying, "Well, the Prime Minister should be here," and the Prime Minister turning around and saying, "Well, there should be some emergency coordinating power or organization out there"—or perhaps the mayor or another group—dealing with the problem, the Red Cross and so on.

This legislation makes it clear. It provides a comprehensive strategy for emergency powers. Making Ontario's legislation consistent with modern emergency powers legislation in other provinces and other jurisdictions is worthwhile. It's the right thing to do at the right time, and I'm pleased to stand and support the bill here today.

Mr. Arnott: I'm pleased to have a moment this afternoon to respond to the important presentation that was made by the member for Simcoe–Grey. First of all, I want to inform the House that the member for Simcoe–Grey will be celebrating his 43rd birthday next week, and I happen to know that the member for Nickel Belt will be celebrating her birthday as well next week. We'll just leave it at that.

I thought the member for Simcoe–Grey made quite a number of good points. Obviously, he does an excellent job, as an experienced member of this Legislature, pointing out some of the important aspects of this bill and relating some of his experience as Minister of Energy in the late 1990s, when the province did in fact face a very severe crisis because of the terrible ice storm that affected eastern Ontario most specifically.

The member also made reference to my efforts to bring forward the private member's bill in support of double-hatter firefighters, and for that I thank him. When my original Bill 30 was before the Ontario Legislature in 2002, I don't think there was another member of the Legislature who was more supportive of the idea of double-hatter firefighters being allowed to continue to serve as firefighters in their own hometowns and small communities that they live in, and I very much appreciated that.

Getting back to what the minister had indicated in his opening speech this afternoon, of course the standing orders provide for questions and comments so that members can ask questions of ministers and provide comments. I asked two questions in response to his speech. I asked him why Ontario and Newfoundland are the only provinces in Canada that don't have protection for double-hatter firefighters, and I also asked him why the government continues to ignore their own fire marshal, who continues to ask for support for double-hatter firefighters in legislation. The minister ignored both of those questions and was not forthcoming whatsoever with an answer. I will continue to raise these issues and ask him why those questions were not answered.

But I want to thank once again the member from Simcoe–Grey for his eloquent presentation this afternoon.

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): I commend the Minister of Community Safety for taking these great

strides to protect the people of Ontario. In this world, we often talk about "the new normal." We have had many narrow escapes from great tragedy—the Mississauga train derailment, the ice storm, SARS, the blackout—and we've been very lucky that we have had great leadership.

But what we don't want to do is rely on luck. We want to make sure that we have a policy in place, a process in place, that will assure the security and safety of the people of Ontario when some unforeseen disaster strikes us. Appointing the Commissioner of Emergency Management, bringing in people like Dr. Sheela Basrur, the chief medical officer of health, and looking at a comprehensive strategy to address any emergency that may take place have been very prudent and proactive steps by this minister to make sure that we are ready. This is all about readiness.

With that, we wanted to make sure that we work with all parties—this is a non-partisan issue—that we all come together as a family here in Ontario, and as elected officials, to make sure we can deliver that safety and security for the people of Ontario. This piece of legislation has the checks and balances in place that make the government accountable for its actions should it be necessary to declare a provincial emergency.

1640

In Bill 56, we also provide the authority to the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make emergency orders. So things like restricting travel or what happened during SARS in terms of quarantining people, all of these are measures that must be available to the government to protect our people.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Simcoe–Grey, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Wilson: I want to thank the member for Nickel Belt, who mentioned that there is no money for training, and that's something that police, fire and EMS personnel—paramedic officers—want to bring to the attention of the government.

The member for Scarborough Southwest made a very good point that, when there is an emergency, the public needs to be clear on who is in charge and who is to do what. This legislation and the debate around it will help with that.

The member for Waterloo–Wellington, my friend Mr. Arnott, forgot to mention when he mentioned Ms. Martel's birthday and mine that he's four days younger, and he had the distinction of being the youngest member before us. I guess Shelley had it first, and then probably Ted by four days. Anyway, it was many years ago. Many people have beaten our records since, in other Parliaments, in this Parliament and in the federal Parliament.

The member for Mississauga East says there are checks and balances, speaking on the government side. That's what we want to be careful about. There are people out there more up on civil liberties legislation throughout the world who would argue that there aren't very many checks and balances.

I note that the Premier's order can stand for 72 hours and then he has to go to cabinet. Well, most Premiers see

their advisers and cabinet and can usually sway their advisers and cabinet to their own way. So I'm not sure that's a real check and balance, going back to your cabinet whom you appointed.

You don't have to come to Parliament for quite a long period of time under this legislation. We may want to tighten that up. There's no reason why you can't get leaders of the parties in here together on a conference call during an emergency or in some way. If you're the leader of a party or you're a minister or even some of our critics, we know where they are all the time, 24 hours a day, in case things do come up. So there must be a way in this day and age to consult with the other parties and make sure that when an emergency is declared, the government is on the right track.

With that, I thank the members for their comments.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Marchese: I would like to have unanimous consent to stand down our lead from the member for Niagara Centre.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Trinity-Spadina has requested unanimous consent to stand down the lead. Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Mr. Marchese: What I want to do is point out a number of problems with the bill. While it is true that there are a number of things we probably agree with, we know that our critic has a lot of disagreement with this bill, and we want him to have this opportunity, obviously, to put them on the record. But having the opportunity to be here today, I want to begin that debate by repeating something that the member from Nickel Belt said in her two-minute response, and that is that the SARS Commission's second report was highly critical of Bill 138. This is what the commission's report said: "The essence of the commission's concern is that the unusual process of proceeding to a draft bill of such profound legal importance, without prior policy and operational analysis by departments of government and without prior legal and constitutional scrutiny by the Attorney General, deprived the bill of the solid underpinnings that ordinarily precede the development of any important piece of legislation ... a sober second thought is now required."

In so doing or in so saying, the minister today, in response, said that Justice Campbell's criticism was merely a matter of speaking to process. Well, it isn't just process that Justice Campbell spoke to. He spoke to many other things that are simply not addressed in this bill. When the minister spoke today, he made it appear—in fact, he said that the bulk of Justice Campbell's concerns had been addressed. Well, I want to begin the list that shows that the concerns have not been addressed, and that is why we, as well as the Tories, I am hearing, are calling for hearings, because we want people to have an opportunity not just to address Justice Campbell's concerns, but hopefully the concerns that will be raised by the front-line emergency professionals, who I know have raised many of the concerns before and I suspect will repeat them again when the hearings on this bill begin.

On the whole matter of voluntary compliance, a lesson from SARS is that advanced planning for health emergency compensation is vital. A recent US study also showed that fear of loss of income was the number one barrier to voluntary compliance with emergency orders. We know that although that is the number one barrier, there are a number of other impediments that have been identified. They talk about poor logistical support, psychological stress, spotty monitoring of compliance, inconsistencies in the application of quarantine measures between various jurisdictions, and problems with public communications.

The SARS Commission report recommended that any emergency legislation require that every government emergency plan provide a basic blueprint for the most predictable types of compensation packages and that they be ready for use, with appropriate tailoring, immediately following any declaration of emergency. Bill 56 does not address this adequately. The bill does set out conditions under which employees are entitled to a leave of absence without pay in emergencies. I remind people that a leave of absence without pay doesn't quite satisfy one of the problems that has been identified by Justice Campbell. So we need to review this, and I suspect that there will be a number of people who will speak to this whole issue of voluntary compliance and how we deal with it based on the recommendations put forth by Justice Campbell. So this is one measure that has not been dealt with adequately at all.

On the whole matter of prevention, preparedness and co-operation: Without preparedness, emergency powers are of little use. Specific emergency plans are required for specific threats. Generic plans are not enough. The SARS Commission report made several recommendations regarding coordinated emergency plans: Ensure the integration of all emergency plans; require that every emergency plan specify clearly who is in charge and who does what; clarify rules around administration of and compensation for seized property; and clarify the legal effects of emergency powers. Bill 56 does not address this adequately. It leaves the implementation of any emergency plans formulated to cabinet orders without specifying much in the way of further requirements. Simply leaving this matter to cabinet orders is not a plan.

Already we have two matters dealing with voluntary compliance and with prevention, preparedness and co-operation, and the government, through this bill, does not deal with it. This is not a matter of process; this is a matter of detail that the minister has not addressed. Maybe he will think about addressing these matters while we're doing the review of this bill in committee. Maybe we will have to persuade him to do this in the course of it. We will see.

The role of the chief medical officer of health: The most important thing in a public health emergency is public confidence that the medical decisions are made by a trusted, independent medical leader such as the chief medical officer of health, free of any bureaucratic or political pressures. Mr. Campbell's recommendation was

that emergency legislation should provide that the chief medical officer of health has clear primary authority with respect to the public health aspects of every provincial emergency, including:

- public health emergency planning;
- public communication of health risk, necessary precautions, regular situation updates;
- advice to the government as to whether an emergency should be declared, if the emergency presents at first as a public health problem;
- strategic advice to the government in the management of the emergency;
- advice to the government as to whether an emergency should be declared to be over, and emergency orders lifted, in respect of the public health measures taken to fight the emergency;
- advice to the government in respect of emergency orders of a public health nature and emergency orders that affect public health, e.g. ensuring that gasoline rationing does not deprive hospitals of emergency supplies;
- delegated authority in respect of emergency orders of a public health nature; and
- such further and other authority, of a nature consistent with the authority referred to above, in respect of the public health aspects of any emergency.

1650

Under Bill 56, the Commissioner of Emergency Management appears to be given primacy in all emergency situations, and there is no requirement for the two offices to exercise their authority in consultation with each other. We are reading here that the Commissioner of Emergency Management is given primacy in all emergency situations, contrary to what Justice Campbell was recommending, and that is that the chief medical officer of health ought to have clear primary authority with respect to the long list of issues that I have raised. So here we have another example that doesn't speak to the issue of process but speaks to the issue of content, and the government has not fixed that with the introduction of Bill 56. I have an ongoing list of points that I will be raising that speak to the fact that perhaps the bulk of the measures recommended by Justice Campbell have not been dealt with.

There's another matter of the power to override Ontario laws. Bill 138 contained an override power which stated that orders under the emergency management legislation prevail over other rules. The SARS Commission report recommended that the government amend the override power in order to:

- clarify whether the override power affects collective agreements;
- protect our foundational legal statutes such as the Human Rights Code etc. against emergency override;
- clarify whether a journalist or lawyer who refuses to disclose confidential information or the identity of their source is liable to the penalties provided; and
- clarify that the override power does not constitute a constitutionally impermissible delegation of legislative power to public officials.

The report also recommended that the override power be given a more prominent place in the statute by putting it right after the enumerated powers.

Bill 56 does not amend the override provisions in Bill 138, nor does it give it more prominence in the statute. There is no mention of collective agreements and no evidence of legal analysis undertaken to ensure constitutionality. With respect to personal information, the section on offences now limits the uses of personal information during an emergency and clarifies that the FOI legislation applies as soon as the emergency is declared over. Here's another matter that is substantive in nature—nothing to do with process—that has not been dealt with by the minister or his bill.

Further, Bill 138, as it relates to the power to implement emergency plans: The SARS Commission report argued that under Bill 138, the power to implement emergency plans is at best ambiguous and at worst lacking in transparency. Arguably, what the provision really provides, through the opaque technique of incorporation by reference, is a series of blank cheques which authorize public officials to do anything they see fit so long as it is written down in some plan."

The report therefore recommended that the power be amended to (1) ensure that it confers no hidden powers other than those explicitly set out in Bill 138, and (2) provide that every emergency plan requires protocols for safe and speedy court access developed in consultation with the judiciary, and that the Courts of Justice Act be amended to ensure an early hearing for any proceeding under or in respect of emergency legislation or any action taken under it.

The same blanket wording applies in Bill 56. No amendments have been made. There may be some changes that may be addressed in Bill 14 to deal with this, but we haven't seen it ourselves. Perhaps the minister will clarify in the hearings, when they are going to be held, as it relates to this particular issue. But again, these matters are substantive in nature; they are not simply a matter of process.

There are other issues I wanted to raise connected to the problems of concurrent powers, occupational health and safety, and the trigger, criteria and limitations, but I want to touch on other matters as well before I complete my 20 minutes. Those have to do with the problems of the front-line emergency professionals and what this bill does to address their concerns. That is why we believe it needs to go to committee, because we believe front-line emergency professionals and their needs are not dealt with in this bill. We believe that if the government is serious about emergency management, it must invest in the front lines.

The bill does not address this at all. During the review of emergency management statutes, the EMS, the OPP, the Ontario Fire Marshal's office and the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police all noted that they lacked significant surge capacity throughout the province. Nothing in this bill addresses any of the concerns that have been put forth by all of these various people.

There are chronic staff shortages at 11 provincially operated central ambulance communication centres and at the medical air transportation centre, where the new-hire retention rate is just 30%. Try managing a regional health crisis or a major disaster with understaffed dispatch centres. This bill does not address this and the minister has not spoken to these concerns at all. Talk about meat inspectors overworked and under serious stress, they have a turnover rate of over 30%. The turnover speaks to the problem we are having, not just with meat inspectors, but with the medical air transportation centre staff and the 11 provincially operated central ambulance communication centres. If this is true, as indeed we believe it is, we've got a problem that the minister needs to address and that this bill should be speaking to.

The public health labs have been aggressively starved after the layoff of scientists responsible for researching infectious diseases, superbugs and chemical toxins. Because of this, it took two years for Ontario to respond to the West Nile virus.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri (Etobicoke North): Superbugs?

Mr. Marchese: Superbugs, Doctor. Perhaps you heard something else? I thought maybe you wanted to speak to the whole issue of superbugs, but perhaps you may want to speak to some other issues as well.

1700

These are concerns that affect the front-line staff, and when we're speaking about emergency management statute law amendments, front-line emergency professionals are affected by it. They are the people we need to speak to. Their needs have to be dealt with, because in speaking to their needs, we're speaking to how we protect the public on a regular basis and not just when emergencies happen. This is why this bill has to go to committee. We're happy to hear that the minister obviously wants to send it there, and we know that he's not simply sending it there so that we can talk about process. Clearly the minister has spoken to the issue of process and, yes, he has made sure that consultation has happened with various groups. But what we have spoken to today says that Justice Campbell has raised many issues that Bill 55 has not addressed, or not addressed adequately. As a result of that, we feel the bill needs to have a thorough review. It needs to have professionals come to speak to it in order to make it a much more effective bill. As much as the minister says, "We are in a hurry to do this," we say, "Yes, we are, but we also need to do it well and to do it right and to make sure that we correct the failings and the shortcomings of the bill."

With that in mind, I hope the minister, the parliamentary assistant and the most attentive Liberal backbenchers watching me here as I speak will do the right thing and hopefully make sure that some of the amendments that Justice Campbell has proposed are brought forth by those members who are on the committee, if not by the minister.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): I was listening carefully to the member for Trinity-Spadina

about the negative approach to Bill 56. By the way, it's Bill 56, not 55. I think it's a very important step toward putting the house in order. It gives the ability to the government, which is, in the end, responsible for the security and protection of the people of Ontario.

I was listening to many speakers in the House talking about this bill, some of them in support, some not. But I hope in the end, after the debate is finished, all the members should be in support, because it's a good thing to do. We've witnessed in this province many incidents. We had SARS, we had the blackout, we had Walkerton. We've had many different incidents happen in the province of Ontario. So the government, which is supposed to be, in the end, responsible for the protection of the people, should have a mechanism in place in order to act when this problem happens. It's important for our government to get that permission from this place in order to act when an emergency happens in Ontario, in order to protect the great people of this province.

I think it's an important thing, so I want to congratulate the minister and the government for bringing this bill forward in order to establish some kind of mechanism to protect the people of this great province, like, for instance, prohibiting travel, protecting hospitals, protecting people when they declare an emergency, when they cannot come to work, buying food, penalizing people who don't respond to the emergency declarations, and so many different issues.

We cannot leave the whole thing open when the incidents happen. We understand the people of the province because we care about the people of this province. That's why, at a good time like this time, we have to think and put something forward.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): It's always a pleasure to rise and comment to my friend and colleague the member for Trinity-Spadina, who always has an important message and does so in a very interesting manner.

I share some of—

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: It may not have been his most stellar, but even when he brings his B game, it's an A game, I think, by anybody else's standards.

I do share some of the concerns that the member has brought forward. That's why I think it's essential for further consideration of Bill 56 at committee. I appreciate the original process. It's too bad the original process did not bear fruit, but we do hope that this will go back to committee.

Certainly, in times of crisis, it's important that cabinet have the ability to respond. We lived through some very challenging times in 2003 with both SARS and the power blackout, and I was pleased to be part of a government that responded very aggressively to those challenges. Having been there, I understand the importance of having some degree of emergency power to address those issues. We must always also ensure that the balance is there as well to protect civil liberties, to make sure that cabinet does not abuse those powers and that those powers are rescinded as soon as possible.

One thing I would also like to mention, coming from Fort Erie, being born and raised there, is that Fort Erie border issues are already a concern today and, I worry, are going to become an increasing concern with the new passport requirements coming soon. We always boast about the largest unprotected border in the world between Canada and the United States. Sadly, that's really no longer true. It has increasingly become a fortress.

I want to give particular plaudits to the Niagara Regional Police. During the SARS crisis and terrorism concerns and others, they responded very well in assisting the customs officers at the border. The challenge the regional police have is that they often act as an international force, whether it's at the border, patrolling the lakes or the Niagara River. As Chief Wendy Southall of Niagara has commented, as well as Chair Peter Partington, they're not compensated for those activities by either the federal or the provincial government. In fact, Chief Southall's reaction to last week's budget noted that, while there was an increase in funding for Toronto's police—and we are all very concerned about gun crime in the city of Toronto and across the province—perhaps similar consideration should be given to the Niagara Regional Police force to deal with crises at the border, along two Great Lakes and the Niagara River. I hope that's part of the consideration as the minister moves forward with this bill.

Thank you for the additional time, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Martel: The member from Trinity–Spadina raised those concerns that remain outstanding. He did that because the minister, during the course of his remarks, said that many of the provisions of the previous bill, Bill 138, have been carried over into Bill 56, and he's right about that. Many of those provisions were provisions that Justice Archie Campbell was extremely critical of, which have not been addressed, which have not been dealt with. He named at least 10, and when I get a chance to speak on this bill, I'm going to name a few more. These come directly from the justice's work on SARS. I appreciate that we have a second bill and a second version, but the problem is that the second version has many flaws too. Those need to be addressed and those need to be dealt with.

I was pleased to hear that the minister said he was open for the bill to go to committee. I think that has to happen in this case. There are ongoing concerns that have been raised by a number of health care professionals in terms of how they feel they will be implicated, but I think there are concerns that have to do with the quite enormous power that Justice Campbell also talked about that need to be addressed.

My colleague from Simcoe–Grey, during the course of his remarks, read into the record quotes that were made in the media by the justice with respect to the powers of the Premier and cabinet in declaring an emergency. He said those powers were awesome. I don't think that was a positive point of view. I think he had serious concerns about just how excessive those powers are. Those things need to be addressed.

We asked Justice Campbell to do extensive work, looking at the fallout from SARS and what needed to be done. He did extensive work, and now it's time for us to incorporate his recommendations into emergency plans and to ensure that the concerns he has around declaring an emergency are also addressed. These things haven't been dealt with yet.

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): It's a pleasure to join the debate on this bill because, coming from Mississauga, it brings to mind an event in the fall of 1979 when a train carrying toxic chemicals and flammable substances derailed in what is now central Mississauga. At that time, the evacuation of tens of thousands of people was accomplished without panic and without death or injury. In fact, it was and still is called the Mississauga miracle. At the time, a feisty new mayor named Hazel McCallion ran for days on virtually no sleep, but never missed a meeting.

1710

Many of the things the world learned about how to do it right in disaster planning and how to do it better came out of the Mississauga miracle of 1979. Those lessons and what was built on them now form some of the basis of Bill 56. This bill says to every Ontario municipality and every large corporation that handles, ships or produces hazardous or flammable substances that you now have the framework you need to lay your contingency plans and then to test them.

Some people have said, "Well, you know, there are still flaws in this." It brings to mind, from my former occupation, an adage of software development that goes like this: "Perfection is the enemy of the good." In this case, we're not looking for perfection. We're looking for a bill that enables municipalities and corporations to do the things they need to do now to be ready for an eventuality that may, and they hope won't, happen.

It's a good bill. It's got a good set of checks and balances. It gives government and corporations the tools and the authority they need. This is the sort of legislation that municipalities, the people who live within them, corporations and the people they serve, hope they never need to use, but if used as a planning tool, Bill 56 is the type of legislation that's going to make the difference between order and chaos, life or death.

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

Mr. Marchese: In response to the members from London–Fanshawe and Mississauga West, we are not disputing the need to have these emergency powers. That's not the issue. Nor do we simply want to pat ourselves on the back as government members, I would hope, simply for having introduced a bill, which is what the member from London–Fanshawe does. I don't think it should be enough for us to do that.

The member from Mississauga West simply says we are not looking for perfection. I don't understand why he would say that, because our job as legislators is to try to find the best possible answers to the questions everyone is raising; in this particular case, the questions raised by

Justice Campbell. It seems to me that it's my job and his to take advantage of the fact that this bill is going to go to committee, and when it goes to committee, it is my job and the job of the members from Mississauga West and London-Fanshawe to try to improve on the bill that has been presented by the minister, not simply to send it to committee and say, "We've got a perfect bill. We can't make it any more perfect." It's not what we should be doing. It speaks poorly of you, us, as politicians, if we say that.

The reason we send bills to committee is to hear from deputants, to hear from our critics; in this particular case, Justice Campbell, the person we haven't listened to properly in our response with Bill 56, to be able to then say, "We've had an opportunity. We've listened. We want to make improvements that we can make so that this bill can be the best that can be presented." I hope that would be the job of all of us in this House.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): I am actually delighted to engage in the debate on Bill 56.

We live in a dream called Ontario, but this bill contemplates a nightmare, the nightmare of a provincial emergency. We're not talking about a local emergency. We're talking about an emergency that deals with the entire province. We are talking about a nightmarish day in this province. The question is: As legislators, will we ensure there are sufficient powers so that we can exercise our duty as those who are elected to protect our fellow citizens? Is that not our chief job in a nightmarish scenario? It is to defend life.

There is much accountability and balance in this bill, and I'll talk about that shortly. But let us never fail to deal with the central question: Are we adequately prepared? As the minister said, we are the only province in this country that does not have a modern emergency management bill, so it is time for action.

The reason I asked to speak on that, as it's been referenced, is that I thought the minister was very wise in sending the question of how to modernize our emergency management in this province to a select committee made up of all parties. There were some wonderful members on that whom I gained a great deal of respect for during that process, because though I was not on that committee, I was occasionally seconded onto that committee to deal with specific concerns dealing with agriculture. I distinctly remember the debates we had—I know the person who is now my minister, the Honourable Laurel Broten, I know the member from Willowdale, I know the member from Guelph-Wellington—and the discussions we had. I don't remember in that all-party select committee there ever being anybody from the third party who came to those meetings, despite the invitation. I found that compelling. I think that is why the minister has said that if we are not going to have everybody in this House or in a select committee dealing with this issue, and we're going to abrogate our responsibilities because we're not getting exactly what we want, then the minister has no choice but to introduce a government bill that has taken

into consideration the deliberations of our select committee on Bill 138 and to introduce Bill 56. That's why we're where we are today.

The one thing I learned is that in this type of nightmare situation, time is of the essence. That is what we never have enough of in an emergency—our ability to respond quickly and decisively. There is no time for dithering, there's no time for second guessing and there sure is no time to write a new piece of legislation while people's lives are in danger. It falls upon us as legislators, after due deliberation, to move swift afoot and ensure that the government of the day has the powers necessary to protect human life, because that, at the essence, is what this bill is all about. After the briefings I received, being on that select committee—and I know other members from all parties received—the types of scenarios that were contemplated by those people who are professionals, who deal in this area of emergency management at the provincial or national level, are disturbing to say the least. We can shun away from that disturbing reality or we can embrace it and deal with it, and that's what this bill is all about. It is about making sure that we can be swift afoot.

The bill always has to deal with the issue of balancing an individual's rights, which we enjoy each and every day because there is no provincial emergency, with the collective right that we have as a community to protect human life when there is an emergency.

I want to put on the record quite clearly, as the minister stated, that most emergencies in this province are municipal or regional. Some 97% of all municipalities in this province now, as mandated by the government, have emergency measures. I can tell you that the experience of my good friend the member from Peterborough and my experience of the drinking water advisory in my hometown of Stratford show how very important it is that we have the ability to respond at the local level when there is a local emergency—and they were indeed emergencies. When people are flooded out of their homes and businesses, when 30,000 people cannot drink the water from their tap, that is an emergency. I want to commend the municipalities that have worked so hard to prepare; but surely it falls upon us as the provincial Legislature to be ready in the event of a provincial emergency. The minister was absolutely right to note two examples, the hydro blackout and SARS, two emergencies that fell back-to-back and which, I think, have convinced most of us in this House—maybe not all, but most—of the need for us to take action.

I just want to be clear. The member from Trinity-Spadina, whom I respect, is referencing the Campbell report, and that is a valid point, but he is talking about a specific situation. This bill is not about dealing with specific situations. The entire point of the bill is that it doesn't deal with specific situations. "Well, we'll be ready if we can appropriately contemplate every nightmare scenario." That's not the way to write a bill. The way to do it is to make sure that the powers are sufficient, that they are there, that they can be accessed, that the

government of the day is held accountable for its actions once the emergency is over, and that there is no carte blanche given to the government for an unending period of time for them to deal with an emergency. They have to come back into this House and be accountable to the people for their actions.

1720

In regard to pandemic planning, we on this side of the House are very proud that Dr. Sheela Basrur is the chief medical officer of health for this province. She and her team, and people in health units and in the medical community right across this province, have been dealing with one, but one very disturbing, nightmarish scenario, that of a pandemic. This bill is not about that, sir. Dr. Basrur and her people are doing their good work. This bill is about having the powers that can be invoked, when necessary, for a provincial emergency. It doesn't absolve everybody else in the government from doing their job, just like Dr. Basrur is doing.

I can't go by without mentioning that the member from Simcoe–Grey was talking about some lack of commitment from this side of the House in regard to our brave firefighting professionals and volunteers in this province. Last year, it was our government that was able to provide some \$30 million of one-time assistance to fire departments so they could focus on the training and the equipment that they need. Just the other day in my own riding, there was a fire in Milverton. They had thermal imaging equipment which, in my opinion, was able to save lives. That equipment is there because we made a commitment to the firefighters—professional and volunteer—right across this province that as a government we would assist them, that we would provide the funding so that they would be adequately trained and that they would have state-of-the-art equipment, because their lives and the brave work that they do are valuable to this government.

I also want to note, and perhaps the member from Simcoe–Grey was not aware of this, that we have the heavy urban search and rescue that is completely in the purview of the province, and as well that we have a team that deals with chemical, biological and radioactive/nuclear concerns. As I said, chemical, radioactive, biological. These are the nightmare scenarios that we cannot shun. We cannot cast our eyes away from this problem. We have to deal with it in the light of day, because it is not wise of us as legislators to somehow ignore this, or to participate in what I would consider to be endless dithering if we're not all in agreement in this House that we must move this piece of legislation forward. That is very important to me, as someone who had a chance to be on that select committee.

I want the good people of Ontario to know that we are fortunate to have, in my opinion, Minister Kwinter. I think he brings a certain wisdom to this House because of his long tenure here, and I think he's got it right. We cannot let the forces of inertia and dithering take us away from what our objective is as legislators, which is, at the end of the day, to protect human health in the event of a

provincial emergency. That's why I'm supporting this bill, and I urge all of the members opposite and my government colleagues to support this bill. It is an important piece of legislation whose time has come.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I am pleased to add some comments on the speech made by the member from Perth–Middlesex on Bill 56, which is the Emergency Management Statute Law Amendment Act. It's a bill that was introduced on December 15 by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, and it affects the Emergency Management Act, the Employment Standards Act, 2000, and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

This bill would grant extraordinary powers to the Premier, and it gives the cabinet authority to override almost all Ontario laws when an emergency is declared. Obviously, that is something that I would have concerns with.

It also has proposed powers that include the authority to compel anyone to disclose any kind of information it wants and force citizens to be vaccinated against spreading an illness. It also would give the government the power to close down any public or private place that they deem necessary, prohibit travel and force the removal of a person's personal property. These, obviously, are quite extraordinary powers.

It would also regulate the use and distribution of goods and services, including water and electricity, and fix the prices on goods and services. These are very broad powers. They very well may be too broad. So with a bill like this, which is, I'm sure, necessary, there obviously needs to be a real balance, and it will be more important than ever that we get public input from those involved in the health field, from the police, from emergency workers, from the public at large, so that we can get the right balance between giving the powers necessary in an emergency situation, but not taking any rights away that we don't want to take away.

Ms. Martel: I've heard some comments now about the urgency of moving this bill forward, and I want to remind members that we've had a commitment from the minister to have this bill go back for public hearings. He made that comment in the context of acknowledging that there are health care providers who would be called upon to act in emergencies, to implement emergency plans, and that these health care providers continue to have concerns. So the bill is going to committee. I appreciate that the minister is going to do that, and I would urge all of us to make sure that that is a process whereby the concerns that we are bringing forward in a legitimate fashion can be raised.

I want to remind members as well that the concerns that we are bringing forward relate to concerns that have been expressed by Justice Archie Campbell, who had a chance to look at the wording of Bill 138. The critique that was presented by my colleague from Trinity–Spadina was a critique of Bill 138 and the provisions in

that bill, and concerns were expressed by the justice about those.

The minister said in his opening comments today that many of the provisions of Bill 138 are now in Bill 56. If that is the case, I would have hoped that the concerns that had already been expressed by Justice Campbell would have been addressed, and we don't think that they have been. That's clearly why we are talking about the concerns that were raised with Bill 138 and whether or not they have been dealt with in Bill 56. We're pointing out those areas where those concerns that have been raised have not been dealt with.

It seems to me that we should be benefiting from the experience and the expertise of Justice Campbell. After all, he did head up a commission looking at SARS, what happened, the fallout, and what we can do to ensure that we don't have such a situation again. He's made some recommendations. I hope that during the committee process we look at those recommendations and move the amendments necessary to do this right.

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): I know the member from Perth–Middlesex very well. Not only are we seatmates, but we're friends, and we spent a fair bit of time talking to each other about the kinds of obligations and responsibilities we have in this place. I know that he understands that being an elected representative, particularly one who's been given the task to speak to a responsibility as awesome as the responsibilities that are contemplated in this legislation, it's something that we can't shy away from.

The time to plan for those dark days when people are cursing the darkness clearly are days when the sun is shining, when you've got time to think about some of the exigencies that might be there. I think the member from Perth–Middlesex was quite exemplary in his prudence describing the situation and the need for us to prepare for that eventuality where we, in addition to sharing one another's joys, may have to share some of the awesome burdens that we experience.

The bill—and the member speaks well to this—would allow the government to ensure that resources are available, that price gouging isn't something that would happen, that in public places contagion of disease or other traumas can be controlled, and transportation resources needed to respond can be in place. Public hearings will be held ostensibly to improve the bill. I think the member has put the case for this bill very well.

1730

Mr. Hudak: I also enjoyed the comments by the member from Perth–Middlesex. I particularly enjoyed the metaphysical interpretation of his remarks by the member for Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot. I'm going to have to review those comments and enjoy the light of day that comes after raging against the darkness, sir, but it was a particular comment.

I had spoken a bit earlier about the concerns in representing a border community and about the good work the Niagara Regional Police do in support of the federal

government, the RCMP and customs officers, as well as helping us on provincial issues, as when trucks were backing up at the border around the time of the SARS crisis, and the unfortunate terrorism attacks that have happened in the United States, in Great Britain and in other places that will often cause increased security at our borders.

I want to say, while I'm speaking on border issues, that I am pleased to hear the Conservative government, federally, is going to move forward with the notion of arming our customs officers. Having had the chance to work as a customs inspector to help pay for university and then full-time for a short time, I always felt there should be a greater concentration on the law enforcement side and on interdicting the transference of firearms, drugs and other contraband. Unfortunately, in the past, there has been too much of a concentration on customs officers as glorified tax collectors. I'm pleased to see a greater enforcement role now being taken up by the government that will recognize the very dangerous job these women and men perform.

On that topic, I know my colleague Mr. Runciman is going to speak soon. One concept that he had championed for some time and that I'd like to see back on the stage is the notion of a North American security perimeter. I am very worried about a growing gate at our borders. I would like to see us work with the United States and Mexico toward a North American security perimeter concept. I'm sure my colleague will talk about that in more detail.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Perth–Middlesex has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Wilkinson: I want to thank my good friend the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka for his comments. I say to him with all due respect that I think all of us are going to have to take a look at the vast implications of this bill. Its time has come. I think we agree it's necessary for this piece of legislation. I say to my friend from Nickel Belt that I know you are reassured that the minister will refer this matter and the points raised to committee. To my metaphysical seatmate, the member from ADFA, I appreciate the support for those of us with one little candle in the dark. The member from Erie–Lincoln has raised many good points about border security.

I want to conclude by saying, did you know that if there is a provincial emergency, people can gouge their neighbour for prices because there is no law that says that's illegal? That has happened. We only have to cast our minds back to the hydro blackout. The fact is that some people, when the community is struggling the most, see that as some opportunity for them to pad their pockets. I know the vast majority of people in this province find that behaviour completely reprehensible, but as a Legislature, are we in a position to say, other than some moral suasion, that it is completely and utterly unacceptable that in a provincial emergency, instead of helping your neighbours, you kick them when they're down, that you decide that perhaps you can make a quick buck? That is exactly what this bill is all about.

Just one small point about the need for us, as a Legislature, as a province, to prepare for the nightmare: We can only pray that we will never have to deal with the nightmare in our own terms of office, but we would be foolish not to be prepared. There is a time for consultation and there is a time for action. I am heartened that all of my colleagues have decided that now is the time to debate, to deal with this and to take action against the darkness.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): I appreciate the opportunity to participate in the debate. My comments this evening are not going to get into too many specifics related to the legislation. I'm going to leave that to our critic, Mr. Dunlop, when he has an opportunity to participate in the near future. My comments are going to be more general in nature and to some degree based on my own experiences. I think that they are unique, perhaps not something that you necessarily boast about, in the sense that I was the Solicitor General at the time of the ice storm, which many of us will recall, certainly in eastern Ontario, and I was the Minister of Public Safety and Security with the two outbreaks of SARS and with the blackout. So I have had some experience with the responsibilities of dealing with emergencies in the province, and I would like to comment related to that experience and also to some of the concerns I have with respect to the way the government has approached this issue. Hopefully, it will be for the most part constructive criticism and not construed as partisan in nature, unlike what we heard from the minister when he first tabled the legislation.

I wasn't here for his opening comments, but I gather he reiterated some of the allegations that he made when he introduced the legislation, that he was doing so because the committee legislation had been held up by the opposition parties and that we wouldn't allow it to be called for second reading, which is—Mr. Speaker, I have to ensure that I don't incur your wrath here, and I will not do that by saying something that's unparliamentary, but that is simply not accurate. As the House leader for the official opposition, I can tell you—and I think, if you look back in Hansard, this view is shared perhaps in a more colourful way by the House leader for the third party—that we did certainly have discussions around the committee legislation dealing with the emergency issue. Our concerns were really echoing those of Justice Archie Campbell and others on the extensive reach of the legislation and the impacts in terms of personal freedoms etc. that we felt required extensive review. We never suggested that we would, in any way, shape or form, somehow obstruct the legislation coming forward. We don't have the powers as opposition parties to say to the House leader of the government that you can't call a bill for second reading. So to suggest to the public that somehow we wouldn't allow the bill to be called for second reading is truly unfortunate. For the minister to once again say that in the House today, I'm not sure what to say. We saw the political games being played—we

saw it earlier today with respect to the assessment legislation—which is truly unfortunate.

What we did say—and I want to put it on the record. The government kept referencing the possibility of bird flu, and the chief veterinary officer wanted to have some powers to deal with the possibility of a bird flu epidemic. What we suggested to him, given the complexity of this legislation and all of the implications of this legislation, was, why not bring in a single piece of legislation that would address the requirements or the desires of the chief veterinary officer of the province of Ontario? Bring it in, and we can probably agree to pass that very quickly. But to suggest that, in dealing with that one immediate concern, we give carte blanche to this in terms of quick passage would not be appropriate in terms of adequate scrutiny by the opposition and by the public at large in addressing concerns. I'm sure we would hear from Alan Borovoy, and certainly we knew we were going to hear from Justice Archie Campbell, whom I have enormous respect for, having worked with Justice Campbell in the review of the Bernardo investigations and the excellent report and advice he provided to the government with that undertaking. So we simply couldn't ignore that. But if you have an immediate concern, isolate that concern, bring it forward and we will co-operate. I think it was an extremely co-operative offering on the part of both the Progressive Conservative opposition and, I believe, the NDP opposition as well.

1740

But no. The government again chose to play political games and bring in comprehensive legislation as government legislation and once again try to put pressure on us to move rapidly without taking a look at all of the implications. That's not our role. We have a role to provide that kind of scrutiny and oversight, to ensure that concerns are addressed and that the public has an opportunity to have input. We're going to do the job we're put here to do. That's the bottom line.

In general terms, I want to talk about some history here. I suspect that we, in reviewing this legislation—and we'll hear more from our critic in a few days—by and large will be supportive of most of the content of this legislation.

I had the opportunity to work for six years with Dr. Jim Young. When I became Solicitor General, he was ADM of public safety and chief coroner. When I went back into the ministry in 2002, he was still in that role. I have a great deal of admiration and affection for Jim Young. Certainly he has authored a significant portion of this legislation. How much, I'm not sure, but I know that he and I had a number of conversations about the need for changes to be made so that the province could in the future more adequately respond to emergency situations. There are a couple of things, though, I want to talk about related to emergency situations and security.

I was reading the minister's statement when he introduced the legislation. This is out of Hansard, December 15, and I'm quoting the minister, the Honourable Mr. Kwinter:

“Clearly, times are changing, and we must all get used to a new reality. We’ve learned that we are all vulnerable. The world has changed, and governments everywhere have been forced to change as well.” He cites the terrorist attacks in Madrid, the London bombings, and the attacks on the hotels in Jordan as reminders that terrorists can and will strike anywhere. He talks about “modern weaponry, travel, technology and the interconnected global economy” increasing the risk substantially, and the threats to our safety from a variety of sources. I couldn’t agree more, but the irony in that is how the Liberal government has approached these kinds of issues since taking office in 2003.

I was asked to go back into the ministry in 2002 by the new Premier, Mr. Eves. His view at the time, and it’s certainly one that I shared, was that in the wake of the 9/11 attacks in the United States and the challenges posed by terrorism throughout the world, we should be more proactive in the province of Ontario not just in dealing with ice storms or tornadoes or other kinds of natural disasters, those kinds of issues, but that as the largest province and with the largest city and the capital of Canada in the province of Ontario, we should be taking a more proactive role in terms of preventing terrorist attacks on our province. That was essentially part of the mandate that Premier Eves gave me when he reappointed me to the ministry and gave the ministry a new title, the Ministry of Public Safety and Security. So along with the responsibilities that had gone with the Solicitor General and correctional services ministry in the past, we had this new responsibility for security.

One of the first things I did was retain a security adviser to the minister. We established an Ontario security council, the first of its kind, which was chaired by Dr. Jim Young, who was ADM of public safety and chief coroner of the province. That security council was comprised of Major-General Lewis MacKenzie, perhaps the most respected military officer in our memories as people in this place, the former head of the RCMP—his name escapes me at the moment.

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Inkster.

Mr. Runciman: Norman Inkster. We also had the chief medical officer of health as part of that security council, as well as the security adviser to the minister. This was a blue-ribbon panel to review intelligence issues, security issues, within the province; not restricted to counter-terrorism or those kinds of issues, but also our ability to respond to natural disasters like pandemics, bird flu, whatever could strike the province or the country. That was put in place.

We also put additional monies into the ROPE squad, which deals with a lot of people who are in this country illegally. We expanded the mandate of the ROPE squad. These are repeat offenders who have broken parole, but we expanded it to deal with illegal immigration and illegal immigrants at large in the country as well. We also significantly invested in the Criminal Intelligence Service of Ontario. We created a new anti-terrorism unit within the OPP and we started to work very closely with the

RCMP, with CISO. This was an arrangement that was working extremely well. You take a look at when the Liberal Party formed the government in the fall of 2003, there was very quickly a very ominous signal issued by them when they changed the name of the ministry. They eliminated “security” from the title of the ministry and instead went back to actually calling it a new name, Community Safety and Correctional Services. Security was eliminated from the equation.

Mr. Hudak: Strange.

Mr. Runciman: Yes, passing strange, and concerning at the time.

Mr. Wilson: Makes you wonder what their priorities are.

Mr. Runciman: Well, then they almost immediately disbanded the Ontario security council, with people like Inkster and MacKenzie, who were essentially volunteering their time to provide solid advice.

Mr. Hudak: Why would they do that?

Mr. Runciman: I don’t know why they’ve done that. I think the minister said publicly that these are responsibilities of the federal government; the province shouldn’t be playing a role here. Well, I would strongly disagree with that, especially with the largest city in the country here, the city of Toronto, the subway system, the vulnerabilities that exist in this city; and the capital of the country, Ottawa, and the potential for attacks in that community as well. We should be participating. We should be actively involved.

In the last budget of the Conservative government in 2003, we put an additional \$1 million into the ROPE squad, monies that never flowed, I’m advised—another indication of the lack of interest in anti-terrorism and security issues affecting Ontario.

We also heard stories earlier this year, where the government had decided to gut CISO, dramatically reducing the funding for the Criminal Intelligence Service of Ontario. I’m told just coming in here that because that became public knowledge and concerns were expressed in the media about that, they have backed away from that situation.

My colleague mentioned the North American security perimeter, which is something we strongly advocated for, but were opposed by the federal Liberal government of the day. In fact, I went to Washington to give a speech talking about security issues and the North American security perimeter. We had extreme difficulty with the embassy in Washington, which wanted to edit my speech and remove any references to the North American security perimeter. John Manley was the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time and they were strongly objecting to the Ontario position, as was the Liberal opposition in this Legislature, now the government.

It’s passing strange that now Mr. Manley is in the private sector, he is now a strong advocate for a North American security perimeter.

1750

Mr. Hudak: I think he always was.

Mr. Runciman: I suspect he always was.

I guess that from a Liberal perspective, talking about that kind of co-operation with our friends in the United States is anathema. There's so much entrenched anti-Americanism in the Liberal Party, nationally and provincially, that I guess they can't offend their core by being seen to be supportive of anything that makes common sense with respect to continental security if it involves co-operation with the United States, our best friends and allies in the world. In any event, I thought I should put that on the record as well.

I remember their comments when perhaps I should not have referenced in a scrum that the OPP had indicated there had been a terrorist cell operating in Ontario—at least one. Of course, I was ridiculed by the Liberal opposition for referencing that. The Minister of Health recently described a professional medical organization as terrorists. That's the Liberal perspective on terrorists. He called medical professionals in this province terrorists, and at the same time he and his colleagues were ridiculing me, ridiculing the OPP counter-terrorism unit for indicating that there were terrorist cells operating in Ontario.

I don't know. It's kind of mind-boggling with respect to the way these people address these kinds of issues and then suggest to us that we have to give this legislation quick approval without giving people the opportunity to look at all the implications of some of the individual rights that are going to be removed here and some of the extensive powers that the provincial government of the day will be granted.

I also want to mention Jim Young—I mentioned him earlier—who is now an adviser at the federal level.

Mr. Hudak: We miss him.

Mr. Runciman: We certainly miss him.

He was, I think, the poster boy for public service in the province of Ontario and probably in Canada, probably the most respected public servant to serve the province and the public service of Ontario in the last 30 years—a world-renowned reputation, certainly in the field as a coroner. He has attended many of the most significant disasters we've seen in our time. He was one of the first people there at 9/11; the Swiss Air disaster; he was over to Kazakhstan. He's been all over the world. He went over with the tsunami as well, representing Ontario and Canada—an unbelievable gentleman and so accomplished, one we could all be proud of.

I was proud to work in that ministry with so many fine civil servants, but Dr. Jim Young stood head and shoulders over virtually everyone I've ever worked with in the public service over my 25 years as an MPP. I want to comment on the way he left that ministry, I think under very mysterious circumstances. I certainly don't want to embarrass Jim Young; it's the last thing I would want to do. But I think it is unfortunate that he's no longer in that ministry, and there are very serious questions about why he is no longer in that ministry in my view—the fact that the media speculated that the individual who replaced him, someone whom I like as well, was put into that position because there was some political

threat he might run as a Conservative candidate in the next provincial election.

This is the kind of political mindset that I think operates within the current Liberal government. If indeed that was what happened, it speaks volumes about that government's respect for people like Jim Young who have done such enormously good works for this province, for this country, for so many years.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms. Martel: I just want to follow up with something the member from Leeds–Grenville said with respect to timing. He gave a bit of a history of what the government had asked with respect to this bill and why we had said—both opposition parties—that if we wanted to deal with something with the chief veterinarian of Ontario, then we could deal with that legislation, but we shouldn't be trying to rush this other important piece of work through as well under the guise of trying to deal with a specific scenario that had been identified by the chief veterinarian.

I've heard some Liberal members talk about why we need to do this and we need to do this now. I appreciate that. I pointed out to the minister that this should go to committee again, and I agree with him and I'm glad he's agreed to do that.

With those who would continue to say that this is a rush and needs to be done now and we are living in a state where we don't have an emergency plan, I guess I'd have to point out that the reality is that the bill was introduced on December 15, 2005, by Minister Kwinter. The Legislature did sit for three weeks in February and the beginning of March 2006. I guess if it was such a priority and there was such urgency, I'd have to ask why the government didn't move the bill forward then, because we certainly could have dealt with it on second reading at that time, and we could be moving it to committee at this time. So for those who say we need to rush, rush, rush this and it's terrible that we have a state now where we don't have an emergency plan in Ontario, the reality is we could have dealt with this bill in that three-week period when we sat in February 2006, and it wasn't called by the government.

So what I draw from that is that the government doesn't think it's as critical as some of the backbenchers would purport it to be. I think that there is lots of room for improvement and I hope the committee process that follows second reading will be a process where the significant concerns that have been raised, especially by Justice Campbell, will be dealt with then.

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): As the clock winds down this afternoon on this debate, I'm delighted to have a few minutes to speak on Bill 56.

As the member from Leeds–Grenville commented about leadership during such events as the ice storm of 1998 in eastern Ontario and the blackout, I too had the opportunity of being in a position of leadership, and certainly it wasn't easy.

I had just been elected as the reeve of the new township of South Stormont after amalgamation, and we were flying basically by the seat of our pants in that regard. We came together as a new township, put together an emergency plan, and I think that we have a very strong plan in that community now.

But as we have the global threats these days, especially with the aftermath of 9/11 and all that we read and hear about today of those threats around the world, I think it's very important that we have a comprehensive strategy for emergency powers. I believe this legislation will bring us up to the standard that we see across Canada with regard to other provinces and their leadership with regard to comprehensive strategies for emergency powers. I think that's a very important component of Bill 56.

As we work through this in committee to bring this to finalization, I think we will be a proud Ontario to have in our hands, in our workings in government, a bill that will give us the tools that we require as we face the emergencies of the future. I'm just pleased to have had this opportunity to provide a few words of encouragement.

Mr. Wilson: I just want to commend my colleague Mr. Runciman, the member for Leeds–Grenville, for his comments on Bill 56. Of course, Mr. Runciman has served his community as safety and corrections minister, Solicitor General, corrections, public safety and public security minister, so he knows of what he speaks. He's highly regarded by police forces, our paramedic officers, our emergency measures services people, by our firefighters. Regardless of whether they're the highly unionized associations that speak with him or the chiefs themselves and management, he has an understanding of all sides. He served as a union official many years ago, I believe in the chemical industry. The fact of the matter is, he's highly regarded. He's done a great job.

During his comments tonight, he did raise the point of why the McGuinty Liberals got rid of the Ontario security council, which had such distinguished citizens as Major-General MacKenzie and Norman Inkster, former head of the RCMP, on it. I think it's strictly politics. I think Mr. Runciman alluded to that during his comments. It's too bad, because those people aren't political. All parties have asked Norman Inkster to look into things. For example, I hired him after he'd retired from the RCMP, when I was health minister, to look into health care fraud. The federal Liberals have asked him to look into different things. Although he did run as a Conservative candidate one time, we've all asked Major-General MacKenzie—almost all political stripes—to investigate things. Yet they kicked these good people off, just for political reasons, and they disbanded the Ontario security council, which was a very important body that

really had just begun to work on many of the problems that have led to Bill 56.

I just want to say a final word about my friend and colleague from Leeds–Grenville. There was no better leadership. I was energy minister during the 1998 ice storm in eastern Ontario, but it was Bob Runciman and Norm Sterling, really, who steered us in the right direction and made sure everyone was pulling on the oars in the right direction. I think, as a government, we came through that particular crisis—which was one of only two that have ever been declared in the province of Ontario, I believe—very well, and it had a lot to do with the leadership of Bob Runciman.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Leeds–Grenville, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Runciman: I appreciate the input of all my colleagues.

I could have spoken on this issue at length, but there's one thing I did want to reference. My colleague from Erie–Lincoln mentioned customs officers being armed. The new federal government is prepared to keep that commitment, and I certainly support that. But one of the things that I raised, and our government supported, back in 1995 relates to gun crime. We hear Mayor Miller talking about increased enforcement. This is passing strange. I appeared before a Senate committee in 1995 as the Solicitor General. I was concerned about the long gun registry being brought in by the federal Liberal government. We projected at the time—and this was not a political projection; it was the officials within the Ministry of the Solicitor General—this was going to cost taxpayers over \$2 billion, and it has proven to be quite accurate. Others were suggesting that this was going to cost that much money and not have any real impact in terms of curtailing gun crime in Canada. One of the suggestions we made, in terms of an investment, to really have an impact on gun crime was using those monies for front-line police officers across the country, but also initiating a border patrol across the country. If we had done that, I think we would have had a real impact on the flow of illegal weapons across the US-Canada border.

Of course, we've had Liberals who have stood up—including Mr. McGuinty and all his colleagues who are now sitting in the government benches—who were very supportive of this wasteful long gun registry, but then they yammer about guns coming across the US-Canada border. When they had an opportunity to support real, effective measures, they refused to do so.

The Deputy Speaker: It being past 6 of the clock, and since Emma and Adam are waiting for Grandpa for dinner, this House is adjourned until 10 of the clock on March 30.

The House adjourned at 1804.

Continued from overleaf

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Mercredi 29 mars 2006

PREMIÈRE LECTURE

Loi de 2006 portant prorogation du délai d'appel, projet de loi 85, <i>M. Duncan</i>	
Adoptée	2500

DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Partage des recettes avec les Premières nations	
M. Caplan	2500
M. Ramsay	2501
M. Miller	2502
M. Bisson	2503
Emploi des jeunes	
M. Bentley	2501
M. Jackson	2502
M. Marchese	2503

DEUXIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 2006 modifiant des lois en ce qui a trait à la gestion des situations d'urgence, projet de loi 56, <i>M. Kwinter</i>	
Débat présumé ajourné	2536

CONTENTS

Wednesday 29 March 2006

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Children's services	
Mrs. Munro.....	2497
Conant family	
Ms. Marsales.....	2497
Brockville General Hospital	
Mr. Runciman.....	2497
Transportation	
Mr. Wong.....	2498
Property taxation	
Mr. Yakabuski.....	2498
Women's issues	
Ms. Horwath.....	2498
Ontario budget	
Mrs. Mitchell.....	2498
Mr. Oraziotti.....	2499
Robert Costall	
Mr. Mauro.....	2499

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

Standing committee on government agencies	
The Speaker.....	2500
Report deemed adopted.....	2500

FIRST READINGS

More Time to Appeal Act, 2006, <i>Bill 85, Mr. Duncan</i>	
Agreed to.....	2500
Mr. Duncan.....	2500

MOTIONS

Private members' public business	
Mr. Caplan.....	2500
Agreed to.....	2500

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

First Nations revenue sharing	
Mr. Caplan.....	2500
Mr. Ramsay.....	2501
Mr. Miller.....	2502
Mr. Bisson.....	2503
Youth employment	
Mr. Bentley.....	2501
Mr. Jackson.....	2502
Mr. Marchese.....	2503

ORAL QUESTIONS

Ontario budget	
Mr. Hudak.....	2504
Mr. McGuinty.....	2504, 2505
Mr. Sterling.....	2505
National child benefit supplement	
Mr. Hampton.....	2506
Mr. McGuinty.....	2506
Ms. Papatello.....	2507
Property taxation	
Mr. Hampton.....	2507
Mr. McGuinty.....	2507
Mr. Hudak.....	2508
Mr. Duncan.....	2508
Ontario Human Rights Commission	
Mr. Hampton.....	2508
Mr. Bryant.....	2508
Agriculture funding	
Mr. Wilkinson.....	2509
Mrs. Dombrowsky.....	2509
Northern Ontario	
Mr. Miller.....	2510
Mr. Bartolucci.....	2510
Education	
Mr. Marchese.....	2510
Mr. Kennedy.....	2510
Social assistance	
Mr. Ramal.....	2511
Ms. Papatello.....	2511
Democratic renewal	
Mr. Prue.....	2512
Mrs. Bountrogianni.....	2512
Mr. Gerretsen.....	2512
Energy conservation	
Ms. Mossop.....	2513
Mrs. Cansfield.....	2513

PETITIONS

Landfill	
Mr. Sterling.....	2513
Municipal restructuring	
Mr. Prue.....	2513
Mr. Hardeman.....	2516
Special care homes	
Mr. Milloy.....	2513
Organ donation	
Mr. Miller.....	2514
Mr. Yakabuski.....	2514
Mr. Arnott.....	2515

School bus safety

Mr. Parsons.....	2514
------------------	------

Long-term care

Mr. Levac.....	2514
Mr. Leal.....	2515

Identity theft

Mr. Ruprecht.....	2515
-------------------	------

Cancer treatment

Mr. Wilson.....	2515
-----------------	------

Community mediation

Mr. Fonseca.....	2516
------------------	------

SECOND READINGS

Emergency Management Statute Law Amendment Act, 2006,

Bill 56, Mr. Kwinter

Mr. Kwinter.....	2516, 2520
Mr. Balkissoon.....	2518
Mr. Arnott.....	2519, 2525
Ms. Martel ...	2520, 2524, 2529, 2531, 2535
Mr. Leal.....	2520
Mr. Martiniuk.....	2520
Mr. Wilson.....	2521, 2525, 2536
Mr. Berardinetti.....	2524
Mr. Fonseca.....	2525
Mr. Marchese.....	2526, 2529
Mr. Ramal.....	2528
Mr. Hudak.....	2528, 2532
Mr. Delaney.....	2529
Mr. Wilkinson.....	2530, 2532
Mr. Miller.....	2531
Mr. McMeekin.....	2532
Mr. Runciman.....	2533, 2536
Mr. Brownell.....	2535
Debate deemed adjourned.....	2536

OTHER BUSINESS

Visitors

Ms. Matthews.....	2499
Mr. Kormos.....	2499

Answers to written questions

Mr. Wilson.....	2504
Mr. Duncan.....	2504

Continued overleaf