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Wednesday 10 May 2006

Mercredi 10 mai 2006

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 10 May 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 10 mai 2006

*The House met at 0900.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT
(NUTRITION STANDARDS IN
SCHOOLS), 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR
L'ÉDUCATION (NORMES ALIMENTAIRES
DANS LES ÉCOLES)

Mr. Klees moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 93, An Act to amend the Education Act / Projet de
loi 93, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member
has 10 minutes to make his presentation.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm very pleased to
rise in support of this bill. I look forward to this debate.
At the outset, I want to acknowledge the work of Nupur
Dogra, a grade 9 student from the Iroquois Ridge High
School in Oakville, who is here in the gallery with us
today, with her father, Rakesh, and her mother, Mukta. I
understand as well that she has with her today visitors,
her aunt and uncle, as well as a cousin, and her teacher,
Monique Gazan, who I want to acknowledge.

The reason I want to acknowledge Nupur and her
teacher and her classmates is that this bill is before us
today because of the work and the inspiration of Nupur
Dogra. It came about as a result of the initiative of the
CBC's Making the Grade program, inspired by the Leg-
islature's very own Mr. Mike Wise, who we all know in
this place as someone who is probably one of the most
even-minded reporters in the media today. Through his
inspiration of trying to get young people involved and
giving them an opportunity to become involved in the
political process, we have before us a bill that was first
introduced in the House a few weeks ago for first
reading. Now we're here, and this special session of the
Legislature is debating this bill.

This bill before us will do three things. First of all, it
will address the issue of nutrition in our schools. The
initiative that Nupur has brought to us here is really
designed to ensure that young people across the province
have the opportunity to have available in their cafeterias
food that is healthy and that will contribute to their long-
term health.

The first thing that this bill does is "require every
pupil in every school year who attends a school under the
jurisdiction of the board to receive instruction that the
board provides on nutrition standards that it considers
necessary for healthy eating, which shall include instruc-
tion on Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating and
Canada's Guidelines for Healthy Eating, both published
by Health Canada as they are amended from time to
time."

That is section 7.3 of this act. This is incredibly im-
portant, because what we want to do is ensure that young
people, of their own choice, learn to make good decisions
in terms of the kind of food they eat and the kind of
habits they develop in their own personal lives.

The second issue that is addressed in this bill, under
7.4, is the establishment of a committee within each
school "composed of the persons that the board appoints
to advise the board on what nutrition standards should
form part of the subject matter of the instruction
described in" the previous paragraph.

Finally, the third thrust of this bill is that "if the board
operates a cafeteria in a school under its jurisdiction for
the use of the staff and the pupils," then there must be a
posting in the cafeteria of Canada's Food Guide to
Healthy Eating and Canada's Guidelines for Healthy
Eating, both published by Health Canada as they are
amended from time to time. That is the essence of this
bill.

I want to refer to the comment that was made by
Nupur in the preamble, in the leadup to this legislation. I
want to quote Nupur in terms of her motivation: "1.6
billion dollars is going toward treating obesity-related
illnesses. This bill will help make a difference by posi-
tively affecting our society's economy by spending less
money to treat these diseases. Healthier choices mean a
healthier future. This is a win-win situation. Everyone
benefits from this."

I want to especially draw attention to the fact that this
bill isn't before us because the Minister for Health
Promotion or the Minister of Education or any of us as
legislators decided that we want to impose on students in
this province these guidelines. We know that this is a
very positive initiative, but what is especially unique
about this bill is that it was initiated by a student, by
someone who, by virtue of interacting with peers, had the
vision and recognized that something has to be done.
This is all about ensuring that our cafeterias within our
schools and our school system are first of all providing
the education in terms of the standards that are necessary
for healthy lives. It is then about ensuring that the food

that's provided within our cafeterias is such that it is going to promote healthy lifestyles and ensure the health of our young people.

0910

Nupur has done an outstanding job—I want to acknowledge her efforts again—beyond the crafting of the bill. I had the pleasure of working with her in terms of searching out the specifics of the legislation, and I want to acknowledge the work of legislative counsel in terms of their support as well. Beyond this, once we had the bill introduced, Nupur went to work in her school and across the province, designing petitions that young people and adults across the province signed, and we read a number of those petitions into the record here in the House.

I have a letter as well, addressed to Norm Miller, the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. This came from the school nutrition action committee at Bracebridge and Muskoka Lakes Secondary School. They write: “We are writing to encourage your support of Bill 93.” They go on to enclose a petition that was signed by many individuals in their school.

I want to read into the record a letter I received from the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario, referring to Nupur Dogra’s bill and commending her for her initiative as well: “The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario is increasingly concerned about unhealthy eating habits among children and youth. The current lifestyle of Canadian children is resulting in an upsurge of type 2 diabetes, heart disease and stroke by the time they reach their 30s as it is currently estimated that one in four children (26%) are either overweight or obese.

“The Heart and Stroke Foundation is working hard to help create a healthier society. The foundation has committed itself to take a leadership role to lobby for health conscious public policy and to improve nutrition.”

It goes on to say, “With students like Nupur, taking an active role in promoting a healthy lifestyle and more nutritious choices in the school system, it will assist in our goal to raise awareness regarding the detrimental effects of an unhealthy diet and lack of physical activity on our children....

“The HSFO is pleased to support your bill,” and they’re prepared to do whatever it takes to ensure effective implementation of this legislation.

I want to encourage all members—I’m pleased to see the Minister of Health Promotion here today; I look forward to hearing his remarks, and I trust we will have his support and the support of all members of the House for this important legislation.

Once again, I commend Nupur for her initiative—the entire class. It is encouraging to see young people involved in the political process. I think one of the things this exercise has done, through the assistance of the CBC, is ensure that not only young people but everyone in this province understands that the political process is not mysterious. It simply takes individuals who have an interest, who are prepared to put action to their initiative.

We stand here before the Legislature debating a bill, but I’m also optimistic that we have before us a bill that

will be enacted by this Legislature and implemented by the government of the day to ensure that our young people in this province eat healthy and remain healthy.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I appreciate the opportunity to participate in the debate, and I’d like to welcome our guests to the Legislature today. I’d like to thank Ms. Dogra for the initiative she has shown to deal with what is a very serious problem of childhood and adolescent obesity by trying to ensure that schools become much more healthy-eating friendly and by enabling students to make healthier choices.

I support the intent of the bill. I won’t go through the details; they’ve already been outlined by Mr. Klees. But what I did want to put on the public record this morning is the crisis we are facing with respect to childhood and adolescent obesity in this province and, indeed, right across Canada, and secondly, some other recommendations that have been made by other groups and organizations to deal with this matter, which I think the government should take into account over and above the bill that we hope is going to be passed at some point today.

Let me deal first with the problem. In her 2004 report, the chief medical officer of health, Sheela Basrur, pointed out that obesity among children ages seven to 13 tripled between 1981 and 1996. Unhealthy weights are responsible for a dramatic rise in type 2 diabetes, and contribute to heart disease, stroke, hypertension and some cancers. Obesity cost the Canadian economy \$2.7 billion and Ontario’s health care system \$1.6 billion in 2000-01.

Also from her report, which was released in November 2004, she made a couple of additional points that I want to put on the record. First, “According to a study of Canadian youth, students’ daily breakfast consumption declines as they moved from grade 6 to 10. For girls, the increase in ‘breakfast skipping’ was dramatic between grades 6 to 8; at all grade levels, fewer girls than boys reported eating breakfast every day.” That’s important because, “Weight is affected not only by what we eat, but by when and where we eat.... skipping breakfast is associated with overweight and obesity.”

Secondly, “Weight is also affected by how active people are. Over the past few decades, people have become more sedentary and spend more time watching television and using the computer. According to Statistics Canada (2003), Ontarians age two and up spend almost 21 hours a week watching TV. Children ages two to 11 watch an average of 14.5 hours a week, while youth (12 to 17 years of age) spend approximately 14 hours a week watching TV. This does not include the time spent playing video and computer games or using the Internet. The amount of time Canadian children spend playing video games is among the highest in the world.” So not only do we have a serious problem with respect to nutrition, but we’ve got a serious problem that our young people are not leading active lives, and that, in fact, is contributing to their weight problems.

Let me deal with this document put out by the Ontario Medical Association in October 2005. It was a position

paper entitled *An Ounce of Prevention or a Ton of Trouble: Is there an Epidemic of Obesity in Children?* The OMA pointed out in the document, "Obesity during childhood increases the risk of adult obesity. 40% of obese seven-year-olds and 70% of obese adolescents go on to become obese adults. Only 25%–40% of juvenile obesity can be linked to genetic heritability, leaving over half of childhood obesity relating to environmental factors. Obesity in adults is linked to greater health risks, including the increased incidence of coronary disease and type 2 diabetes, although it has been found that increased activity can mitigate these negative effects. Given the propensity for obesity to become a lifelong issue, and because treatment for childhood obesity is only variably successful, obesity prevention is key." That means much more active young children, much more active adolescents and much-improved nutrition, which we are regrettably not seeing, either in the province or, frankly, across Canada.

Let me look at this document that came from Statistics Canada. It was done by Margot Shields. It's called *Measured Obesity: Overweight Canadian Children and Adolescents*. These were the findings from the Canadian community health survey: "In 2004, 26% of children and adolescents ... were overweight or obese; 8% were obese.

"For adolescents aged 12 to 17, increases in overweight and obesity rates over the past 25 years have been notable; the overweight/obesity rate of this ... group more than doubled, and the obesity rate tripled.

"Children and adolescents who eat fruit and vegetables five or more times a day are substantially less likely to be overweight or obese than ... those whose fruit and vegetable consumption is less frequent.

"For children aged 6 to 11 and adolescents aged 12 to 17, the likelihood of being overweight or obese tends to rise as time spent watching TV, playing video games or using the computer increases."

Finally, "Canadian adolescent girls are significantly less likely than American adolescent girls to be overweight/obese."

Those are some of the statistics with respect to the problem that's staring us in the face, not only in this province but right across the country. We need a strategy that is quite broad and quite extensive to try to deal with that. Certainly the bill that is before us will go some long way to promoting health and better nutrition in our school system, but I think there are a number of other things we can be doing at school, at home and in the community that we need to be considering if we're really going to deal with what is an epidemic, and deal with it head-on.

0920

On November 26, 2003, the Ontario Public Health Association wrote to the former Minister of Education, Gerard Kennedy, and made these types of suggestions to the minister with respect to what else could be done. They said the following, and I'm quoting:

"Local public health units across the province are addressing school nutrition issues in a variety of ways:

"Many are developing handbooks and guides for schools and school boards to promote the development of policies and guidelines related to food and nutrition.

"Others are working on specific issues, such as vending machines; in Ottawa, the local public health unit is conducting a pilot of Fuel to Excel vending machines with an assortment of nutritious snacks, including milk, yogurt and cheese. This initiative is still in its early stages, but may prove to be a viable alternative to traditional vending machine choices of pop and chips.

"The Eat Smart! school cafeteria award program—primarily applicable to secondary schools with food service facilities. School cafeterias can receive an award of excellence if they meet standards related to nutrition/healthy food choices, as well as food safety. This program is administered locally by the public health units and supported provincially through the Nutrition Resource Centre at the Ontario Public Health Association.

"The FoodShare salad bar program (Toronto) offers schools a child-sized salad bar stocked with fruits, vegetables, grain products and a daily source of protein so kids can create a healthy lunch. So far, this project has been successful and will hopefully be offered to more schools in the next year."

So, over and above what's included in Bill 93, here are some other good suggestions that have been made by public health units—the public health unit association in particular—that could be expanded to schools right across the province, which would in fact promote healthy choices, give healthy choices to students at school, and promote much better nutrition choices as well.

There are some recommendations that were made as well in March 2004, in a document called *Call to Action: Creating a Healthy School Nutrition Environment*. This was a document prepared by the Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health school nutrition work group steering committee. They made nine recommendations or have included nine elements that they think are fundamental to healthy school nutrition environments, and I want to go through some of the nine elements that they have listed.

"1. Food and nutrition policies to support healthy eating:

"The development and dissemination of a coordinated school nutrition policy is fundamental to providing the framework for a healthy school nutrition environment.

"A school nutrition policy allows for consistent healthy eating messages in the school environment. This will have a positive long-term effect on both the risk of chronic diseases and the effect of diet on health, growth and intellectual development....

"2. Nutrition education for students:

"Nutrition education contributes to improved dietary practices that affect the health, growth and intellectual development of children and youth....

"A minimum of 50 hours of nutrition education per elementary school year is necessary to impact behaviour....

“3. Nutrition education for staff provided by registered dietitians:

“Registered dietitians have unique skills and expertise in nutrition education.

“Training in nutrition can help gain teacher support for nutrition education and increase the extent to which teachers will implement the curriculum....

“4. Healthy, reasonably priced and culturally appropriate food choices available in schools:

“Nutrition education in the classroom is undermined in schools when snack bars, school stores and vending machines promote the sale of food and beverages with minimum nutritional value. For example, soft drink vending machines are a contradiction to any healthy eating program....

“Healthy habits are taught in the classroom, but the effect is diluted when students receive candy as rewards, or when freedom to choose means soft drinks and sweets.”

In addition to that, “When the price of fruit and vegetables was lowered in a school cafeteria, there was a significant increase in fruit and vegetable consumption in that cafeteria.”

“5. Positive role modelling of healthy eating by school staff:

“Children and youth who see teachers eating healthy foods are much more likely to eat well.

“Teachers are found to be trusted sources for nutrition” and healthy choices.

“Elementary school teachers have a potentially greater influence on a child’s health than any other group outside of the home....

“6. Student, parent and community education about healthy eating:

“Students are more likely to adopt healthy eating behaviours if they receive healthy eating messages through multiple channels,” including home, school, community and the media, “and from multiple sources,” including parents, peers, teachers, health professionals and the media....

“7. School nourishment programs:

“School nourishment programs improve students’ cognitive performance and their educational achievement....

“8. Safe food practices and allergy-safe environment:

“Providing a safe food environment will decrease the risk of food-borne illnesses and protect students with life-threatening allergies,” for example, to peanuts or nuts.

Finally,

“9. Appropriate scheduling of nutrition breaks:

“Lunches should be scheduled so that recess is not competing with mealtimes. Research shows that children eat less if they are eager to go outside for recess.

“Allowing students a minimum of 20 minutes to socialize with others at lunch provides a break in routine and refreshes them for afternoon classes.”

Those were some of the elements that were put forward by the Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals, and these should be included in changes that we

want to make to ensure we are really promoting nutrition in our schools.

Sheela Basrur, in her report, talked about things that school boards could be doing as well to promote healthier eating:

(1) Assess school environments—cafeterias, vending machines, opportunities for phys-ed, fund-raising and special food days—develop plans to create a healthy school environment, and monitor progress.

(2) Promote healthy eating by developing guidelines for foods available in Ontario’s school cafeterias, which this bill will do, including nutrition in the curriculum and integrating new material on Canada’s labelling system, and ensure teachers receive appropriate training to teach nutrition.

(3) Establish the foundation for lifelong physical activity by providing quality daily phys-ed, ensuring phys-ed classes are taught by teachers trained in physical education, providing daily physical education opportunities through active recess and lunch programs and intramural activities, and educating children about the benefits of regular physical activity.

(4) When building or retrofitting schools, include features that support physical activity and healthy eating, such as bicycle racks, active and safe routes to school, adequate separate indoor facilities to support quality daily physical exercise and activity, and kitchen facilities and adequate space for students to eat lunch.

Those are some other improvements that we should be making and need to be making to support some of the initiatives in Bill 93.

Finally, do nutrition programs work? There was a great article that was released February 2005 by CBC Health and Science. It looked at a number of schools in Halifax where there were nutrition programs in place. In those schools where full nutrition programs were in place, in Nova Scotia’s Annapolis Valley, those schools and those students fared the best in terms of having a nutrition program and ensuring that they were eating properly. In that particular area and those schools, students had obesity rates that were 72% lower than those of students who attended schools without a nutrition program.

So it can be done. It should be done. The province, indeed the country, is facing a crisis with respect to both child and adolescent obesity. The recommendations in Bill 93 would go some way in ensuring that we have adequate choices and have schools where there is a foundation for nutrition, but I hope the government would also consider some of the other suggestions that I’ve made to really encourage that even more. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: I’m pleased to recognize the Minister of Health Promotion.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): It’s my pleasure on behalf of our government and our government caucus to stand in support of Bill 93, which has been graciously introduced by the honourable member from Oak Ridges. I want to take a moment to

thank Nupur Dogra from Iroquois Ridge High School in Oakville. I had the opportunity to meet Nupur several months ago, and I think this is an historic occasion for us in the Legislature. It's the first time that a high school student has helped to craft a piece of legislation that is being debated on the floor of the Ontario Legislature. I think young Nupur Dogra from Oakville deserves our support, our thanks and our encouragement, because this is an important piece of legislation, and while it falls under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Education, as Minister of Health Promotion, I am very supportive of any ideas that are brought forward to this place that can help with the challenge that the honourable member from Nickel Belt spoke of with respect to obesity in this province and this country.

0930

There's been a 300% increase in obesity rates amongst children in the last 25 years. It is a challenge that is not going away. I believe we have a golden opportunity through this initiative and other initiatives that our ministry is going to be bringing forward in conjunction with the Minister of Education over the course of the next several months.

The fact of the matter is that this legislation, Bill 93, deals with three specific aspects, one of which is to provide greater information so that students can make informed choices when going to the school cafeteria. We've done some good work as a government. We have banned junk food in vending machines, for instance, which has been well received. We've brought in 20 minutes of daily physical activity in elementary schools as well. We have worked with a company in Ottawa called Fuel To Xcell, which is a pilot program for vending machines to provide healthier choices for individuals in high schools.

Just on a personal note, when I was a high school student at Thornlea Secondary School, I had a television show, a cable TV show, in Richmond Hill, and I brought in a television camera because I was upset with the quality of food in our school cafeteria. In fact, during nutrition week, every single day of nutrition week, they were serving French fries. I discovered through searching school records that the school cafeteria company was not following the guidelines they'd agreed to. As a result of this television show that I did as a teenager, we made significant changes in that high school cafeteria. I believe that Nupur is following in that tradition of youth activism, of getting involved in the advocacy through CBC, and I thank Mike Wise for his initiative in bringing this piece of legislation to the floor of the House.

I look forward to voting for it. I thank Nupur, I thank the CBC and I thank all of the students who've been involved in Making The Grade. Merci beaucoup.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Bill 93, nutritional standards in schools: That's an interesting bill. Iroquois Ridge High School—it came from Oakville, which is in my riding. I'm very proud of the students and teachers who brought this bill forward, especially Nupur Dogra. Thank you very much for bringing it forward. It's a great

initiative. Of course, we in Halton expect great things, so you're just following in a long tradition.

It's a very important piece of legislation and deserves to be passed. Good eating habits and nutritional standards can form a lifetime of habits. That can result in a healthier population. Of course, a healthier population is less dependent on our health care system, which is under great stress. It also provides a much, much better quality of life. The people who really enjoy life are people who are healthy and fit and who eat well.

There are three simple parts to this bill.

This bill, if passed, will ensure that students receive instructions on nutritional standards based on the Canada Food Guide to Healthy Eating and Canada's Guidelines for Healthy Eating. They'll receive that instruction each and every year.

The second part of the bill establishes a committee of the board of education to advise which standards should form part of the subject matter. I think it would be very important to ensure that there is student representation on that advisory board. After all, it was students who brought this bill forward and it is students who will be most affected by this piece of legislation.

The third part of the bill requires schools to post copies of Canada's Food Guide and the Guidelines to Healthy Eating in the cafeteria as a constant reminder of the learning process that students achieved through their high school careers.

This piece of legislation is a well-thought-out bill. It involves three pieces within the legislation, and those three pieces mesh together very well, much like a three-legged stool. If you're missing a piece, if you're missing one leg off a three-legged stool, it gets very wobbly. This piece of legislation is tied together tightly and forms a very solid three-legged stool or a very solid piece of legislation.

All too often in our society, we hear of problems of eating habits that lead to unhealthy lifestyles in young people and quite often not-so-young people, but certainly in the middle-aged and aged of our population, those eating habits were developed in their formative years. Problems such as obesity, which we all know forms all kinds of problems with our heart and our circulatory system and leads to strokes, is something that I think every adult is aware of, and wishes that they had had a healthier eating regime perhaps established earlier in life so they would be able to avoid many of those problems. I myself am one of those people who seem to be constantly on a diet, although I count myself lucky, living in the world we do, that I get up in the morning hoping that I can eat less, whereas most of the world gets up hoping they can eat something. If we're going to have a problem, we certainly have the best of problems.

The second problem that we hear a lot about is anorexia, which, strangely, leads to the same kinds of problems—heart disease, strokes, circulatory problems and a much shortened life. Establishing healthy eating habits that will stay with us throughout our life is important, and the time to teach those healthy eating habits is in the formative years, in the school years.

I'd like to congratulate the students, Nupur especially, for the research they did and for thinking this bill through. Those three pieces of this legislation didn't just happen by accident. The first one fell into place, they thought of the second one, and they needed the third one to tie it all together. So it's a very well thought out piece of legislation. Let me say that there are other pieces of legislation that come before this House that aren't nearly as well thought out. They don't seem to have the logical consequences of the actions thought out as clearly as this bill does, so I congratulate you on that.

I also congratulate your teacher, Ms. Gazan, who obviously supplied some motivation in this area. She obviously supplied guidance in this area as well. For teachers and students together, they have persevered to get this job done and to bring this bill before the Legislature: the first time in the history of this place, since 1867, that a bill such as this has come before this place. I'm sure that this bill will be one of the highlights for the entire class, and especially Nupur, of their school days. Many years from now, she can look back and say, "I brought a bill before the Ontario Legislature." That's something that very, very few people will ever be able to say. So congratulations to the students, to the teachers and to everyone who brought this through, and I can assure you that I'll be here to vote for this bill.

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I want to congratulate Nupur Dogra as well, her teacher, parents, friends and those who helped with this proposal, and the member who is bringing it forward. I also want to say to the member from Nickel Belt, I thought your suggestions and quality of presentation were very well done this morning.

Because of the shortness of time that I have, which is only three minutes or less, I won't get into the detail. I know there are three areas. I'd like to offer the member a few points that he might want to clarify in his wrap-up or look at in committee.

It seems to me that there's some requirement for what kind of instruction we are talking about. How do boards implement it? Is it introduced in health and hygiene classes? Are those elective? Are those required? At what grades do we begin this? Is it to be in classes in itself, or in conjunction with other classes?

For the advisory committees, what are the qualifications of members? Do they employ nutritionists? Do they employ others who can provide advice on this?

Are the positions of nutritional standards solely from Canada's food guide? I would suggest to you that, in the nutritional field, there's a lot of challenge to Canada's food guide and what it lays out in its dietary balance of red meat, etc. That should be considered as not the be-all and end-all and the apex of what is the best of nutritional diets.

So there are many questions about this.

Along the same lines as your bill, I would like to acknowledge, as has the member from Nickel Belt and the Minister of Health Promotion, the program Fuel to Xcell. I won't go into it because it has been described

twice already. Actually, I believe it started in my riding and has moved to numerous schools throughout. What has gone on is alternatives to vending machines, while still making some money for schools that use this for certain extracurricular activities and that kind of thing. The program was piloted and currently is in over 40 schools in the Ottawa area. In my riding of Ottawa Centre, the healthy schools plan that was implemented in 2004 eliminated junk food etc.

Nutrition plays an important role in education and so does physical education. Teaching nutrition in schools reinforces good parenting practices at home. It also addresses the whole balance of what constitutes a healthy human being: body, mind and spirit.

My time is up. I wish I had more. Congratulations. I will be supporting the bill.

0940

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): It's my pleasure to join in this special debate on the Making the Grade program and to support Bill 93, the Education Amendment Act (Nutrition Standards in Schools), 2006.

In the past few years, we've seen a huge increase in obesity in our children. In fact, obesity rates have tripled over the past two decades. This is a huge problem. As the member from Halton pointed out, when you have people who are obese in their youth, it tends to be something that goes on throughout their whole lives. I have a study here which was sent to me that bears out that fact, and I'd just like to quote from it, if I can find the right spot here. I may have to come back to that.

I think the member from Halton made a very good point in that these habits that are established in our youth are very often carried out throughout our whole life, and many other problems come from that, in particular, the cost to our health system: \$1.6 billion to mend preventable obesity-related illnesses.

I want to get on the record in the short time that I have to speak to this bill today a letter I received from the school nutrition action committee of the Bracebridge and Muskoka Lakes Secondary School in my riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka. They wrote an excellent letter, and it says:

"To Norm Miller:

"We are writing to encourage your support of Bill 93, the Education Amendment Act (Nutrition Standards in Schools), 2006. The Bracebridge-Muskoka Lakes school nutrition action committee ... applauds Nupur Dogra for taking this initiative and introducing this bill to legislation.

"It is time to address the poor eating habits of Ontario children and youth. Overweight in young people due to poor nutrition and lack of physical activity is identified as one of the greatest health challenges and risk factor for chronic disease—one that may soon overtake tobacco as the leading cause of preventable death and disease.

"Our committee is comprised of teachers, school administrators, school board trustees, food service staff, parents, students and public health staff. We joined together to address a common concern in our school ... the

overwhelming accessibility of unhealthy food choices available all day long in schools for students and staff.

“Our committee in conjunction with our food service company Aramark is working to make healthy food choices more available, more affordable and more visible in our cafeteria and vending options. We have made great strides during this school year but we need the help of Bill 93 to make nutrition standards compulsory and consistent in schools as well as increase the student knowledge on healthy eating.

“We invite you to visit our school cafeteria to see firsthand what we have been doing to make changes to the food choices and what obstacles are still in our way.

“We are asking for your support of the proposed Bill 93. This bill is one step toward improving the health of Ontario students by assisting in creating a healthy school nutrition environment.”

That was sent Steve Kinnear, teacher and chair of the BMLSS school nutrition action committee. I certainly will be supporting that.

I also received an excellent petition showing support for this bill with many signatures from Bracebridge and Muskoka Lakes Secondary School. It was just a copy, so we couldn't deliver it in petitions. I'm looking forward to the original petition coming in the next few days, at which point I'll read it in the Legislature. But it makes the point of how childhood obesity rates have tripled, how we're spending \$1.6 billion on preventable obesity-related diseases, how the Ontario food premises regulation currently only deals with safety policies and not with nutrition and how we need to encourage more nutrition.

In the last 30 seconds I have to speak on this, I would also like, as the aboriginal affairs critic, to point out that this situation with obesity and with the problems related to it, particularly diseases like diabetes, are far higher. I did have a number of studies to back that up, but unfortunately I'm running out of time.

I'd just like to congratulate Nupur and her teacher Monique Gazan on bringing this initiative forward, and I look forward to supporting it.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): It's a great opportunity to stand today to talk about this, but I want to make a couple of points before we get started.

First and foremost, as I've usually done in this place during private members' hour, I will say exactly what I plan to do. To the member from Oak Ridges, I plan to support this bill. I think it's a good bill. I think it's the right thing to do.

Let's move on to the next point, and that is this: This is history-making. The member from Halton made that point and I want to reinforce it. This is history-making. We've got people engaged in the process that only 103 of us ever get a chance to do. We have now extended that and we have expanded our opportunity to have people participate, in a very straight way and a very tangible way, in our democracy. I want to congratulate the CBC, Mike Wise and, in this case, Nupur and her school and teachers and everybody else. This is a great day for this

place. Again, it expresses my opinion that the private members' time is an opportunity for us to speak without the shackles of any party and that allows us to speak to what we believe the people of the province of Ontario are talking about.

This is an important bill, and that's why I'm supporting it, not just because of the democratic movement but because this is a good bill. It talks about what we should be talking about, and that is our health. Without health, without that opportunity for us to be better as human beings, we are going nowhere.

So let me talk about a couple of things. I am very proud of the moment that we, as legislators in private members' time, passed the anaphylaxis bill for students. We are going to be saving lives, under the circumstances, in schools. We are using that as an opportunity to educate people. Bill 33 is on the docket, and I know the member from Oak Ridges has a bill out there as well on organ donation. Bill 33, which I've asked for, is putting organ donation inside the education system, talking about teaching people about how to give organs to save lives. Those are the types of bills that we as legislators should be very proud of, and I'm proud of this bill. I'm proud to look at the member and tell him that he's come up with a bill, through the input of the people that he's expressed—that we're talking about the health of our students.

Let me tell what you this bill isn't. This bill is not restrictive. This bill is not telling people what to eat. They're educating people about what they should be eating. As an educator for 25 years, I can only tell you that this is the direction we should be going. This bill is not assuming the role of the official parent. This bill is not becoming the parent. It's not doing any of the things that at one time people thought the nanny-state government was doing. That's not what this is about. This is about education. This is about leading us to a better path and a better way.

I commend those members in the gallery and their entire team that put this together, and I would encourage us to make this the norm. Let's make this the norm. Let's say this experiment ends up being a success and decide it should continue.

I support the CBC. My first conversations with Mr. Wise, before we even brought it to the House, were guiding him through the process of how we get the schools involved, how we get the legislators to accept it and what process should be used to incorporate hearing more from people about private members' time.

I definitely support this bill, and I encourage the member to use his authority, his ability, to convince everybody else that we should continue down this path for all students across the province to participate in this place, because it opens it up and it makes it a place where they want to be. Thank you very much.

0950

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa—Orléans): There is nothing more important to our caucus than the education, safety and well-being of our youth. That's why we have the Ministry of Health Promotion, and that's why we

have the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. Under Dalton McGuinty's Liberals, \$146 million has been invested annually in order to hire a total of 2,000 additional specialist teachers over the next four years, and part of that focus will be on physical education in our schools.

Under our government, school boards have been directed to provide elementary students with at least 20 minutes of sustained moderate-to-vigorous daily physical activity, and we have allocated \$10.7 million to that. The member for Mississauga East, who was an Olympian, has tried to get that up from 20 minutes to 40 minutes; he's had a private member's bill to that effect.

We've also provided \$20 million to school boards to help them open schools to non-profit community groups to use after hours year-round for fitness programs to make our communities healthier and stronger.

In addition to physical fitness, of course we come to this bill this morning, which is so important. Nupur, you're providing leadership bringing this bill forward, and that's a commendable thing. Good lifestyles, exercise and proper eating were very important in schools when I was young, and that goes back a few years. Fast foods and sugar-filled drinks took over our homes and schools, and we now find that obesity and type 2 diabetes have increased dramatically.

I am particularly proud of what school kids can do. I know that in my own area of Ottawa, there is the Exposé project. High schools in Ottawa submitted 24,000 post-cards to our government—24,000 from just one city—to get the power walls out of retail stores. That change in the legislation was because 24,000 of our youth worked hard to get it.

I like this bill. I'm sure the continued work by youth will lead our government, and incite us as members of Parliament, to legislate change that will improve the lives of young Ontarians. Well done.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It's a pleasure to join the debate today on Bill 93. Many members talked about the content of the bill, and I don't think I have heard anybody who has a view other than that this is very progressive legislation we should take a very serious look at.

I'll also join with my colleague from Halton in saying that a lot of the information we'll hear this morning coming out of this exercise, thanks to the assistance of Mike Wise from CBC, has come from the region of Halton. It's a sign that the public school system and the separate school system in my community are in fine shape. They're producing great students; they've got great teachers and great parents. Certainly I think it says something about the quality of public education, not only in Oakville and the region of Halton but throughout Ontario. Special thanks, of course, to Nupur Dogra, a grade 9 student at Iroquois Ridge High School.

When I talk to young people before they come into the House, I try to prepare them a little bit. I tell them they're going to see a lot of men, they're going to see a lot of grey hair, they're going to see very few women in the House, and they're going to see some balding heads,

mine included, but what they won't see is a lot of young women. What we should be particularly thankful for today is that this initiative comes from a young woman. This was started by a young woman, who, if you read Time magazine this month, is now in fine company. Bill Clinton is saying exactly what you are saying: We need to get serious about nutrition; we need to get serious about the way we treat our bodies as young people, because that's going to pay dividends in the future.

By supporting this bill today, we're allowing it to proceed to committee stage. Any adjustments that need to be made to it, any amendments that could be made to improve it, could be introduced at that point in time. It's wonderful when all the parties are working together. We have to thank the students today for allowing that to happen, for bringing forward such progressive legislation that I think is unarguably some of the best and most comprehensive we've seen in this House. My hat is off to all the students who have been involved, and especially to Ms. Dogra, from grade 9 at Iroquois Ridge, for the wonderful leadership she has shown in this regard.

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I'm of course very delighted, coming from Halton, as the last speaker does and my colleague Mr. Chudleigh, to be celebrating a piece of legislation that has been presented through the hearts and minds of the youth of our province and our community. Special compliments to Nupur Dogra, the student who was responsible for spearheading this, and to Monique Gazan, a teacher who clearly inspires a class to do better and become more involved and therefore become better citizens.

Personally, I also want to acknowledge that we have with us today from Burlington Gennaro Santoro, our legislative page from Rolling Meadows school, my daughter Michelle Jackson, here job-shadowing her father, and her best friend Michelle Millar. We want to thank the CBC for all of what is happening today. I couldn't have picked a better day for my daughter to be job-shadowing me. Ladies, you can stand up.

We all have agreed this is an excellent piece of legislation, and certainly our school system and our public health departments regionally across this province are to be commended, because there is a concerted effort at doing a better job of taking greater responsibility for our own lives—that's essentially what is at stake here. We want to teach young people, at a much younger age, the importance of taking care of themselves so that they can continue to have strong and healthy bodies, live a full life and continue to contribute. The school becomes a repository of this kind of thinking about good citizenship and good self-development.

When I read this, I was very, very pleased, because this wasn't coming from the top down, in effect; it was coming from the bottom up. There are so many incidents to demonstrate over the years the accomplishments of teachers, school boards and public health officials. I know that in Halton, Dr. Bob Nosal provides tremendous leadership in our community. We have grassroots community organizations that I've been involved in over the

years that have developed breakfast programs in our schools to assist children who leave home in the morning with no breakfast and seldom have any kind of meaningful lunch for reasons of poverty or neglect. Yet the school system, the government and regional authorities try to do work to support that.

Again, I'm seeing clear evidence of work and thought and concern being put into this bill.

I also wanted to say that much has been said about issues of obesity leading to heart disease and to forms of diabetes and hypertension and all those other problems. The corollary is those young men and women—predominantly young women—in our schools who for a variety of reasons, whether it's the bombardment of the media and images of what is deemed to be more attractive in our society, are suffering from eating disorders and the challenges of that. These are taking the lives of our young people at a much, much younger age. I want to make sure that that as well becomes part of the awareness and education of our young people.

I also want to put on record the important ongoing work that the teachers' federations, the departments of health and all ministries of all governments of all stripes in making our schools safer and making them more aware of the importance of this.

I remember that many years ago I was approached by Dr. Karen Scully of Burlington, a dermatologist, who brought a program back from California called Slip! Slap! Slop! It was to help kids put on a shirt and put on sunscreen to provide protection from skin cancer. I went to the NDP Minister of Education and presented it to him with Dr. Scully, and it became the program for all schools in Ontario.

These things can happen when they are grassroots and supported by everyone, and I applaud Iroquois Ridge school, the CBC and all those who had a hand in this, especially my colleague from Oak Ridges.

The Acting Chair: That concludes the hour we have for debate on this ballot item. Pardon me; I apologize. The member for Oak Ridges has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Klees: I want to take the two minutes that I have remaining to acknowledge the contribution of my colleagues in the debate. I'm very, very thankful for their advice. The member from Nickel Belt made some very good points regarding some existing programs through which I believe we can extend the intent of this bill. We had some recommendations as well from the member from Ottawa Centre that we will take to heart and look forward to working through in committee.

I want to thank my colleagues as well from Halton, Parry Sound–Muskoka, and Burlington for the points they made about how historical this event today is. More important perhaps even than the bill that's before us is the process and the fact that young people have been engaged in the political process. I believe this is an incredible signal to students, to young people across the province, that we have in this province a political process that is open to their involvement. I believe the Legislature, by creating this special session today, is sending a

signal that we want their engagement, that we welcome their input, welcome their advice.

From that standpoint, I thank members. I have heard the expressions of support from all three political parties. We have here before us a piece of legislation—once again, I want to thank Nupur Dogra for her incredible initiative and the support of her family and her school for allowing her to become someone in this province who truly has made history today. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Now that concludes the hour we have for debate on this ballot item. We will deal with the question on this matter at noon.

1000

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT
(SCHOOL WASTE REDUCTION), 2006
LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR
L'ÉDUCATION (RÉDUCTION DES
DÉCHETS DANS LES ÉCOLES)

Ms Wynne moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 96, An Act to amend the Education Act / Projet de loi 96, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to recognize the member for Don Valley West.

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I'm proud and happy to rise to speak to Bill 96, an Act to amend the Education Act regarding school waste reduction. This bill, if passed, would ensure that, first of all, every classroom in the province has a minimum of two recycling containers—one for paper and one for plastic and aluminum—and secondly, that every school cafeteria has a recycling facility and that the recycling facility clearly indicates which materials are recyclable and where in the facility the recycling materials are to be placed.

Although this bill stands in my name before this Legislature, I want to acknowledge the interesting genesis of the bill and the people whose energy and commitment have brought it before us today.

First of all, let me recognize Mike Wise of the CBC. It was Mike's imagination that led to the development of the concept of Making the Grade and the idea that it would be a useful exercise for students to attempt to influence the legislative process. There's Mike in the gallery. It was Mike's perseverance and that of his colleagues at the CBC who took this project on and allowed it to flourish. I'm sure there were discussions at storyboards about this project more than once. He has created an experience for the students involved in this project, their schools and the students and teachers around the province who have followed this journey, and he is to be commended. Just before I leave Mr. Wise, I want to say how much I value the existence and the work of our national public broadcaster, which would see the intrinsic educational value and merit in a project like Making the Grade. But I'm not here to talk about the CBC.

Secondly, I want to recognize Laura Hudgin, the teacher from Georgetown District High School who has provided support and guidance to the students who are members of the geography club. She intentionally called this the geography club. She was a geography student and she loves geography, so good for her. She allowed the students to talk and debate and settle on this initiative as the one that they believed was important enough to bring to the Ontario Legislature. From my contact with these students, it's obvious that Ms. Hudgin has created an environment that encourages debate and inquiry among her students. But most importantly, I want to acknowledge the geography club students from Georgetown High who are there in the gallery. I'm just going to quickly read their names, because this was a team effort: Kevin Robbie, Hillary Lutes, Joanna Ho, Jenna Misener, Jessica Holburn, Jen McVicar, Calvin Halaig, Dylan Hickson, Chris Dobson, Rob Weber—who I heard on the radio the other day, yesterday, I think—Justin Bravo, Jamie Gelfand, Amanda Stonebrink, Alison Corbett, Jessica Deshane, Samantha Gibson, Erin Gough, Andrew Noble, Scott Welfare. They are all here, but Kody Lyons, Robin McDonald and Ashley Moffatt could not be here. But they've all been part of this project and deserve a lot of credit. Bravo. These students were interested enough both in the substance of the bill and in the legislative process to meet together, settle on the idea for the bill, meet with the reporter and with me, answer our questions and attend the Legislature—twice now—to track the progress of their bill. They deserve a lot of credit, and I'm reasonably certain that each of them—each of you—will take away something of lasting value from this experience that you've shared.

I want to talk about the substance of the bill and then I'll come back briefly to the process. I believe there's no one in this House who can question the need for increased recycling in our ever more consumerist, waste-producing society. The issues surrounding disposal of garbage are at the top of the list of priorities for urban centres around this province and indeed across North America. Diversion of waste from landfill sites is no longer—as it might have been when I was in high school—a nice idea embraced by activist environmentalists. It's a fundamental necessity for cities such as Toronto that have virtually no readily available landfill options.

This past February, our Minister of the Environment, Laurel Broten—who is very supportive of this initiative and whose parliamentary assistant will be speaking to the bill in a moment—spoke to the municipal recycling coordinators in Orangeville. She talked about our need to learn from the natural world and compared a city to a forest. She said, "A city is no different from a forest. It must not consume its resources too quickly. It cannot afford to simply waste what it consumes. That's just not sustainable.... Recycling is one of the fundamental things that we do to protect our air, land and water resources, and the outstanding quality of life that we enjoy in Ontario."

Our waste diversion goal in Ontario is 60%. The realities of expanding growth and growing population create a strain on our natural resources. One of our goals, in order to manage that strain, is to increase the rates of reuse and recycling. Part of that goal must be to expand the municipal blue box program. According to the Ministry of the Environment, waste diversion rates have gone up in the province. More than four million households now have access to recycling. Over the past 10 years, there has been a 74% increase in the total amount of recovered recycled material.

But our work is not done. When the Georgetown students looked at the recycling practices of schools across the province, they discovered that our practices are uneven from school to school and from board to board. Every classroom didn't have the recycling in place and every cafeteria didn't. So they realized that there was more to be done. In fact, the majority of the statistics available on recycling referenced households, not institutions, and the most visible and consistent use of the blue box is on the sidewalk outside single-family dwellings. I know, even from my own riding, that it's much more challenging for people living in multi-residential housing and in institutions to recycle. That's where we need to focus. That culture of recycling, reusing and conserving is something we all want to embrace, but the post-war generation, of which I'm a part, and our children do not have the habits of moderation and restraint that we have to learn. Ontario's track record: We're doing well in comparison to the United States, for example, but we're well behind the Netherlands, Denmark and Belgium. We still generate in the order of 12 million tonnes of solid waste annually in Ontario, and each Canadian throws away approximately half a kilogram of packaging daily.

That's not good enough. The Georgetown students understood that, and they understand that their generation will have to push us. They were the ones who got us started on the blue box program and they're going to have to continue the job.

1010

I sincerely hope that this Legislature passes this legislation and it becomes law, but even if that doesn't happen, if for some reason that doesn't happen, our awareness has been raised. This exercise has not been wasted. The profile of the issue has been raised and I really believe that everyone in this Legislature will be a more attentive advocate because of the work that the students from Georgetown have done.

I want to come back briefly to the process that has brought us to this point. As someone who has spent most of her working adult life in schools in one capacity or another, I believe that as a society we often and frequently underestimate the seriousness of our students. We underestimate their ability; we underestimate our children's ability to take issues seriously and to take part in what we might call adult debates. It's my experience that it's quite often the case that young people are the most able to take part in those debates.

As a politician, I can tell you it's much easier for me to predict and deflect the questions that come at me from another adult or from another politician than it is to predict the questions that grade 5 students will pose, and there's no deflecting those honest, guileless questions: Why don't we fix poverty? Why don't we deal with homelessness? Why don't we clean our water? Those are the questions that young people ask us, and those are the questions that we have to be considering.

That has been the value of this exercise for us as legislators. Students, with the ability to take responsibility for their ideas and with the ability to see a problem clearly and to see a gap, have said, "Why are you not doing something so obvious?" In this case we've said, "Actually, you're right. We should be doing that," so we've come together to do that.

The British educator John Abbott talks about the development of the human brain, especially early adolescence. He maintains that we as a society miss a golden opportunity to educate if we don't allow adolescents to take responsibility and to do real things in order to learn—not a hollow practice, but a real exercise with consequences and inherent rewards. I think Making the Grade has been a perfect example of that kind of exercise.

I hope there have been personal rewards for the students. I hope you have a deeper understanding of the democratic process. You've brought out the best in us in the Legislature. We've come together to debate this issue and we're going to be voting together to support your idea. I hope that at least some of you will consider taking part in the legislative process yourselves, will consider politics. But for the next few years, I hope that you take seriously the issues around you, that you continue to consider seriously the issues that affect your lives. That's what politics is about in the most local sense. That's what leads people, in the best way, to take on politics at either the municipal, the provincial or the federal level.

I'm greatly indebted to the students of Georgetown for allowing me to be part of this exercise. Thank you for your commitment to the environment. I look forward to support from all parties for Bill 96.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I am pleased to be here today to address Bill 96 and to commend the students from Georgetown District High School's geography and eco club who are here today, and to their teacher Laura Hudgin for being here and for initiating the process. It's a wonderful idea and we need to engage more youth in our political process in what we'd like to move forward.

Mike Wise is here from the CBC. This was his brainchild, to make Making the Grade. I know that there were 160 submissions that had to be narrowed down to three. That would probably be a very tough thing to accomplish, to narrow it down to three, because I think we have really bright, innovative students. It's a tremendous chance for these students to learn more about

how legislation evolves and what they can do to contribute to that. So we're all anxious to find ways to encourage young people into this political process, and this is a great opportunity for them.

In the bill I'm debating now, the school waste reduction, it is a requirement of every classroom in Ontario to have at minimum two recycling containers—one for paper and the other for plastic and aluminum—and every cafeteria in Ontario should have a recycling facility that prominently indicates materials acceptable. The classrooms that are to be initiated for these recycling containers are required to have adequate recycling facilities that delineate materials that are acceptable. They're to be properly marked.

I think this is part of engaging and educating our youth. I hear many stories of young people in the schools who get educated and go home and help their parents; they educate their parents on what we'd like to promote. Recycling is certainly one of them. The target is 60% waste diversion in Ontario. I know the dates keep changing for when that is going to be accomplished, but for today this is an initiative we want to move forward on as quickly as possible, and to recognize that the students are right on the mark.

Statistics from an Ipsos Reid poll in 2005 say that "Eight in 10 Ontarians (85%) feel that managing and disposing of our non-recyclable garbage should be a priority for the provincial government. Of those, 47% feel it should be a major priority, and 14% feel it should be a minor priority." But 84% of "Ontarians feel that we should be recycling more than we currently are." I think the students have picked a topic that is very hot and progressive in society. They're hitting what society wants to move toward and they've learned the legislative process. They've got petitions, which I know are posted on the CBC website under Making the Grade. They've done it properly. They have contacted names and they're getting public support. I think those are great initiatives in finding out how this brings attention in the Legislature and how it gets to be foremost of mind.

According to the Environment Canada website, paper and paper products account for more than one third of the materials discarded into Canada's municipal waste stream, and it's estimated that less than one quarter of the six million tonnes of paper and paperboard used annually in Canada is recycled. So it only makes sense to reduce and reuse the large volumes of paper and paper products that are used in the school system. The recycling of paper in schools makes sense to help reduce landfill space. I know that the paper we see in our offices as legislators is enormous, and I have great guilt feelings about all the paper we use. The fact that it is can be used in a recycling process compensates for some of that. The more waste that we reduce, reuse and recycle, the less pressure there will be on our landfills and our precious natural resources.

Waste reduction is everyone's responsibility. The students and teachers of Georgetown District High School have recognized that. I commend them for their

efforts toward waste reduction. They set an example for all of us that we should follow and they have encouraged us to move this forward. I want to thank them today for the opportunity to speak. I know that many of my colleagues want to participate in this debate, Mr. Speaker, so I will thank you for the opportunity and let them carry on.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member from Hamilton West.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and it's Hamilton East.

It's my pleasure to speak to this bill, Bill 96. You'll know that in a little while I'll be introducing a bill as well. I've had the privilege and the honour of working with young people on this project. Members have already commented on the work of Mike Wise from the CBC in his bringing this forward, but of course I wanted to mention that as well.

I was thrilled when I found out which topics generally we would be moving forward with in terms of amplifying the voices of young people in the province. The project does more than just bring these bills forward. I'm going to get more into that in my own remarks later on, but I think it's important to acknowledge that this bill not only brings the issues forward, but it also engages young people in our province in the political process. Certainly I have learned a great deal from them. These young people are very interested and very concerned about what is happening in the province they live in, the province they will one day be responsible for in a more fulsome way.

What I think this bill does particularly is show how important they think it is to be involved in the stewardship of the province at this very time, while they are in high school, and that is extremely laudable. It's something that I think we all have to acknowledge. It's our hope for the future really when you think about our environment specifically.

1020

Having worked a great deal on environmental issues in my own community, coming from a heavily industrialized area of the province, I know that environmental issues are often things that people think are just too big to tackle, that the issues are too massive, that they are too difficult to actually wrestle to the ground. What these young people are telling us is that not only are they not too difficult, not only are they not too huge, not only are they not too unattainable, but that in fact they are prepared to get extremely involved and to ensure that we as legislators are putting the tools in place that they need to be able to participate fully in protecting our environment.

How are they doing it? Well, by Bill 96 which basically requires, demands of school boards the necessity of putting the tools in place within the schools to make sure students have the ability to do the right thing by the environment, to undertake recycling in the schools. I have to say that when I look at the bill, it's very clear that the students want to make sure they are not contributing to our ongoing pressures around garbage, that in fact they

are doing the opposite, that they are helping, that they are doing their part, and that they are doing their part in their own school and are making sure their fellow students across the province are given the same opportunity.

I commend the students for bringing this bill forward because, in my opinion, it is where we have to start. I have a son who is 13 years old and is just finishing grade school, and although they have recycling bins in every classroom, often when I go I go to meetings at the school, not that he generates a lot of unnecessary meetings at the school, but when I go for the open houses and things with my son's teachers, I notice a couple of different things. In some classrooms, the recycling bins are overflowing. Those classrooms are obviously doing a great job in terms of the recycling of paper products. Other classrooms are not so effective at it. So I think that along with this kind of initiative of providing more opportunity for recycling, not only in classrooms but in cafeterias, we need to make sure we are getting the message out there about how important it is.

It's one thing for us as adults to try to tell young people and children, to try to encourage them and get them moving in that direction in terms of recycling, but it's quite another when their own peers, fellow students are setting the example, when the message is coming from colleagues or from other students as opposed to coming from adults. I think that if there is one thing that is of extreme value in this particular process, whether it's about this bill in terms of recycling or whether it's the bill we've already debated in terms of foods in cafeterias, or whether it's the next bill we're going to be debating, the bottom line is that when it's young people speaking to young people, I think the message will be received in a much more positive way from other students who are facing these same kinds of situations in their schools.

The issue of recycling is one that everybody is aware of. In Toronto, of course, it's a heightened awareness because of the garbage that is being trucked out of the city because the solutions still don't exist in terms of dealing with or handling Toronto's garbage. What are the solutions? As we continue to generate more waste, our solutions are basic: landfill, or the other one that is coming down the pike, and people will know this, incineration. I can tell you that from my community's experience, we closed an incinerator not too long ago in our city. It was the largest producer of dioxins in all of Canada, and in my community, the actual community I represent, Hamilton East, residents there have ill health effects as a result of the dioxins that were spewing out of the smoke stacks of SWARU in Hamilton for years and years.

We have higher cancer rates in Hamilton. We have all kinds of health effects. Asthma: As everyone knows, in most communities there is a general trend of increased asthma because of smog, and greenhouse gasses of course are the culprit there. But nonetheless, the issue of incineration is one that I know will be before us in a more full way.

If we are reducing, recycling and composting, and we have broad organics programs community across com-

munity in Ontario, then we have less pressure to undertake solutions that are distasteful to us, like incineration and trying to site or find new landfill opportunities in Ontario. So it comes down to the management of solid waste. What these students are saying is that they are concerned about this. They want to make sure that solid waste is dealt with, and they are going to do their part not only in their own schools, but by bringing this legislation forward and encouraging other students to make sure they are doing it as well, and in fact to require that their school boards partner with them in that endeavour. It's a very important piece.

I want to just end by saying that the students who got involved in this are true leaders and we look forward to the days when we are flipping the channels and we see you in these seats debating legislation in the province of Ontario. So congratulations to everybody who has taken part. I look forward to participating in the debate for the rest of the morning.

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): It is with great pleasure that I rise today to support Bill 96, an initiative, as has already been mentioned, that came from Mike Wise at the CBC. I have to tell you, I worked for 20-odd years in journalism, in newsrooms, and it is not easy getting a story idea through assignment editors, because you're competing with dozens of other ideas and of course all the news of the day. So congratulations to him for pitching this idea and making it a reality, and to the Georgetown High geography club for running with the ball and coming up with something that is tremendously valuable.

I'll tell you why it's valuable, as we've heard from a number of people. I grew up in a culture of waste. When I was growing up, everything we had, every piece of paper, every little mechanical device that we were done with, we threw in the same plastic garbage bag, and it got hauled away by the garbage man and we'd wave and it was all very nice and pleasant. I learned about recycling and reuse through my grandparents and my aunts and uncles who had lived through depressions and wars and who truly understood the value of resources because they went through periods of time when those resources were seriously strained and their value was really recognized and there was rationing. They were given much less to use and they had to use it in a very creative way, and they recycled. I remember my grandmother would always have a large jar of leftover string and elastic bands on the kitchen counter. Everything was saved; everything was reused. Extra pieces of foil were saved. I remember my grandfather—boy, he could really stretch out a paper napkin, let me tell you. It would be there a couple of days and we'd have to tell him, "I think it's time you threw that one out."

We have learned the value of these resources now partly because of the growing demand on them through the growing population. We now understand that our resources are limited and the population is forever growing, so we need to treat them a little bit differently. But we still have a problem in that we have a really

disposable society. You go along the streets and you see all this litter and paper packaging all over the place. These things are still disposable. Some are recyclable, but a lot of people just toss them out when they're done. The answer to the problem really is going to be recycling, and the time to learn it is when you're in school and when you're young. It's the time to learn the intrinsic value of recycling to the sustainability of our society and of our species. In fact, that's what it is. What you are bringing to the table is something that's very sensible, something very real, something very basic but very valuable to the sustainability of us as a species and as a planet.

I thank you very much and applaud all of you who have been involved in this, Ms. Wynne for bringing it forward and giving a great speech this morning, and all the other speakers.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): I'm pleased to rise on Bill 96, the school waste reduction program that is brought to us by the geography club of the Georgetown District High School, another bill this morning that originated from my riding. Two out of three: That's not bad for Halton. Of course, it's what we expect from Halton; we expect the very best. I welcome the geography club here this morning to share in this.

It's an interesting piece of legislation. It speaks to students' concerns over the environment and what we can do to lessen the effects of human habitation on our ecosystem. This bill, if passed, will require boards of education to do two things. One, it will ensure that every classroom has two recycling containers, one for paper and one for plastic and aluminum. This will help divert waste from landfills and also develop lifelong habits.

Personally, I can remember 20 years ago starting the recycling program—I lived in Mississauga for a short time then—and we had one container. Now I'm up to three containers. One of the members from the Georgetown geography club can substantiate this. Justin Bravo is my neighbour, and I'm not sure if he checks out my recycling every other Tuesday morning, but he could. I have three containers out there for those things, and I could easily have five if you wanted to separate out the containers for plastic bottles, metal containers and aluminum containers.

1030

The second thing that this bill requires is for the board to ensure each cafeteria has a recycling facility which clearly indicates which materials are recyclable and where each is to be placed.

This bill, if passed, over time will make some of us think about the consumption culture, how we use things and how we throw them away, as the former speaker just mentioned.

In my grandfather's day, which might be 80 or 100 years ago, there was little waste. What was disposed of often was done in a careless or haphazard way, which could result in future pollution. They did that out of ignorance. They didn't realize or understand the consequences of what their actions were. In my father's day,

say 40 or 50 years ago, the consumption culture was beginning to take off. We were producing dioxins, PCBs, CFCs, and few people sounded any concern about what we were doing to the environment in which we were living.

The first time the warning bells rang for me was in 1961 when Rachel Carson published her famous book *Silent Spring*. Incidentally, that's still a good read. From that time, more and more people in every facet of our society became aware of the habits a careless community had developed and the destructive nature of those consequences. Our grandfathers didn't know. Our fathers began to know. But we in this society do know, and we understand very clearly the consequences of our actions. It is up to us, both the generation that sits in this Legislature and the students in the gallery. It is up to us to begin to carry on the task of first stopping the degradation of our ecosystem and, secondly, of cleaning up the mess. This can't be done overnight, but in this way we could leave an environment in better shape than we found it for our children and our grandchildren.

This bill, in its own way, starts that learning process at an early age, when life habits are formed. It begins the habit of recycling.

I congratulate the students of Georgetown geography club. It's a great initiative to bring forward this bill and to actually have this bill reach the Legislature. It's the first time, I think, in Ontario's history that this has actually happened, and this is something where, when you're my age, or perhaps not quite my age, you will look back on your high school experiences and say, "Yes, we brought a bill before the Ontario Legislature." If you have experience in Legislature activities and bills coming before the Legislature, you'll say, "Holy mackerel, that was really something. Imagine, we did that when we were only kids." This will be an experience that you'll look back on for most of your life, and I think it will be a very positive one, particularly if we see fit in this Legislature to pass this bill, which I will be very pleased to vote for and support in every way I can.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I too appreciate the opportunity to participate in this debate this morning. I want to indicate at the outset that I support the bill that's been put forward by Ms. Wynne. I want to recognize the work that has been done by the students who are here today and congratulate them both on their initiative and on seeing it through in terms of the research that was necessary to bring this forward in a proper way so it could be presented here in the Legislature. I'm glad to see they could join us in the Legislature this morning as well to see the bill debated.

I've also spoken in favour of an earlier bill, Bill 93, and will of course be supporting the next bill that's coming forward by my colleague Ms. Horwath, Bill 95, the Employment Statute Law Amendment Act, which would inform students of their employment rights, also a very important bill in terms of ensuring that young students, students who are going into Ontario workplaces for the first time, have all the information that is

necessary to allow them to make informed choices about the work they are going to do, to make sure they have the training necessary to do the work they have to do and make sure they understand they have the right to refuse to do that work if they feel their employer is putting them into an unsafe work situation. So I appreciate the work that's been done on all three by students from across the province and look forward to seeing these bills passed as well.

Now, this may sound a bit strange, but it does seem strange to me that a bill like this has taken so long to get here, and I say it in this respect: This is not to undermine students. It's not to undermine teachers. It's not to undermine custodial staff, and it's not to undermine board staff. But when you think about it, schools have, for a long time now, been at the forefront of teaching the three Rs to our students.

There certainly was a time when our grandparents—and I can speak very vividly about my grandmother, who was at the forefront of recycling in her kitchen, who had a composter at the bottom of her vegetable garden, who used to use her nylons to hang up the vines for the beans and the peas, who used to freeze her nylons so she could use them again, as a matter of fact. We used to do a number of things with respect to reduce and reuse—I see people nodding their heads. This is what I remember from my grandmother.

There was a period of time, when those who had gone through the Depression—and she was one, and who wouldn't have thrown away anything, much less food—to a period of time where our parents and indeed me, as a generation, just lost all that and didn't have a respect for that and didn't practise those kinds of policies and indeed just became so used to buying stuff and throwing material out left, right and centre, not composting, not dealing with food scraps, that we really lost a whole period of that opportunity.

Then schools really made it a focus to start to teach young people about the three Rs, about reducing, reusing and recycling. I look at my kids today, and my kids are big promoters of three Rs. My kids are going through our blue box to make sure that everything is clean before it goes in. They are making sure that the toilet paper rolls are going in. They are really clear about contributing their part in this effort.

Last Saturday, my son and I were coming back from the vegetable market at the corner of Logan and the Danforth, where we buy our vegetables. There is a school that we have to pass, and along the school there are beer bottles, because this is where some of the kids—not the kids from the school, obviously, but some other kids in the neighbourhood—spend some of their time on Friday nights. So there are empty beer bottles and there are empty juice bottles and pop cans and the whole—and he decided we were going to pick them all up on our way home. I'm already carrying two bags full of vegetables and fruits and trying to accommodate him as he's picking up all the stuff. He says, "Mom, look at all these litterbugs. Who would litter like this?"—my eight-year-

old. By the time we reach our house we have a whole bunch of stuff for the blue bin, both for the plastics and for the bottles and other paper goods that were going into that bin outside. So he's really into this, and this comes from us supporting that at home, but really from what he has been learning in school.

Then he's on to me yesterday about getting a composter. I'm not too excited about getting a composter, because we participate in the green box program and it's hard enough with the green box program in the city to keep the raccoons out of the green boxes. So I'm not so interested in becoming really involved in composting because I don't want to see the composter chewed up by the raccoons. In a previous house we lived in, that's exactly what they did, in a house that we rented. I'm trying to convince him that if we just do our bit with the food scraps in the green box and we put that out appropriately on Friday morning, we will be doing our bit. So I'm hoping that I have him convinced of that.

I have to say, after having said all that, isn't it strange that the school environment where my kids were taught all of this, and so many other children were taught all of this, is now in a position where we're going to mandate them to think much more seriously about recycling on school grounds and on school property? It's a bit of a contradiction when you think about schools being a leader in teaching kids but not having the facilities in place in the school environment to actually make that happen.

I think of our school, where my kids are, on Fridays: pizza day. When you drive up to the curb on Friday afternoon, there are boxes and boxes and boxes outside—all of the empty pizza boxes from the Friday afternoon pizza lunch. These are things that we should be squishing and folding up and tying up, and they should be kept somewhere in the school until the proper recycling day so we can really take them out to the curbside at that time and get rid of them. Right now, they're all over the sidewalk, and parents driving up run the risk of driving into them sometimes. You're trying to make your way through all of the boxes to get in to pick up your child, either from the school or from the daycare, and it's a heck of a mess, through no fault of the school but there just isn't anywhere else to put the stuff.

Hopefully, things like this, initiatives like the ones that are outlined in this bill, are going to deal with this problem, not just at our school, which is trying to make efforts in other senses but just doesn't have the space to keep all of this and store it properly, and at other schools across the city and across the province.

1040

So I'm supportive of this bill. I'm very glad that the students brought it forward. But I just note that it's kind of strange that it has taken so long for a bill that is so important to come forward when, through so much of the last number of years, schools have been fundamental in promoting and ensuring education in the three Rs. For those schools that don't have these things in place right now, I hope it will be in very short order that school

boards respond positively and get the recycling facilities in place, both in the schools and in the cafeteria, and in that way we can really say that we are doing all we can with respect to the three Rs, not just in our homes, as many of us are and as many of our kids are prompting us to do on a daily basis, but also in the very school environments where our students are being taught all of these important things.

So I support the bill. Again, I want to thank the students from Georgetown for bringing it forward and Ms. Wynne for putting it forward as a private member's bill today.

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I'm delighted to join in the debate today in support of Mrs. Wynne's amendment. I want to congratulate Mike Wise of the CBC and the Georgetown District High School. Good for you to all be here today to celebrate your success in moving this forward. To teacher Laura Hudgin, congratulations to you and to your entire geography club. It's great to have you here to celebrate today as we all debate your resolution.

I don't have a lot of time, because my colleagues are very excited about this and want to talk about it, so I am going to keep it brief.

I think we all understand and recognize that recycling keeps Ontario communities safe, clean and livable, and that it doesn't just save landfill space but cuts down on air emissions, reduces the risk of potential ground and surface water pollution, saves energy and cuts down on greenhouse gases.

But recycling doesn't just happen; we have to make it happen. The amendment you bring forward today in providing containers will not only raise awareness for students but will also make it easy for students, and that's what makes it happen.

I want to point out three examples of raising awareness and making it easy that I think are contributing to recycling in all of our communities. In my community, in East Ferris, which is part of my riding, they recently went to curbside recycling. You used to have to take your recycling to a recycling centre. It's a rural community. Now they've gone to curbside recycling. In the first two months they diverted more waste from the landfill than they normally would in a year. They predict that 250 tonnes of waste will be diverted from the local landfill over the course of the first year. That's really exciting, but that's the result of making it easier for our residents. When we provide them with the resources, they are able to do the recycling that we know is so important.

As well, in North Bay we recently had a contest in our schools to raise awareness about recycling. We challenged local schools to build something creative using juice box containers. My local school, E.T. Carmichael Public School, won first place. They built a metre-high tree using 2,000 drink boxes that they had collected over seven days. They went through 200 glue guns putting it all together. Our Lady of Fatima took second place, and Pinewood Park Public School took third place. This contest was hosted by the city and Tetrapak Canada, and

it raised awareness of what could go into a blue box and how we should be moving forward with our recycling.

Your resolution will make sure they can recycle those drink boxes at school, because the containers will be available.

Just recently, if anyone has paid attention around this building, you'll have noticed that our building here, Queen's Park, has adopted new recycling and garbage containers in the hallways. They just came out this week, which may actually be a result of your amendment. I don't know; we'll have to ask the Sergeant at Arms. Suddenly this week we have new garbage containers that allow us to recycle glass and plastic and garbage. Congratulations to you for raising awareness for everyone, including the people in this building.

I certainly support this resolution and thank you for the opportunity to speak to it today.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I'm very pleased this morning to have this opportunity to speak in support of Bill 96, the Education Amendment Act (School Waste Reduction). I want to compliment all the members who have spoken to this issue this morning, especially the member for Halton, who ably represents the town of Halton Hills, and Georgetown high school. I thank them all for their presentations.

If passed, Bill 96 would improve recycling in every classroom in the province of Ontario. This is a policy and a principle that I would encourage every member of this assembly to support enthusiastically. I am most grateful to the students at Georgetown District High School who worked to make their ideas a legislative reality, because this bill is really their idea.

This morning's debate is extraordinary, for this is the first time, to the best of my recollection, that we are debating three private members' items in one morning. Usually it's only two, and only on Thursday. With this unique Wednesday morning debate and our regular private members' session tomorrow, we will have debated five private members' ballot items in one week. This is a good thing.

This debate is also an advancement for Ontario's young people, our students and for the Ontario Legislature as a whole. The progress that we can proudly mark today is that all three of the bills before us have been recommended by students from high schools. For that achievement, I want to thank Mike Wise, the reporter from CBC television. He has quite successfully promoted involvement and participation by young people in our democratic system through a CBC program called Making the Grade.

The bill we're debating right now was sponsored by the MPP for Don Valley West, a member of the Liberal caucus; the bill that preceded this debate was sponsored by the MPP for Oak Ridges, a member of the Progressive Conservative caucus; and the next bill to be debated at 11 o'clock is sponsored by the MPP for Hamilton East, a member of the NDP. I want to thank all three MPPs for their support and encouragement today. Having all-party involvement, I think, is good politics. The process is truly

non-partisan, for your ideas and your ideas for solutions can cut across party lines. This debate is more inclusive because we MPPs, at least on this side of the House, by our caucus tradition, usually have free votes on private members' bills and resolutions. This means that no MPP should feel that he or she has to be guided by the party lines or whipped to vote in a certain way.

I want to draw attention to the exceptional work that is being done by Georgetown District High School. The students in the geography club made their ideas known about how to expand recycling, and they put those ideas into Bill 96. For the efforts these students made, I want to extend my appreciation and sincere congratulations. These students are very fortunate. They are fortunate to be learning with Laura Hudgin, the teacher and adviser for the top-notch legislative work that is being done by the geography club. These students of Georgetown District High School are well on their way to achieving excellence with Bill 96. I'm scheduled to meet with the geography club on May 23, and I'm looking forward to having the chance to listen to their ideas and hopefully answer some of their questions.

One of the best paths to excellence in the protection of our natural environment is to always be looking for new ways to improve the systems, our laws and how we encourage people to make better choices. I was also fortunate to have the experience of serving as parliamentary assistant to one of Ontario's best ever Ministers of the Environment, the member for Kitchener-Waterloo. Shortly after the Walkerton tragedy, she was appointed to serve as environment minister, and she provided strong leadership that Ontario needed for safe water, clean air and sound waste management. For this Minister of the Environment, excellence always meant striving to improve our way of doing things.

The geography club is doing just that with their initiative to improve the four Rs of reduce, reuse, recycle and recover. They are showing leadership by example. They propose to bring sound environmental policy from their classroom to all classrooms across the province. Bill 96 will improve our system by ensuring that each and every classroom has at least two recycling containers, one for paper and one for plastic and aluminum. It also stipulates that school cafeterias will have recycling facilities with clear indications of what is to be recycled and where.

This reminds me of the spirit and principle that motivated another piece of legislation that I had the opportunity to support in this House. As mentioned, I served as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment from the spring of 2001 to the spring of 2002. One of my legislative responsibilities on behalf of the minister included helping with Bill 90, the Waste Diversion Act.

To explain Bill 90, I'd like to quote from Hansard the statement that the Minister of the Environment of the time made as she introduced that historic piece of legislation on this House on June 26, 2001:

"This important piece of legislation would establish a permanent, non-profit organization run by industry and

municipal representatives to develop, implement and fund waste diversion programs in Ontario. This legislation firmly establishes a partnership between industry and the municipalities and lays out the framework for a recycling system that will serve this province for years to come.”

So it's clear that our party when in government was embracing the concept of recycling and wanted to move forward to encourage greater recycling. Certainly the spirit of what the students have proposed today follows along those lines. With that constructive advice, I want to close my remarks by thanking again the students, their teachers and all educators at Georgetown District High School for their leadership. I wish them every success and urge all members of this House to support this bill.

1050

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It's a pleasure to rise today in support of Bill 96. I want to pay particular thanks to the member from Don Valley West, Kathleen Wynne, who has worked with the young people from Georgetown high school to get the bill to the point where it is today, where it's before us for our consideration.

Once again, without bragging, the region of Halton District School Board has something to offer in showcasing the talent of its teachers and its wonderful students. Georgetown is actually in the town of Halton Hills in the riding that is represented by Mr. Chudleigh. When you think of Halton Hills, you think of the escarpment, conservation areas and a pristine environment, and yet quite often today the way we treat our environment, we are putting those types of areas at risk.

It's wonderful to have a fresh set of young eyes on issues like recycling, landfill sites. If you'd asked the average member around this House prior to the introduction of this bill, “Is there a recycling bin in every classroom in Ontario?” I think most of us would have said, “Well, probably there is, or if there isn't, there should be.” The fact is nobody has done anything about it, and with a fresh set of young eyes, some young people from Georgetown have decided to do something about it, and I think they are to be commended.

If you look at any time we've changed behaviour in our society, we've done it through young people. When we were talking about drinking and driving, talking about recycling, blue box initiatives, preventing smoking, we haven't gone to the old fuddy-duddies who can't change their minds any more; we've gone to young people who still have the ability to take in some common sense these days and can relay that common sense back to us as parents or as older people.

We're facing some pretty serious problems with the environment in this country and on this planet. If you look at things like greenhouse gases, global warming and climate change—we, in this House, talk about emissions from generating plants: Should we be closing coal plants? Should we be keeping them open? Should we be burning natural gas?—there are a variety of issues that we face as challenges on a daily basis here. Some young people from Georgetown have brought us forward a very

practical solution to those. I think it's a great idea. It goes a long way towards encouraging people not to use up the capacity in the landfill sites, to in fact use those materials over and over again.

I still don't understand why in Halton we get garbage pickup once a week and we get recycling every two weeks, when you'd think it should be the other way around. With more initiatives such as we're hearing from Georgetown high school, that will probably be our future.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): I also want to commend the CBC, Mike Wise and my good friend the member for Don Valley West for this initiative and to say welcome to Georgetown District High School—home of the Rebels is my understanding. It's wonderful to have you here, and how aptly named you are, because you are forcing us here of our generation to deal with this issue.

There's a famous saying from the Lakota tribe, First Nations, that says we do not inherit our natural environment from our grandparents, we just borrow it from our grandchildren, and that wisdom is something that we always have to remember in this place.

I was speaking to my son, Breen, who's in grade 6 at Jeanne Sauvé Catholic School in Stratford. I said, “I have to debate a bill about making a blue box mandatory in the classroom.” He said, “Daddy, we already do that.” At their school, there's a blue box in every classroom and in the lunchroom. The question here—and this is what's been raised by our friends from Georgetown—is whether it should be in every classroom. This is what the Legislature is all about.

I say to the young generation here that Theodore Roosevelt was President of the United States at the beginning of the last century—and I quote this for my good friend the Minister of the Environment, who can't be here today and asked me to speak in support and share her support with you—“I recognize the right and duty of this generation to develop and use” our natural resources, “but I do not recognize the right to waste them, or to rob, by wasteful use, the generations that come after us.” What I would say is that, unfortunately, we have not fulfilled the words of the late Theodore Roosevelt.

The 19th century was the industrial revolution. Our society rose to that challenge about how to harness our natural resources. The 20th century was the technological revolution where we were able to embrace the microchip. We learned how to split the atom, how to vaccinate children and to have better nutrition and sanitation. We've raised longevity, lifespan, but we're not sustainable. The challenge for your generation, I say to our friends from Georgetown, the great challenge of the next century, that I am sure you will be ready for, is, how do we as a society become sustainable? How do we fit within our natural resources? How do we reduce our footprint? How do we get in balance with nature? Because nature is telling us that we are not.

I want to commend you for your work and I look forward to supporting, with all the members in this House, I'm sure, Bill 96.

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe): First, I want to commend the member from Don Valley West for sponsoring this bill. I think it's a very important bill for all of us in the province of Ontario, especially when we are dealing with students. As you know, I was a teacher at one time in my life, in my career. I think it's important to teach students how to behave, how to conduct business on a daily basis. I believe the school is the most important place to help our students to learn and to have a vision for the future. I think this is an important task, especially when dealing with waste.

With the new technology, with the new life we live on a daily basis, all our food and all our stuff is packaged and delivered in cans, boxes, wrappers—many different materials. If we don't manage it, we are going to have a problem—we have a problem today. We have to find a way to recycle this material and reuse it, rather than send it to the garbage, rather than throw it outside in the schoolyard, rather than put it in our backyard and many different places. We cannot afford that, because we are obligated at the present time, as the people of this province, to protect the environment and set an example for the future—our future. I think some important lessons should be taught and learned in the schools: to create two containers in school classrooms to help the students divert their garbage, one for cans and one for paper, so we can recycle and reuse again; and also for the cafeteria to have a recycling bin; and to insist that our task as a government, as an environmental people, as a city, is to manage our waste.

I think it's a very important bill. Whoever thought of it, the school, sponsored by the member from Don Valley West—it's a very good initiative and therefore I'm going to support it. I'm looking forward to seeing all the members in this House support such an important initiative, especially when it comes from students. We should encourage many different students to take the same steps toward helping us as a province, helping us as a community, to contain and control our waste. Because our duty for future generations is to protect them and ensure a safe environment.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Don Valley West has two minutes for a reply.

Ms. Wynne: I just want to follow up on a comment that was made by the member for Nipissing. She checked with the Sergeant at Arms and assures us the Legislature has been recycling for eight years but that we just got new bins. So it's even easier for us to recycle now in the Legislative Building.

I agree with the member for Perth–Middlesex that, arguably, sustainability of the environment is the number one priority for this generation going forward, the number one issue that we need to confront. But as the member for Halton said, we know the issue but we haven't done enough. And the member from Nickel Belt identified that isn't it strange that we have to deal with this issue, because the Georgetown students found that recycling is inconsistent across the province in our classrooms, in our boards. So it's absolutely necessary that we confront this.

The member for Stoney Creek talked about the practices of our grandparents. I have literally boxes of linen handkerchiefs in my home. I don't think my grandparents ever used a paper handkerchief, a paper tissue. We are having to go back to practices that were sustainable, and we can learn from that previous generation. I know that many people in the Legislature probably have switched from paper napkins to cloth napkins. Those are the kinds of things we have to be thinking about as we reduce the amount of waste that goes into the recycle bins and into our garbage.

I look forward to supporting this legislation. I appreciate the support from all sides of the House, but most importantly, I look forward to there being, in every classroom in Ontario, two recycle bins at least, and in every cafeteria a receptacle for waste and waste diversion, thanks to the students of Georgetown District High School. Thank you very much for your time this morning.

1100

EMPLOYMENT STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT (INFORMING
STUDENTS OF THEIR EMPLOYMENT
RIGHTS), 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI A TRAIT À L'EMPLOI
(FOURNITURE DE RENSEIGNEMENTS
AUX ÉTUDIANTS SUR LEURS DROITS
EN MATIÈRE D'EMPLOI)

Ms. Horwath moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 95, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 and the Occupational Health and Safety Act with respect to providing information to student employees about employment rights / Projet de loi 95, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi et la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail à l'égard de la fourniture de renseignements aux étudiants salariés sur les droits en matière d'emploi.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): As I was having an opportunity to speak to some of the other bills this morning, I mentioned that I was very privileged to have participated in this project thus far. I want to say thank you to the students here today whose bill I am bringing voice to in the Legislature. I'm going to name them, because they really deserve to be acknowledged. But before I do, I want to say that not only has this been a great learning experience for these young people, I'm sure, but they taught me a heck of a lot too, and I want to thank them for that. They taught me not only to reconsider what I do here in the way that it affects them, but also they taught me that they have a heck of a lot to offer and that if only I find the opportunities and make myself available to them, they will come forward and they will step up to the plate and they will have a lot of great ideas to share with us as legislators. I want to thank them for

that, and I also want to thank them for being so open and so available as I was having questions about what direction they wanted the bill to take and what kinds of amendments and changes needed to be made to satisfy the legislative drafters, as well as to make sure that their issues were well represented in the bill.

I want to first of all say thank you to St. Ignatius of Loyola Catholic Secondary School in Oakville and the students there: Ha-Joon Choi, Andrew Cormier, Zach Horcoff, Christina Lee, Katie MacFarlane, Nicholas McLeod, Alicia Medina, Erin O'Leary, Regine Robles, Ana Romero and teacher Ken Rachner. In fact, the teacher happens to be a resident of Hamilton East. I know only some of them could come; the class was taking on this project last semester, I believe, so now, this semester, a couple of them managed to come. For those of you who got here, thank you very much for being here and congratulations on this very exciting day.

From Cardinal Carter Catholic High School in Aurora we have Zach Brewer, Ana Romero, Karen Spilak, Stephen Stanford, Gabriela Torres, Henry Whitfield, Vanessa Fleming, Natasha Burrow, Lauren Babic, Carly Carrigan, Kendra Stephenson, Amanda Piron—pronounced like Barone from the TV show—Liz Piccoli, Dante Lagrasta, Sasha Kuyumju, Stefano Longhin and Kristina Karakolis, and the teachers are Giulia D'Agostino and Lori Lucignani. Thank you for coming again.

Last but not least, at the very top benches in the gallery we have Majd El-Samrout from Lisgar Collegiate in Ottawa. Majd actually got on a bus in Ottawa at midnight—the red-eye—to come to Toronto to be here for second reading of the bill.

They all deserve a big round of applause, for sure.

Applause.

Ms. Horwath: I've used almost half my time talking about the students, but that's really what it's all about. So welcome, everybody, and thank you for being here.

I want to commend everybody who has participated. Today's historic second reading of the first-ever bills to be written by Ontario students is extremely important. As we have heard this morning, all three bills are certainly deserving of our support. They are thoughtful, they are practical and they're much-needed measures for the province.

I wanted to make sure that I urged the members of all three parties here to continue to co-operate to push these bills past the finish line. It would be extremely important to actually have the legislation recommended by our youth passed and enshrined into legislation in Ontario.

Bill 95 specifically speaks to the necessity of employers to produce information for students that can be received by them in a way that is most appropriate for them. This bill is a little bit different, because the previous two bills talked about students as they were experiencing their school life: cafeteria food and recycling. This one speaks to students as they leave school and enter the workplace. The bill basically puts an onus or an obligation on employers to make sure that students are aware of their rights in the workplace.

Why is that important? It's important because many times students enter the workplace without a good understanding of what their rights and obligations are as workers. What they decided to do was come up with legislation that they thought and their own experience showed them would be necessary to close that gap of knowledge and understanding as young workers entering the workplace in Ontario. They are the ones who identified what was wrong with the current system, they are the ones who showed me where the gaps were and they put together the draft legislation that's now in front of us as Bill 95.

The goal basically is twofold: to reduce and hopefully completely prevent the exploitation of students in the workplace, and also to ensure that they are safe in the workplace, that their safety is protected in the workplace. We just passed April 28, the day of mourning for workers who were killed or injured on the job. Members need to know that from 2000 to 2004, an average of 15 young people were killed on the job. The average for workers generally is 300 annually killed on the job in the province of Ontario. That's just not acceptable.

This legislation gives the employer clear direction about how to communicate the rights of student workers in the workplace. The onus is on the employer. This is done through a poster that needs to be visible and accessible to all student workers in the workplace, which will set out the various pieces of information in language that is appropriate for the students to receive.

At this point in time, members might know that the Occupational Health and Safety Act already requires poster in the workplace. But students said to me, "Yes, that exists. We've seen it, but it's not easy for us to understand. It doesn't really speak to us. It's not something that we find speaks our language." They want to see a poster not only about occupational health and safety but also about other workplace rights, things like—and I wrote a little list, because it's all set out on page 3 of the bill—hours of work, breaks, eating periods, overtime pay, public holidays, vacation with pay, leaves of absence and termination and severance. All of these are pieces that young people entering the workforce really don't have a good way of knowing about. The bill says the employer has to poster and also provide a booklet to each new student entering the workplace and starting a job. There's a record that needs to be kept. The employer needs to keep a record that the student worker has received the booklet. There's an obligation on the employer to maintain the poster in the workplace.

We spent some time talking about how specific we needed to be with the poster. The legislation does indicate a certain size of typeface to be on the poster, and it requires a location that is accessible to the student so they know where the poster is.

Interestingly enough, the other issue that came up in discussing this with the students was the fact that they were acknowledging that many of the schools in their communities have a number of students whose first language is not English. They also acknowledged that as

they leave school, they attend work and a lot of them have workplaces where large numbers of co-workers do not necessarily use English as their first language. So the bill also identifies the fact that in cases where there is a language other than English as the majority language in the workplace, the ministry is obligated to supply the employer with this information in the language of majority in the workplace.

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I thought that was an extremely important piece. It currently doesn't exist in the way that we think it is important to exist. So not only do the poster and the booklet need to be in plain language and in language that is easily understood by students, but also, if there is a workplace where a large number of students are not as proficient in English and have another language as their first language, then the obligation is to make sure the ministry produces that. So it's not "if" one is available, and currently in the act that's the language, for the Occupational Health and Safety Act anyway. It says that if there's something in that language available, it shall be provided. But we're saying no. We're saying the obligation is to make sure the ministry produces something in the language that's needed so that it can go to the employer and then the employer can meet their obligation in the workplace.

It's an excellent bill, and I look forward to the support of all members.

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): It's a pleasure to speak on the second reading of Bill 95, a bill that provides information to student employees about employment rights.

Before I get into the bill, let me say how pleased I am to see 100 or more schools in the province of Ontario participating in this program, but in particular the three schools that did deal with Bill 95, the students from St. Ignatius of Loyola in Oakville, Cardinal Carter Catholic High School in Aurora and Lisgar Collegiate Institute in Ottawa. I am familiar to some degree with the students from Cardinal Carter Catholic High School because I read in the local media once in a while about their activities. I'm pleased that they are taking part in this bill. By the way, I also want to thank CBC News for being the leader in this bill.

I want to make sure the students are aware that certainly the province of Ontario, and the Ministry of Labour in particular, are quite aware of their concerns. In fact, almost all the issues that they've raised in Bill 95 are already law in Ontario because the Ministry of Labour has addressed those issues. I want to be clear that the health and safety of all Ontario's workers is our number one priority at the Ministry of Labour; however, I think a personal interest in the well-being of our young workers in particular. Our government is committed to protecting Ontarians' future by making sure our youth work in the healthiest and safest environments. We invest in workplace health and safety and believe in promoting a message of prevention in order to build a culture of prevention.

Mr. Speaker, I in particular am quite aware of this. As you already know, one of my jobs this year will be to travel all over Ontario to speak to students, to workers, to employers, to people who are relatively new in Ontario who may have some difficulties appreciating the rules and regulations that we have in Ontario. That is one of my jobs, to go around Ontario and talk to those people. I would like to take the opportunity to ask the students who are interested in this to make sure that they contact my office and speak to me about their specific concerns because, again, it's my job in particular this summer to speak with as many people as possible and make sure that all of us working in Ontario, or as many as possible, are aware of the laws that we have in place and to make sure that the employer respects those laws so that injuries in our province will be eliminated. I realize that will take many years, to make sure that there will not be injuries, but certainly we are moving in the right direction.

Mr. Speaker, you are quite aware that one of our commitments was to hire 200 inspectors to make sure we minimize injuries in the workplace. Of course, we have already hired almost all of them. The last 69 will be hired very shortly, much earlier than the mandate we have in front of us. As you can see, we certainly want to make sure that we prevent any injuries on the job, and at the same time we want to make sure that the employees are quite aware of what their rights are. We already have in place a poster that provides the information. There is a website available as well for people to get into it and get all the information that will be useful to them. We do have almost all the bill in place. Nonetheless, I will be happy to participate when there will be more discussion on this when we go to the people of Ontario.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I am pleased to join in this debate. I want to extend a special welcome to the students who have been involved in the development of this legislation and of course to their teachers as well for their leadership. I take a particular interest in this bill because of the large role of the students from Cardinal Carter Catholic High School in Aurora. I have had an opportunity to meet with some of the students from Cardinal Carter. In fact, Carly Carrigan extended a special invitation to me to meet with her class. I had the opportunity to work with her and her student colleagues to develop another bill that received first reading here in the House. I was hoping we'd have second reading of that bill as well, but the government couldn't make room for it. Perhaps one day. What I do want to do, however, is to extend a special thank you to the teachers who have provided that kind of support for the students in their engagement.

I just did an interview with the media on this issue. It wasn't Mr. Wise, it was a competitor, but he'll be glad to know that all of his competitors are picking up on his story. I would be remiss if I didn't credit Mike Wise and the CBC for their initiative. The purpose of this was to engage young people in the political process. They have been extremely successful in doing that. Our democratic system and the strength of it is really based on the degree

of individual involvement in the process and ensuring that people are aware, are informed. What better way to do that than to begin with students and ensure that there is an interest in the political process generated very early on? What this process has done is let students know that they can have an influence, that the political process is not some mysterious entity out there that is unapproachable, that politicians aren't as bad as the media—not Mr. Wise, but other media—would sometimes represent us to be, that we too are approachable and that it's a matter of communication.

Apart from the content of the bill before us today—which I fully support, and I'm going to make a couple of comments about it—I believe we have here today a historical event. It has never happened before that we are debating in the Legislature a bill that was initiated, drafted and brought to our attention by students. I'm pleased to be a part of that.

With regard to the specific bill before us, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour says most of these things are already in law. Well, if he will listen to the students, they are saying it may be in law but you're not doing a very good job of making sure that students understand it. That's the purpose of their bill, to make sure that there is literature and information in the workplace that students understand, that's not written in legalese, that's available to all of the students so they will know what their rights are, that it's not simply buried somewhere in the statutes of legislation.

This will be a wake-up call for employers because, while I believe that the vast majority of employers in this province are in fact responsible, we do know that there are employers who take advantage of young people in the workplace. I believe that's an issue that this legislation will address. Young people will know what their rights are. They will know they can say no to unsafe working conditions. They will know what they're entitled to in terms of remuneration, in terms of their rights in the workplace.

I commend the students for being so practical in their proposed legislation. I look forward to the parliamentary assistant, and in fact the Minister of Labour, not making excuses and trying to say that this is all looked after, but that they will welcome and implement this, so that it doesn't stay here at second reading, that it goes to committee and then is ultimately implemented.

Thank you very much to the students and their teachers, to Mr. Wise, to the CBC, and thank you to every other media outlet that's going to give this message and this program huge coverage over the next number of days and weeks to come.

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Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It's a privilege to join the debate on Bill 95. Unlike the previous speaker, I think this is a very special bill in that we all know how hard it is as members to introduce private members' bills and have them acted upon. Thanks to the proper drafting of this bill, thanks to the good work these students have done, the Ministry of Labour has already begun to pay

attention to this bill and is already prepared to make some changes as a result of this bill.

I think that if there is one thing I have learned as PA at labour, to two ministers, Minister Chris Bentley and Minister Steve Peters, it is that we have terrific staff at the Ministry of Labour who care about young workers in the province, who are doing the best they can do with the laws we pass on to them from this House.

Today we've got a perfect example, thanks to the students from Loyola high school in my own community of Oakville and from Cardinal Carter in Aurora, and a young gentleman from Lisgar high school in Ottawa, which incidentally is—Phil McNeely, who is sitting in front of me, is an alumni of Lisgar high school. I think he graduated last year or the year before, I'm not sure which.

This is the time of year when a lot of young people are looking for their first jobs. It's also a time of year when people are most vulnerable. The time when you're most likely to get injured in your working life is in the very first weeks of your very first job.

We, as parents, often ask questions. We ask, "How much are you going to make? Do you have to wear a goofy uniform? Do I have to drive you to work?" We ask them all sorts of things, but we never stop and ask, "Do you feel safe working there? Do you understand what your rights and responsibilities are?" I think that's something that, as parents, we need to take seriously as well.

Thanks to the students today who have brought forward this message and this piece of legislation, which, as I said, is already being listened to by people such as Maggie Head, who is here with us from the minister's office today to hear at first hand from these young people.

I suspect this bill is going to make a change to the people of Ontario, and more especially to the young people of Ontario.

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I, too, want to join in this historic debate. It's somewhat historic in terms of it is the first time we've had students suggest private members' bills. Congratulations.

In my time in school—and I was elected fairly young at age 27—we had model Parliaments, and that's sort of how I got interested. I also got interested, if the students want to hear this, when I was in grade 7-8, as we had a split class at St. Paul's elementary school in Alliston, and we had the candidates come in. I think things have changed in the school, because after the candidates came, we had a vote and the Progressive Conservative candidate won the little election we had because he impressed us the most at that time.

So I went out and put up lawn signs for Mr. George McCague. He was our member for 15 years. He was a senior cabinet minister and chairman of cabinet under Bill Davis for about nine of those 15 years. I ended up succeeding him. I ended up being his driver when I started at age 17, because cabinet ministers aren't supposed to drive themselves, in case they get in trouble. I drove him around the riding and around Toronto and

around the province. Actually, that was the best job I ever had; it's been downhill since then.

St. Ignatius of Loyola Secondary School in Oakville, Cardinal Carter Catholic Secondary School in Aurora and Lisgar Collegiate in Ottawa: To you and your teachers I say congratulations. This is a terrific idea. As I said, I never thought about it in my time. To Mike Wise and the CBC, thank you very much. And that's historic, too. I've heard everybody thank Mike Wise and the CBC, and frankly, we usually never thank the media in this House, although in opposition I find the media become my best friends.

Ms. Horwath presented us with some statistics in the package that as the sponsor of this bill she sent around on your behalf. There really is a tremendous need for this information that is going to be provided through the poster and booklet. I first of all want to explain the need. It says in the briefing note:

"From 2000 to 2004, there were 60 traumatic fatalities for young workers under 25 years of age. This represented approximately 11% of Ontario workers killed on the job.

"The two industry sectors with the highest number of allowed traumatic fatality claims were construction and manufacturing."

In 2000, for example, there were 16 deaths in those sectors, in 2001 there were 13 deaths, in 2002 there were 14 deaths, in 2003 there were 10 and in 2004 there were 7.

I must admit that I worked at the Alliston IGA for four and a half years. Actually, prior to that I worked in our family store business and gas station in Loretto, Ontario. You had no rights when you worked for your father. In terms of these family businesses, this will make even the fathers of the world post your rights. I am sure my father is watching this at home, as he does every day, with my mother and is wondering about those comments I just made.

I'm the labour critic for the PC Party, and if I was asked to go to your classroom today and explain all this, I couldn't. You have gone far beyond my knowledge. For instance, as has been pointed out, the poster and booklet have to talk about the hours of work and eating periods, overtime pay, minimum wage, public holidays, vacation with pay, leaves of absence, termination and severance of employment. It has to talk about the fact that the minimum wage is different for students than for most other employees, with a statement of the current minimum wage for student employees and other employees—a lot of very good stuff. I must say, you drafted the bill in a practical way. It reads very well, but it is detailed and very prescriptive.

At the end of the day, you're going to be able to say, when you are older and tell your grandchildren the story of being here and of participating in this process, that the poster on that wall came as a result of work you did. You're hopefully going to be able to see, after this bill is implemented, a reduction in the fatalities and a reduction in the injuries that are occurring to young people, those 25 years of age and younger.

I conclude by saying that you're hopefully going to see very tangible benefits from your work, and I again thank you on behalf of the young people in my riding of Simcoe-Grey and on behalf of the young people in Ontario. This is a historic process and I am glad to be part of it.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmings-James Bay): I am so glad to be here this morning. As my good friend Mr. Wilson said, this is historic for a couple reasons. One is that I don't ever recall in my 16 years here having this kind of occasion where the public, in this case students, get an opportunity to directly tell the Legislature what they would like us to deal with in debate on one particular day. I think that is pretty amazing.

I congratulate Mike Wise from the CBC, who I say is my friend—I love all the media—and especially the many students who have taken the time to submit ideas. Unfortunately, not all of them got picked. Certainly there was a multitude of really good ideas. For all of you who participated and weren't fortunate to get picked, don't despair, but continue. Maybe this can become something more regular here in the Legislature, a good way of showing students that you can make a positive change to your society by being involved in the political process, because after all, this what Legislatures are all about. It's about developing the rules by which society is going to govern itself. How do we drive down the highway, how do we provide services for each other in health care and education? All those decisions and policies derive from this Legislature. For citizens not to be engaged in that process I think is an affront to democracy. For democracy to work, people need to be engaged, and certainly the young people of this province have demonstrated time and time again on occasions like this and others that they are engaged in the process.

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I want to say to my good friend Mike Wise, you got my sister going in British Columbia. My sister is a schoolteacher in Prince Rupert, BC, Collette Cantin. She and her colleagues in the BC teachers' federation or whatever they're called have been watching this quite closely. I have been corresponding with some of the people that she's put me on to. They're trying to get their Legislature in British Columbia interested in this process as well. To those people in British Columbia who are interested in getting this going, I encourage you to do so because it has certainly proven to be quite positive here in Ontario. To my sister Collette I would just say by way of this Hansard, I'm looking forward to seeing you this summer at the reunion. Anyway, that's a whole other—we take all the opportunities we can.

I also want to make, before I get started, a comment to my good friend Mr. Wilson with regard to those young people, like we were at one time, who work for their fathers. I worked for my dad for a number of years and, man, if I had tried to exercise my rights, I'm not sure I would have survived. "You will do what you're told," my father would say.

I want to start off by saying the following: For people to exercise their rights, they need to know them, and

that's what this bill really speaks to. It doesn't matter if you're the son of a local businessperson, such as Jim and I were, who grew up in families who were in small business. Both my mother and father ran a business. I worked for my dad and my mom over the years. And I had some good times; I've got to say that they were good employers. My dad certainly was a progressive employer, so I wouldn't want anybody to think otherwise. Dad is gone nowadays and I wouldn't want anybody to think I'd speak badly of him.

I tried to organize my father. I've got to tell you a funny story. My brother and I decided one day that my father was not being fair, so we decided to hold a strike. My brother and I organized our own union and decided to strike my father. My father used to be a very pro-union guy, and we listened at the kitchen table at supper to all of the stories about how workers had to organize and by organizing you'll be able to hold up the employer to better standards and better conditions for workers. So my brother and I decided to take him up on that. I've got to tell you, man, oh man, his practices were very different. The strike was finished. It was gone. We were both fired. That was the end of that. That was fun. But I digress; that's a whole other story.

I'd just say that for people to exercise their rights, they need to know them, and that's what this bill speaks to. It doesn't matter if you're a young person just starting out in a part-time job when you're 15 or 16 years old, and sometimes a bit younger, or if you're older: If you don't know your rights, you really can't exercise them. I say that from experience because I come out of the Steelworkers. I'm still a member yet today of Local 2995 of the United Steelworkers of America. I've maintained my membership with my union and I'm a proud member of the Steelworkers. At the end, we understood in the Steelworkers organization that we needed to make sure that our members knew their rights. We spent a lot of time when workers were first hired and became members of our union—we negotiated into our collective agreements an opportunity for the union to sit down with the member and say, "Here are your rights, what the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Ontario Labour Relations Act give you, what your collective agreement gives you," so that people understood that there were rules and that if those rules weren't followed, there was a consequence to them, either by way of injury or death or by way of not getting what you're entitled to when it comes to work. Far too often, that whole concept is not brought forward to students.

I've got to say again as a Steelworker that I'm proud that my union, for some 10 years now, has been doing this in northeastern Ontario. There's a student health and safety awareness program run by a couple of people out of Local 6500. Both J.P. and Dan, who are with Local 6500, are very involved in that program. They go from school to school in both French and English across northeastern Ontario in both the Catholic and public boards. They go into the workplace and do exactly what this bill talks about, which is to say to students, "Here is what the Occupational Health and Safety Act is all about.

Here's what happens should you be injured and what you need to do." For example, a lot of people don't realize that if you don't report an accident to your employer and a Form 1 isn't filed to the Workers' Compensation Board, if that injury tends to get bad—let's say it's a soft-tissue injury—you could be in a position of not being entitled to any benefits because you haven't reported it.

So something as simple as reporting an accident—they go into the schools and tell the students they need to make sure that there's a Form 1, that it's reported. If you see something that is unsafe in the workplace, especially in workplaces where I come from, and I'm sure it's the same in others—I'm out of the mining and forest industry. That's very serious business. You don't play around with the equipment that's there, because it's massive and it's quite dangerous if used improperly. We make sure that workers understand that if they're put in a position—and this is what this program does through the student health and safety awareness program and the Steelworkers. They have a right to refuse work.

I think this bill basically goes in that direction, and I really want to compliment the students who have come forward with it and my good friend and colleague Andrea Horwath for bringing this bill forward. She's hitting a triple-hitter here, because this is hot on the heels of a bill she introduced last week that has to do with firefighters. I commend her for always being there and trying to make the province a safer and better place for workers.

I say to the students, this is really good stuff. Imagine if we were in a position where all workers over the last five years, or let's say even six, since the year 2000, had known their rights, had known that when they walk into the workplace, if there's something unsafe, they can report it. They would have understood what their rights were under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. They would have understood the rights under the Workers' Compensation Act.

Some of the statistics I'm going to read from the Steelworkers program, the same program that's presented to students, wouldn't have happened. They're quite alarming. I was just going through them. I didn't imagine that the numbers were as bad as that. There have been 60 young workers who have died in Ontario in the workplace since the year 2000. We're talking about 60 kids here somewhere between the ages of probably 15 and 18 years of age: young people who have not been able to continue with their lives; families who have lost their loved ones, and sometimes for something that was preventable. Imagine if these young workers had had this bill and had been in a position where the employer would have had to provide the type of information needed in order to make the young worker aware of what is safe and what is unsafe. Maybe some of these 60 tragedies, let's hope all of them, could have been prevented from happening. So this bill certainly speaks to what the experience has been in this province in regard to what happens when we're not aware of what our rights are, and I go back my original point, which is that you need to know your rights in order to exercise them.

The number of injuries—and this is a statistic again from the Steelworkers program—shocked me. I didn't expect it to be this high. If I asked the members of this Legislature how many workers have reported injuries since the year 2000 in this province, I would have thought somewhere from 20,000 to 30,000. That's what I would have thought. But the number is 250,000. It is really shocking that 250,000 young workers in this province have reported injury, which tells me as well that there's got to be a whole bunch more that didn't report it. It comes back to my first point that if you know your rights and you exercise them, maybe these injuries could be prevented.

The second thing is, how many people don't report? I know that's the case for many. I'm guilty of that. I worked, again, for my father. I didn't report a workers' compensation thing. My father had a television repair business and I would work for him on weekends and evenings, delivering televisions after they were fixed and stuff when I was about 16 or 17 years old, after I got my licence. I fell down a flight of stairs with the television because the stairs were slippery. Back then I was a lot slimmer. The TV sort of hit me as I went down. I saved the television. My father was very proud of me that he didn't have to fix the TV at his cost, but my back ever since then has been bad. Every now and then I find myself in a situation—you've sometimes seen me walking humped over a bit in this Legislature. It stems from that injury. I never reported that accident because I didn't even know there was a Workers' Compensation Board when I was 16 years old, and certainly my father didn't tell me. Sorry, Dad, I had to put that on the record. I still love you.

Again, it's one of those things. What would have happened if, let's say, I had been an electrician by trade, stayed in my trade and not gone into provincial politics, where I'm able to deal with the injury because it's a lot easier to deal with in this job than it was as an electrician? It might have impacted on my ability to earn a living and provide for my family. So again it comes back to the point that you need to know your rights in order to exercise them. If I had known my rights as a young worker at 16 years of age, I would have reported a Workers' Compensation claim, and who knows, I might have needed it. As it turns out, I'm fortunate with regard to most, in regard to being in a position where that is not so much an issue.

Again, I want to say that the stats are shocking. It's really, truly shocking, the number of young people in this province who are killed or injured in the workplace.

Are you trying to tell me something or are you just making notes?

Ms. Horwath: No, I'm just making notes.

1140

Mr. Bisson: I was reading your notes and going, "What are you trying to tell me here?"

Anyway, the stats are extremely shocking. Anything we can do in this Legislature in order to give the tools they need to young people to be informed about their

rights so they're not put in harm's way will speak volumes to the good that can come out of this Legislature. Again, I want to thank the students.

I want to end on this point: I worked in the mining industry as an electrician and I've seen at first hand, unfortunately, the tragedies of the workplace. In two instances they were summer students that we had working for us. One was at the Foleyet Penhorwood mine at Johns-Manville and the other was at the Pamour mine in Timmins, where students who had come to work for a summer job to get a college education basically lost their lives in the workplace.

One particular young worker who was about 18 years old fell—we had a sort of elevator system for moving men up to the various floors of the mill to do the work that needs to be done. In this particular case, this young person was not properly trained in how to get onto this moving conveyor belt that brought you to the upper floors. In fact, that system should never have been designed, but that's a whole other story. The young man jumped onto it as it was going by the fourth floor, fell down and struck his head at about floor two or floor three and died. If this young worker had been informed of his rights and, more importantly, had been told what is safe and what is not safe and not to do that and how to use that, that young person probably would still be here today.

I remember another young man—I think his name was Paul, if I remember correctly; it's going back a lot of years ago—who was cleaning out an ore bin up in the head frame at Pamour. The ore bin is where, when you convey the ore from the underground on the skips, it dumps into big ore bins. Quite a bit of muck, as we call it, which is broken rock, goes into this bin. It was plugged, which was normally the case. You always get wet and cold and freezing of the muck—not so much freezing because of the cold, but the muck congeals together. He was up with a blow pipe trying to get the muck moving and it wasn't moving, so he decided to walk out onto the muck pile. The thing gave way and he basically suffocated to death, fell right into the ore bin. I'll tell you, a whole whack of people were feeling pretty bad about that. We as a health and safety committee thought we were doing everything we could in order to make this worker safe; the mine certainly thought they did everything they could to make this worker safe. In this particular case it was the mine captain's son. So they lost their son. It's something that always touches me, because I was there when it happened, in the sense that it's a bit emotional. But it was a situation, even in that case, where we thought we had done our job. We had not done it well enough, and unfortunately that young man is no longer with us today and died an excruciating death.

So I say to people, I've seen it first-hand. I've heard the yells and the screams, and heard them all. I have to tell you, it's not a pleasant thing to see. So anything we can do to prevent this kind of injury or disease certainly must be done. I commend the students for having brought this forward and my good friend Andrea Horwath for doing this. There are also things about hours of work, but

I'm running out of time. I only have 23 seconds left. I will just say to all my friends, a job well done.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): Congratulations to the students who worked so hard on this project, to the CBC and Mr. Wise, who produced the CBC program *Making the Grade*, and to our colleague Ms. Horwath for bringing forward Bill 95.

It points to a tremendous need: the need to improve young workers' health and safety and to ensure that they understand clearly the hazards on the job. The statistics are pretty clear: In Ontario, for which we have the 2004 numbers, there were 277,422 injuries on the job. Out of those, 49,000 young people were injured on the job. And out of those, seven died.

Their deaths remind me of the monuments we have around Queen's Park. Straight to the east, we have the monument to fallen police officers. When a criminal fires at a police officer at point-blank range, that is not an accident, or some might say that accident cannot be prevented.

To the south, on the corner of University and College, we have the firefighters, those who have given their lives in saving others. When a child is screaming or yelling from a fire in a great building or even in a small house, the firefighter forgets all the precautions and rushes in. In most cases, that accident cannot be prevented.

Just to the south, we are building today, as we speak, a monument to those who gave their lives for this great country in the great wars—even today in the war in Afghanistan, in Kandahar, where three of our soldiers were blown up by a roadside bomb. That accident could not be prevented.

Tomorrow, our colleague Mr. Ramal is going to introduce a bill, Bill 86, a private member's bill. It's about a monument for those who were injured and died on the job. I don't think we wish to be there, but we need to be reminded of the safety and the hazards on these jobs. Accidents on the job can be prevented. While we have a number of flyers, while the government has a website, while we have notices and brochures, I think that if we can prevent just one accident, and if through Bill 95 we can simply prevent one death, that would be a real accomplishment. That's why today I and my colleagues will be supporting this bill. That's why we, today, want to thank the students for bringing it forward because, together, we can build a better Ontario, to better understand the health hazards and the problems that are work-related.

We want to thank these students. Our support will be with them, and I know we will succeed in building a better Ontario.

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby-Ajax): I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to join in this debate on Bill 95, to be known as the Employment Statute Law Amendment Act.

We've heard from several of the speakers here this morning about what a historic opportunity and time this is, that this sort of thing has not been done in the Legislature before. I wouldn't know about that. For those students who wouldn't know, I'm a newly elected

member. I just arrived here after March 30, so I'm still learning the processes and procedures here in this House. It seems to me that this is the kind of thing we really should be encouraging with students, to open up the process of the way things happen here and encourage all of you to become more involved in the political process as time goes on.

I'd like to extend my thanks to you and my congratulations on a job really well done to the students from St. Ignatius of Loyola school, Cardinal Carter school and Lisgar Collegiate. You've done a terrific job. I'd also like to thank Mr. Wise of the CBC—I think this is an important initiative—and the member from Hamilton East as well for sponsoring this bill.

The purpose of the bill of course is to give students the essential information they need concerning employment standards matters, concerning the rate of pay, holiday time, matters relating to employment standards issues, as well as occupational health and safety matters. This is really essential information that all students need to have as they enter the workplace for the very first time. I don't know if things have changed; it's been about a million years since I started my first job as a cashier at Woolco many years ago. But I don't think things have changed that much. Probably when you start your new job, you're a little bit nervous, a little bit apprehensive. You're adjusting to new colleagues, to working for someone, to what your new job is going to be, and though you hear bits and pieces of what your rights and responsibilities are, it doesn't really come together in one whole package for you. The onus is really on you, as a student, to seek information out. I think most students probably are not likely to go and seek that information because either they think they're supposed to know it or they're a little bit too nervous to seek it out. I certainly remember those feelings quite well.

I think that what this bill does in order to put this information together in a comprehensive package in the form of the pamphlet and the notice that goes up on the board for students to see is really important. Also, because it spells out the information that employers have to indicate on these notices, it provides uniformity across the board for all employers, so you know that in every workplace the same sort of information is going to be conveyed to students.

1150

Even though the vast majority of employers, I know, take occupational health and safety matters and employment standards matters very seriously, the fact remains that between 2000 and 2004, there were 60 student fatalities on the job, most of them in the construction and heavy industry sectors, where students were required to work with heavy machinery, as one of the previous members has stated, where the work can be awkward and dangerous. So there's a lot of work to be done. I think that this bill goes very far to addressing those issues. The website of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board says that young people who understand these rights and know how to use them are better able to protect themselves on the job. My hope is that this legislation, when

passed, as I hope it will be, will significantly reduce the number of fatalities—and hopefully eliminate them—so that all students will be knowledgeable and have the opportunity to work in a safe workplace.

The cost of this project is negligible. Once it gets up and running, the employers will have the pamphlets available and will have the notice already posted. To my mind, if even one life can be saved, then of course it's going to be worth it. I thank the students very much again, and their teachers, for bringing this important information before us. I support it wholeheartedly.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): I want to echo one more time what I've always done in private members' business. To tell the member from Hamilton East exactly where I'm voting, I'm voting in favour of the bill. I think private members' business is an important part of our process. I want to thank the students, and I want to thank the teachers, obviously. If I want to make sure that I'm on the good side, I'll say, Mike Wise, thanks very much again. I will suggest that I'm glad he took some of our discussions, which Mike and I had about how to make sure everybody understands that private members' time and the private members' business is very difficult, seriously. You don't simply just throw bills down and get them passed. As a matter of fact, there's a likelihood that a lot of the private members' bills—not today's, but including today's—seldom ever pass. It's not an agenda that you get elected for, so the process is to provide private members with an opportunity to speak.

I want to thank the member from Oak Ridges, the member from Don Valley West, and the member from Hamilton East collectively for stepping forward and assisting the students. I want to thank all the members for participating in the debate. What I also want to explain is that private members' bills don't always get passed, but I will tell you that their spirit is picked up in most governments. Since 1999, when I was elected, to now, I've introduced several private member's bills. Luckily, I've had a couple pass. One of them was the anaphylaxis bill that changed the curriculum in schools to make sure that schools took care of students with anaphylaxis, because people were dying. So that's one example where the Legislature stood together and said, "We've got to do something about this." These are the types of things that come to private members' time.

The other thing is, I've got about seven or eight other private member's bills where the previous government and this government took the idea and incorporated it into a government bill. That's another opportunity for the students to acknowledge that maybe you won't get this bill passed, but you'll probably get your message sent and changes are done. The member from Oakville made it quite clear that ministry staff are listening and ministers are listening. Just because you might not see the person you think should be in here, they find that out. I want to say that clearly.

Now, specifically to Bill 95: Thank you for giving us the voice of you, as students. You're telling us what you need to make sure that you've done your homework

about this. What do we need to help you get your job done on site? Thank you for sharing that voice. I do want to say that we're not making bad stuff better; we're making good stuff even better. Because Ontario has the best record in Canada in terms of student safety. It's not good enough, but it is the best record. We want to take something that is good and make it better. That is a good thing for us to do and discuss and debate, and to make sure if there are flaws in the bill—that's why we send them to committee, so that the public and members on all sides can bring those issues forward and discuss them. I can't emphasize enough what the process we're doing now means. It means we are taking the voice that only 103 of us have at this time and starting to give it to the people, where it belongs. We do represent our areas, our ridings and our parties, but private members' time is a perfect opportunity for us to translate the voice of the people into legislation. I congratulate all involved in the process.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): The member from Hamilton East has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Horwath: I want to begin my two minutes of response by just indicating to the students here that the reason the chamber seems a little empty is because there are a number of committees going on right now. We're doing this special day when there are all kinds of other obligations that other members have. Members who aren't here are certainly aware of all three bills that have been brought forward and are very supportive of your work and your concerns. But unfortunately, because of us putting this special day together, there was all the other business of the House taking place, all the other committee work. It is important to make that comment, so that you know it's not through disinterest that most people aren't here; it's because they had other obligations they had to undertake this morning on committees.

I also wanted to reflect that when members spoke on Bill 95, they spoke about their own experiences when they were students and as workers; they spoke about their experience as parents whose children are going off into the workforce and some of the issues concerning them there. They raised issues of being unionized workers and what was happening as a unionized worker in terms of getting information from their union.

Interestingly enough, I recall that when I was meeting with Cardinal Carter school, one of the students there indicated that her mom was in a union and her dad wasn't, and she could tell the difference between their experiences as workers in access to information and support in enforcing their rights on the job in a unionized environment.

I wanted to mention that this issue is an ongoing concern in the labour movement broadly around young workers. The ministry as well is doing some work on young workers' issues. On April 28, the day of mourning, I had the experience of seeing something called a life quilt, which is a memorial to younger workers between the ages of 15 and 24 who were killed on the job. It's a memorial to remember that we have to stop workplace injuries and accidents.

I just want to mention really quickly that it is also about things like hours of work, the right to breaks, what happens on vacation and what are the statutory holidays? All of that is information that's necessary for young workers to know about, and this bill will take care of it.

The Acting Speaker: The time provided for private members' public business has expired. We will deal with each of the ballot items as they were presented this morning.

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT
(NUTRITION STANDARDS IN
SCHOOLS), 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR
L'ÉDUCATION (NORMES ALIMENTAIRES
DANS LES ÉCOLES)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): We will deal first with Bill 93, standing in the name of Mr. Klees. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

There being more than five members standing, we will call that after dealing with the others.

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT
(SCHOOL WASTE REDUCTION), 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR
L'ÉDUCATION (RÉDUCTION DES
DÉCHETS DANS LES ÉCOLES)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): The second item is Bill 96, standing in the name of Ms. Wynne. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

There being more than five members standing, that too will be dealt with in a moment.

EMPLOYMENT STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT (INFORMING
STUDENTS OF THEIR EMPLOYMENT
RIGHTS), 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI A TRAIT À L'EMPLOI
(FOURNITURE DE RENSEIGNEMENTS
AUX ÉTUDIANTS SUR LEURS DROITS
EN MATIÈRE D'EMPLOI)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): The third and final bill this morning is Bill 95, standing in the name of Ms. Horwath. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Again, there are more than five members standing. Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell. *The division bells rang from 1200 to 1205.*

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT
(NUTRITION STANDARDS IN
SCHOOLS), 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR
L'ÉDUCATION (NORMES ALIMENTAIRES
DANS LES ÉCOLES)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Mr. Klees has moved second reading of Bill 93. All those in favour will please stand and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnett, Ted	Gravelle, Michael	Peters, Steve
Barrett, Toby	Hardeman, Ernie	Phillips, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Horwath, Andrea	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Hoy, Pat	Racco, Mario G.
Bountrogianni, Marie	Jackson, Cameron	Ramal, Khalil
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramsay, David
Brownell, Jim	Klees, Frank	Runciman, Robert W.
Caplan, David	Kular, Kuldip	Ruprecht, Tony
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Levac, Dave	Sandals, Liz
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLeod, Lisa	Scott, Laurie
Colle, Mike	McGuinty, Dalton	Smith, Monique
Cordiano, Joseph	McMeekin, Ted	Takhar, Harinder S.
Craitor, Kim	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Watson, Jim
Di Cocco, Caroline	Miller, Norm	Wilkinson, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol	Wilson, Jim
Duncan, Dwight	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Elliott, Christine	Munro, Julia	Wong, Tony C.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Parsons, Ernie	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Gerretsen, John	Patten, Richard	Zimmer, David

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 60; the nays are zero.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

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

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I would ask that this bill be referred to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

The Acting Speaker: The member has moved that this be sent to the standing committee on regulations and private bills. Is it carried? Carried.

I'm required to open the doors for 30 seconds.

1210

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT
(SCHOOL WASTE REDUCTION), 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR
L'ÉDUCATION (RÉDUCTION DES
DÉCHETS DANS LES ÉCOLES)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Ms. Wynne has moved second reading of Bill 96. All those in favour will please rise and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Pupatello, Sandra
Barrett, Toby	Horwath, Andrea	Racco, Mario G.
Bartolucci, Rick	Hoy, Pat	Ramal, Khalil
Bentley, Christopher	Jackson, Cameron	Ramsay, David
Bountrogianni, Marie	Jeffrey, Linda	Runciman, Robert W.
Bradley, James J.	Klees, Frank	Ruprecht, Tony
Brownell, Jim	Kular, Kuldip	Sandals, Liz
Caplan, David	Levac, Dave	Scott, Laurie
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Monique
Chudleigh, Ted	McGuinty, Dalton	Takhar, Harinder S.
Colle, Mike	McMeekin, Ted	Tory, John
Cordiano, Joseph	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Craitor, Kim	Meilleur, Madeleine	Watson, Jim
Delaney, Bob	Miller, Norm	Wilkinson, John
Di Cocco, Caroline	Mitchell, Carol	Wilson, Jim
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Duncan, Dwight	Munro, Julia	Wong, Tony C.
Elliott, Christine	Parsons, Ernie	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Patten, Richard	Zimmer, David
Gerretsen, John	Peters, Steve	
Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 61; the nays are zero.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

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

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I'd ask that the bill be referred to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

The Acting Speaker: The member has moved that the bill be referred to regulations and private bills. Is it agreed? Carried.

Open the doors for 30 seconds, please.

EMPLOYMENT STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT (INFORMING
STUDENTS OF THEIR EMPLOYMENT
RIGHTS), 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI A TRAIT À L'EMPLOI
(FOURNITURE DE RENSEIGNEMENTS
AUX ÉTUDIANTS SUR LEURS DROITS
EN MATIÈRE D'EMPLOI)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Ms. Horwath has moved second reading of Bill 95. All those in favour will please rise and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Pupatello, Sandra
Barrett, Toby	Horwath, Andrea	Racco, Mario G.
Bartolucci, Rick	Hoy, Pat	Ramal, Khalil
Bentley, Christopher	Jackson, Cameron	Ramsay, David
Bountrogianni, Marie	Jeffrey, Linda	Runciman, Robert W.
Bradley, James J.	Klees, Frank	Ruprecht, Tony
Brownell, Jim	Kular, Kuldip	Sandals, Liz
Caplan, David	Levac, Dave	Scott, Laurie
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Monique
Chudleigh, Ted	McGuinty, Dalton	Takhar, Harinder S.
Colle, Mike	McMeekin, Ted	Tory, John
Cordiano, Joseph	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Craitor, Kim	Meilleur, Madeleine	Watson, Jim
Delaney, Bob	Miller, Norm	Wilkinson, John

Di Cocco, Caroline	Mitchell, Carol	Wilson, Jim
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Duncan, Dwight	Munro, Julia	Wong, Tony C.
Elliott, Christine	Parsons, Ernie	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Patten, Richard	Zimmer, David
Gerretsen, John	Peters, Steve	
Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry	

The Acting Speaker: Those opposed will please rise.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 61; the nays are zero.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I'd like to have the bill sent to the standing committee on regulations and private bills, please.

The Acting Speaker: It's been moved that the bill be sent to regulations and private bills. Is it carried? Carried.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to have the House declare Mike Wise an honorary member of the Legislature.

The Acting Speaker: The member is seeking unanimous consent.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: I heard several noes.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, I do now leave the chair and the House will resume at 1:30.

The House recessed from 1215 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**BORDER SECURITY**

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): For weeks now the provincial government has been playing a political game in this House. Through members' statements, staged questions and petitions, they've attempted to blame Prime Minister Stephen Harper for the US proposal that all travellers crossing the border may soon be required to carry passports.

Just for a moment, let's accept their rationale. If it is all the federal government's fault that this passport issue is looming on the horizon, then where was the federal Liberal government on September 23, 2004, when the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act was introduced in the US Senate? Where were the Paul Martin Liberals when this bill was being debated and when it was passed by the Senate on October 6, 2004? Where were the federal Liberals when it was being debated in the House of Representatives and passed that same month? Where were they when the Senate and the House were discussing the bill in conference? Where were they on December 17, 2004, when the bill, having been passed by the Congress, was presented to the President? Why didn't Prime Minister Martin forcefully defend Canada's tourism interests when he met the US

President on November 30 and December 1, 2004, before the American security bill was law? And why didn't he push for a Canadian exemption when he met with the President on two subsequent occasions?

Any fair-minded review of the facts would conclude that blaming the federal government for this problem means that 95% of the blame rests with the former federal Liberal government. But blaming another level of government yields no solution. It's time for the provincial government to stop pointing fingers and begin to take constructive steps to solve this problem, working co-operatively with governments—

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

ASSISTANCE TO ARTISTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): Lately there has been considerable attention paid to the revitalization of existing cultural landmarks like the Royal Ontario Museum and the Art Gallery of Ontario, and the construction of new venues like the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts. These projects are being credited by some for awakening a cultural renaissance here in Ontario. While it's undeniable that these institutions will enrich the province, they can't do it alone. These stages, performance halls and galleries all rely on artists to bring them to life. For this cultural renaissance to be fully realized, measures to improve the working lives of artists need to be introduced.

Artists contribute significantly to Ontario. Their work helps to enliven our communities, stimulate our intellectual lives and attract investment to the province that helps build economic growth.

Despite the ways that Ontario benefits from the work of its artists, this is not a reciprocal arrangement. Artists rank amongst the lowest-paid workers in Ontario. They're not afforded the minimum standards that protect the rest of the workforce. Many live in poverty.

Many artists are here today in the Legislature to advocate for the introduction of status-of-the-artist legislation that would provide them and their peers with protection in the workplace and more income security. Arts and culture play a critical role in helping Ontario flourish in so many ways. My hope is that this Legislature will assist them.

BAYVIEW VILLAGE ASSOCIATION

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): I rise to inform this House of an important milestone for the community of Willowdale, my riding. On May 15, 2006, Bayview Village Association will celebrate its 50th anniversary. Established in 1956, Bayview Village Association serves to promote the welfare of the residents of Bayview Village through government advocacy and the organization of social and cultural events.

With the help of their executive committee volunteers Gail Bebee, Poonam Jain, Keith McKey, Donald Gerrior,

Ken Kurkowski, Doug Webster, Zelick Bocknek, Megan McRae, Judi Codd and the rest of the very dedicated volunteers, the Bayview Village Association has helped to create one of the most desirable neighbourhoods in the city of Toronto. Whether through their government affairs work, community July 1 fireworks, Neighbourhood Watch initiatives or simply by encouraging residents to get involved in their community, the Bayview Village Association has made a big difference in the lives of its members.

I'm proud to have Bayview Village Association as a community partner and look forward to celebrating the contributions of this inspiring organization at their golden jubilee. I would also like to recognize member Simin Molookzadeh and her daughter Sara from Bayview Village, who are with us today.

GROWTH PLANNING

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): Members will know that the amount of growth that's going on in the greater Toronto area, the GTA, is quite unprecedented at this time in our province. In fact, in my community of Burlington, that growth is three times the provincial average. Growth can be a positive thing when services expand to meet the growing needs of a community, but there is a critical situation emerging in our community, both in terms of health care and in terms of our educational supports through our schools.

The truth is that Joseph Brant hospital has been forced to cut 48 beds, one quarter of all their acute care beds, yet we desperately need the hospital expansion which the district health council and the restructuring commission both agreed Joe Brant deserves. We want the current government to acknowledge the \$45-million expansion that's required for Joseph Brant hospital; we want them to acknowledge it this year.

We want this government to acknowledge the Halton school board, which has gone out and constructed three schools at a cost of \$100 million without any support from the current government. They're doing this on the strength of promises made by the Liberal government during the last election, promises that they have not yet kept.

As the great city of Burlington continues to grow, so should the provincial Liberal government recognize the critical need for our hospital's expansion and for the new school construction for the children of our community.

AWARD EVENT

CÉRÉMONIE DE REMISE DES PRIX

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): On Saturday evening I had the pleasure of attending the Fallingbrook Community Association's volunteer recognition awards night at the Ray Friel Recreation Complex in my riding of Ottawa–Orléans. The Fallingbrook Community Association, or FCA, hosts an award night annually in order to recognize the volunteers who come together to make

Orléans an even better place to live. The awards were hosted by Zybina Richards, the president of the FCA. I was happy to present the awards to the recipients, alongside my colleagues and friends Councillor Bob Monette, Councillor Rob Jellett and the federal MP's representative, Royal Galipeau.

Mrs. Zybina Richards, our FCA president and host for the evening, was an award recipient herself. The FCA was honoured to present her with the long-term service award for all her efforts within the association as well as in the community. Mrs. Richards is the association's longest-serving president, and has now held this position for over six years.

Other recipients included Kelly Grant, the fourth Orléans Scout leader who helped to organize last year's Greater Orléans Canada Day celebration, and Alexandra Gayle, who received the Girl Guides junior leader award. Alexandra has been a junior leader for the past two years. Meredith Vrbanac received the English Catholic school award for her volunteer work at the St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School, work done over the last four years.

C'était un honneur de participer à cette cérémonie. Il y a tant de personnes dans notre communauté qui doivent être reconnues pour leur service bénévole. Nous à Orléans sommes vraiment chanceux d'avoir des gens qui veulent sacrifier leur temps pour servir notre communauté.

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): I wanted to make a few comments in the House today following the reading of an article in Monday's Toronto Sun which reported on the funeral for Mahmood Bhatti, the Beck taxi driver who was murdered, stabbed to death last week in Toronto.

The part of the story that certainly drew my attention was the fact that friends of the family have established a fund to raise monies to assist the family in meeting the costs of continuing to meet the everyday challenges of living in this community. Apparently, they are not receiving any assistance from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board in the province of Ontario. I want to mention that donations to the Mahmood Bhatti fund can be made at any TD Canada Trust branch, and I would encourage people to do that.

My point is dealing with the lack of assistance for the victims of crime in this province. We've seen the Wamback family foundation, and we've seen Louise Russo forced to do a plea bargain with members of organized crime organizations, while the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board is sitting on a surplus of \$40 million. I would encourage the government to move in a meaningful way to assist victims of crime.

1340

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): I rise today to share with the House a unique program benefiting new

Canadians both in my riding of Mississauga East and all across the GTA. The Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre in my riding is now working as part of the Mentoring Partnership, an alliance of community agencies in the city of Toronto, Peel region and York region which offer occupation-specific mentoring to skilled immigrants.

The Mentoring Partnership, a brainchild of the Toronto Regional Immigrant Employment Council, matches new Canadians with established professionals in their employment field. The Mentoring Partnership currently has over 35 corporate partners, 950 registered mentors and close to 1,000 matches. The mentor relationship lasts for four months, during which time mentors assist new immigrants through the job search process, providing guidance on how to write a Canadian resumé, how to prepare for an interview and how to network. Mentors also provide valuable knowledge about Canadian workplace culture and access to professional networks.

About 125,000 newcomers arrive in Ontario each year, more than half of those coming here to Ontario. The McGuinty government is committed to helping newcomers reach their full potential.

I want to take this time to acknowledge and congratulate the Mentoring Partnership and its sponsors for the invaluable contributions they make to the lives of new Canadians. By doing so, they are helping us strengthen Ontario's workforce for the future.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): A few days ago, I had the opportunity to attend Clinton Public Hospital's 100th anniversary, and this Friday I have the opportunity to attend Wingham hospital's 100th anniversary. This is a true milestone for these two hospitals. Each hospital has delivered quality care to the community, and I know they will continue to do so for many years to come.

I have taken the time to travel throughout my riding to visit each hospital—and I just want to make everyone aware that I have eight hospitals in my riding. Each time that I go, I am reminded of how hard the staff, doctors, nurses and all the other health care providers work to deliver the excellent health care that we receive. I would like to thank each and every one of them, because they are the force behind our quality health care system.

I would like to take this time to congratulate Clinton and Wingham hospitals for 100 very successful years.

HEARING LOSS

Mr. Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay–Superior North): Last week, I was privileged to take part in the Canadian Hearing Society's hard of hearing day event in Thunder Bay. Along with other civic leaders, I was outfitted with earplugs and foam padding to simulate a severe hearing loss. At that point, I was set out into the community to get a sense of what it's like to deal with a government agency as a hard-of-hearing individual.

The experience was incredibly instructive, but also somewhat intimidating. As a result of my hearing loss, I no longer felt in control of my circumstances, and often felt physically disoriented. Although everyone I dealt with treated me respectfully, I developed a new awareness of how challenging the world can be for people living with a severe hearing loss. I had always thought that having a close relative with hearing loss, as I do, had sensitized me to those realities, but I learned that day that you truly do need to walk a mile in someone else's shoes to understand the reality of the situation. Having said that, it was a wonderful opportunity for me, and our team had a good time as well.

I want to thank Nancy Frost at the hearing society for arranging the day, but I need to reserve special thanks for Jaclyn Balcom and Kerrie Whitehurst, two young women who live with a hearing loss and who advised, guided and protected me and who made sure I truly understood the challenges faced by people with a hearing loss, but who also showed me that although their lives are clearly impacted by their hearing loss, they can and do lead complete and fulfilling lives. I also want to thank Shirley King, one of Thunder Bay's most wonderful volunteers, for being my driver that day. It was wonderful, altogether a great experience.

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 May 10, 2006, of the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to standing order 106(e)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on regulations and private bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Todd Decker): Ms. Horwath from the standing committee on regulations and private bills presents the committee's report as follows, and moves its adoption:

Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr19, An Act to revive Golden Dreams Home and Decor Ltd.; and

Bill Pr24, An Act respecting the City of London.

Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill Pr25, An Act respecting The Sisters of St. Joseph of Hamilton.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

VISITORS

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I rise to welcome to the Legislature Brendan and Dianne O'Brien, who are actually sitting in the government gallery. Brendan and Dianne are visiting from St. John's, Newfoundland. They are the parents of my wonderful legislative intern, Dan O'Brien.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: It being Community Living Day at Queen's Park, I'd like to recognize Gary Cooke, who is a constituent of mine, his daughter Lori, and more specifically, Community Living Oshawa/Clarington and Community Living Durham North.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Wednesday, May 10, 2006, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion 133. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1348 to 1353.

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

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Klees, Frank	Phillips, Gerry
Arthurs, Wayne	Kular, Kuldip	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bartolucci, Rick	Levac, Dave	Ramal, Khalil
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	MacLeod, Lisa	Rinaldi, Lou
Bountrogianni, Marie	Marsales, Judy	Runciman, Robert W.
Bradley, James J.	Martiniuk, Gerry	Ruprecht, Tony
Brownell, Jim	Matthews, Deborah	Sandals, Liz
Caplan, David	Mauro, Bill	Smith, Monique
Chudleigh, Ted	McMeekin, Ted	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike	McNeely, Phil	Tory, John
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Van Bommel, Maria
Di Cocco, Caroline	Miller, Norm	Watson, Jim
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol	Wilkinson, John
Duguid, Brad	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Elliott, Christine	O'Toole, John	Wong, Tony C.
Fonseca, Peter	Oraziotti, David	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Gravelle, Michael	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Zimmer, David
Hoy, Pat	Parsons, Ernie	
Jeffrey, Linda	Peters, Steve	

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

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
Horwath, Andrea	Martel, Shelley	
Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 55; the nays are 7.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

VISITORS

Hon. Caroline Di Cocco (Minister of Culture): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm really pleased to have here with us a number of members from ACTRA, including the president and executive director. I'd like them to stand, and for the House to recognize these incredibly talented people.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES**FLU PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS**

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm pleased to rise during a week that has been designated Emergency Preparedness Week. Emergency preparedness is an issue our government takes very seriously, and it is an issue for which my ministry is a lead partner. Therefore, allow me to take a few moments to advise you, Mr. Speaker, and all members of the assembly of the steps we are taking to ensure that Ontario is properly prepared for the threat of an influenza pandemic.

Let me also advise all members that our government's pandemic plan is not a static report, but rather a living and growing document that continues to be revised and improved and strengthened.

A pandemic is defined by its scope. It becomes a global epidemic or pandemic once it has spread around the world and affected a large percentage of the population wherever it spreads. An influenza pandemic would do precisely that. The threat is real, and the historical precedents are frightening. The Spanish flu pandemic of 1918-19 took the lives of more than 20 million people.

Public health experts tell us that another flu pandemic could happen any time, but they also tell us that if we're prepared, we can reduce the number of people who might become infected and the number who might die. Because pandemic flu spreads the same way as ordinary flu—by hand contact and through droplets contained in sneezes and coughs—basic precautions can greatly reduce its spread. Individuals can and should take precautions, like getting an annual flu shot, washing their hands with soap and staying home when they're sick.

Province-wide preparation and planning are also essential. In planning for a pandemic, our principal goal is to limit the impact of the influenza while continuing to provide the health services Ontarians need.

In order to prepare for a pandemic outbreak, the government of Ontario is stockpiling antiviral drugs and supplies; monitoring flu patterns here and around the world; ensuring we can distribute supplies, drugs and vaccine as soon as possible; and developing emergency plans to maximize the number of health care providers and facilities that are ready to fight the battle.

We will also provide regular updates to tell Ontarians how to protect and care for themselves and their families. That's why we're distributing three million flu pandemic brochures through drugstores, physicians' and dentists' offices, public health units and hospitals, all with the assistance of our health care associations and stakeholders. This brochure is also available on our website in more than 24 languages.

Earlier today, I announced another important weapon in the battle against pandemic flu. This morning I announced that we will be distributing emergency infection control kits to community physicians, family health teams, community health centres and midwives. Some 15,000 kits will be prepared and shipped in late May and June. These kits will give providers and staff concrete support to protect themselves and, by so doing, protect their patients in an infectious disease emergency. The kits contain personal protective equipment for infection control: things like masks, gloves and disposable gowns. The kits also contain communications materials for posting in offices as well as instructions on how to use these materials.

1400

In an emergency, the kits will help protect community health care providers and their staff from droplet-borne illnesses such as flu for the first seven to 10 days of an outbreak. After that initial period, these providers will have access to provincial stockpiles to address whatever needs remain. These stockpiles, currently being enlarged, will be available to all health care organizations once their own stockpiles have been utilized.

International experts have already said that essential supplies such as surgical masks are likely to be scarce and much sought after in the event of a pandemic. That's why we're working now to build our stockpiles of necessary supplies and equipment for infectious disease emergency. Such preparedness is absolutely essential.

I'd also like to take a moment to acknowledge and thank my parliamentary assistant, the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, who serves as pandemic lead and who brings tremendous dedication, energy and expertise to this job. Without Dr. Kular's efforts, our government would not be in the position we're in today.

Allow me also to acknowledge and thank the Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee and the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario. Both have been central to this effort and will continue to play a vital role in this process.

These efforts at pandemic preparedness reflect our vision of a health care system that will keep Ontarians healthy, provide them with quality care whenever they are sick and be there for future generations.

It's by acting now that we can be best prepared for a flu pandemic, and so we are. I know that all members support these efforts and share our commitment to this issue, and I wish to thank them.

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): I'm pleased to respond to the statement that has been made by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. However, I would briefly indicate to the minister that I think what is most disappointing is what was not talked about. Today, we have learned about something that has been made available to physicians and others, but the reality is that we know from other people that there is concern in the province that the government has not yet developed, or has, emergency plans available that are going to take us where they need to go. The whole plan is not yet complete.

But let's take a look at what this minister is doing. On a regular basis, we see many announcements being made. Most of them are totally lacking in any substance; there is no detail, there are no timelines, there is no money. If we take a look at some of the things that have happened in the past, we know there was an announcement made about health care workers not too long ago; again, no details, no dates, no timelines, no dollars. There was no indication as to who would fill those health care roles, who would be eligible, where the people were going to be trained or what this was going to cost. We're just hearing a lot of announcements without any real substance.

I would go on to say to you that we've heard announcements about nurses. There is growing concern from health stakeholders about the fact that the government is not going to be able to live up to its promise of creating 7,000 new nursing jobs. In fact, Doris Grinspun is on record today in the *Toronto Sun* indicating that she is not convinced that the "McGuinty government will live up to its promises of 7,000 new nursing jobs and 70% of all nurses working in full-time positions." She says, "We are not encouraged by the rate of progress.... It takes up to six months for a new nurse to find any kind of work ... and up to two years ... to find full-time work." She's also concerned about HealthForceOntario, "which will see the province set up a job portal for professionals from abroad, including nurses.... She calls that move 'unethical' and says, 'It's the US strategy of a quick fix.' There's a worldwide shortage of nurses ... with vacancies soon to be in the one-million range."

So there is growing concern on the part of stakeholders that this government continues to make announcements without any real substance, without any real detail. The announcement was made concerning the fact that there are going to be jobs available for new graduates. There's no confidence that that is going to happen either. In fact, the announcement that was made regarding new graduates and the talk about the fact that there was going to be tuition funding available if they went to rural areas is simply a re-announcement of an announcement our government made and that the Liberal

government cancelled shortly after they took office. So for them to pretend this is a new announcement, there is nothing that could be further from the truth.

The other thing is, we know that the wait time strategy is not achieving success. We continue to get many letters from individuals who are waiting long times, not just for the five priority areas, but certainly we know now firsthand that the other surgeries are waiting even longer as a result. And people are certainly not consoled by the fact that they can go to a website, because it is not improving access to the wait times whatsoever.

We're also hearing growing concerns about the family health teams. I met again with a group of people today. I met with some people last week. There is growing frustration about the inability of this Liberal government to deliver on the promise to actually put in place 150 family health care teams. They are just not able to do so. There are administrative challenges, there is too much bureaucracy, and doctors and other members of the health care team are becoming increasingly frustrated at the roadblocks and the lack of any template and assistance that this government has available to ensure that these family health teams are actually going to be up and operational.

I would say to the government, despite all the announcements on a daily basis, concern is growing about your ability to meet the needs of the people in this province.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): In response to the statement made by the Minister of Health today, let me say on behalf of New Democrats that Ontario's ability to respond to a flu pandemic is not going to depend on emergency infection kits being sent out to health care providers; it's going to depend on the number of front-line health care providers that we have in our institutions and in our communities in order to respond to a crisis. That is the bottom line.

The problem that we have in Ontario is that we do not have enough of those front-line emergency and health care providers to be able to respond to a SARS 2 crisis. Let's deal with nurses first. The president of the Ontario Nurses' Association, Linda Haslam-Stroud, was here a little over a week ago with 8,000 petitions representing the government's pledge to hire 8,000 new nurses in the province of Ontario—a pledge that this government has fallen far, far short of meeting to date. In fact, according to the government's own records that we have obtained through a freedom-of-information request, the government has hired 3,052 nurses to date, and 1,000 of those nurses are temporary, three- and six-month positions, for new graduate nurses in hospitals and long-term-care homes, not permanent positions in hospitals or long-term-care homes.

Now, not only has the government not lived up to its commitment to hire 8,000 new nurses and is far short of that goal but, as the president of ONA said, we are facing a major, major registered nurses shortage crisis right in the face. In 2008, 30,000 nurses in the province of Ontario will qualify to retire—30,000 registered nurses will qualify to retire two years from now. So the minister

goes out and makes an announcement on Monday that he is going to guarantee that 4,000 new graduate nurses will get a job in 2007. We need to hire 4,000, 4,000, 4,000 and 4,000 more if we are ever going to meet the needs and to replace those registered nurses who are going to be leaving the profession. Of course, we expect those nursing graduates to be hired. They'd better be, or what are we going to do with respect to patient care in the province of Ontario? And it can't only be 4,000; it has to be a whole lot more than that that we hire in this province in order to ensure adequate patient care. So we have a problem with the number of registered nurses in the province.

The minister, in his remarks, talks about midwives. Well, let me give you a quote with respect to midwives, because the Ontario midwifery association just this week, on Monday, because May 5 was Midwifery Week in Ontario, called on this government to increase the number of midwives in the province. They made it clear that last year, four out of every 10 women who wanted to use midwives in the province were turned away because there are not enough midwives to provide this kind of primary care.

1410

The association has had a proposal in to the Ministry of Health since June 2004 to expand the midwifery education program to double the number of enrolments by 150. Two years later we are in a situation where the government has failed to respond to this important proposal, where the government has failed to respond to the needs of women who want to use midwives as their primary care providers. Whether or not existing midwives have their kits doesn't respond to the fact that in a crisis we're going to need a whole lot more midwives just to deal with the crisis. The government should say yes to the proposal that has been put forward, double the enrolment of the midwifery education program and make sure we are responding to the primary care needs of so many women across this province.

Finally, most recently the government was given a report called Revitalizing Ontario's Public Health Capacity. That report was done to look at the abysmal state of public health in the province, specifically with respect to personnel. There are not enough full-time medical officers of health, there are not enough epidemiologists and there are not enough inspectors in our public health units across the province.

The capacity review committee made a number of recommendations specifically with respect to recruitment and retention of these personnel in our public health units. We know for a fact that in Toronto, the Toronto public health unit was very stressed—stressed to the max—during SARS, and we can't allow that to happen again. The government should look at the recommendations, 11 in total, made with respect to recruitment and retention, and get on with the job of making sure our public health units can respond, are adequately staffed and will be in place to protect public health during the next crisis.

COMMUNITY LIVING DAY
JOURNÉE DE L'INTÉGRATION
COMMUNAUTAIRE

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I believe we have unanimous consent for all parties to speak for up to five minutes to recognize Community Living Day.

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

The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for franco-phone affairs): I rise today to recognize Community Living Day in Ontario. I would like to acknowledge all the community living groups present in the House today. There are a number of them, but I particularly want to acknowledge Garry Cooke, president of Community Living Ontario, and Keith Powell, executive director of Community Living Ontario. Thank you for your wonderful work, for your leadership and for being here to celebrate Community Living Day in Ontario.

As a province, we continue to build opportunities for each of our citizens to find success and be fully included in our communities. But we know that some Ontarians need extra support in order to achieve their potential.

Pour des milliers de personnes atteintes de déficience intellectuelle, les soins prodigués par les bénévoles et le personnel des organismes locaux de l'intégration communautaire permettent d'offrir à ces personnes de nouvelles chances de se réaliser.

Grâce à une aide attentionnée, ces personnes acquièrent de nouvelles aptitudes et découvrent qu'elles peuvent participer en toute liberté au monde professionnel et scolaire, et devenir plus autonomes chez elles.

Our government is helping Ontarians with disabilities to participate in their communities and achieve their potential by introducing the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, improving employment supports for people who rely on the Ontario disability support program, and committing to the closure of the last three government-operated institutions so that all people with a developmental disability can have a home in our communities.

Pour nous aider à concrétiser la vision de l'intégration communautaire, les nouveaux investissements consentis par le gouvernement McGuinty pour les personnes atteintes de déficience intellectuelle dépassent maintenant 276 \$ millions.

Under the leadership of Dalton McGuinty, we have invested over \$276 million for people with developmental disabilities.

Il s'agit d'investissements en faveur des personnes, des familles et des collectivités qui créent de nouvelles possibilités et renforcent les services et les aides dont dépendent des milliers de personnes.

Ensemble, nous dressons un plan qui tient compte des problèmes des particuliers et des familles et qui relève les défis auxquels se trouve confronté notre système de

services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle.

Our plan is based on several important principles, including citizenship to promote self-determination and participation; fairness and equality so that people with the same needs get the same supports no matter where they live; accessibility and portability, so that when people move, their supports move with them; and sustainability, so that there will be a strong foundation of supports available for future generations of people with developmental disabilities.

Our plan will give families choices and flexibility and create a more streamlined and consistent way to access a broader range of supports. By joining together in this vision, we will make Ontario a more inclusive province where everyone can participate in their community and everyone has the opportunity to build success.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ernie Parsons, my parliamentary assistant, who did wonderful work by travelling the province to consult with those who work with people with developmental disabilities and gave us advice on what we can do to improve their situations.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I would like to welcome all of our community living organizations, volunteers, parents and self-advocates to Queen's Park today for Community Living Day. On behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus I applaud all community living organizations across our province for the wonderful work they do. Their dedication to helping those who have handicaps and their families is insurmountable. Our leader, John Tory, is an honorary director of Community Living Toronto and a sometime fundraiser for that organization. Thanks to community-minded citizens like Garry Cooke, president of Community Living Ontario; David Barber, past president; Bob Giasson, vice-president; Ken Dingleline, treasurer; and Keith Powell, secretary, as well as all the volunteers and staff, community living is an outstanding organization that really helps those in need.

I know how valuable Community Living Cambridge is in my riding. I believe that this organization truly reflects their mission statement very well. It reads, "Community Living Cambridge believes that all persons who have a mental handicap should live in a state of dignity." Community Living Cambridge works hard to ensure that they uphold their mission statement and they do an excellent job. Every year, Community Living Cambridge holds a dinner and dance that is really impressive. Many of their clients as well as parents attend, and the smiles on all their faces are amazing. Community living really makes a difference in the lives of those in need and their loved ones.

I would like to thank Dorothy Spencer, president of Community Living Cambridge; Val Brooks, vice-president; Maureen Butler-Morin, past president; Byron Bates, treasurer; and Michael Mullen, secretary, for all their tireless efforts in our community. They, as well as the rest of our board of directors, staff and volunteers, continue to do a phenomenal job.

It is very important for all of us to recognize the wonderful work community living does for our province. They offer a vast amount of programs such as preschool programs, residential and adult day services, to name just a few. These programs are critical for people with intellectual disabilities.

I believe that this year's theme, "Kids Belong Together," is incredibly important. Mr. Cooke said earlier today that education is a cornerstone in shaping a person's lifelong citizenship. That really says it all. Our children with intellectual disabilities need interaction with other children, and those other children need that interaction just as much. Inclusive education would be beneficial for all to educate all of our students to recognize and respect diversity.

In closing, I would like to thank all of our community living organizations, volunteers and parents who are here today. The Progressive Conservative caucus joins with you in celebrating Community Living Day.

1420

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches—East York): I rise with pride today to celebrate what is the seventh Community Living Day in this Legislature. On behalf of the NDP caucus, I welcome everyone to this Legislature who is here to celebrate that. I welcome the workers; I welcome the clients; I welcome the volunteers; I welcome the families of all of them.

Community Living's 2006 message is, "Kids Belong Together." We could not agree more. When we in Ontario have an education system that welcomes and facilitates the participation of those who belong here, then and only then will we have true inclusion. As your president, Garry Cooke, stated, "Education is a cornerstone in shaping a person's lifelong citizenship. When the education system welcomes and supports children to learn and to be part of the school around them, it has a profound effect on the nature and extent of their social and economic inclusion in the community as they grow into adults."

We know from years of extensive research that everyone touched by the process of inclusion learns valuable life lessons in respect of diversity, co-operation and understanding. We also sadly know that far, far too many—and in fact the majority—of children in the province with developmental disabilities do not have today that opportunity. Community Living's focus on inclusivity in education should help the government to recognize that children with disabilities, and in fact all children, will thrive when integration becomes the norm. Supports to meet all needs must be in place, and a greater understanding of the true meaning of safe schools for all students is necessary to reach that goal.

I couldn't forgive myself if I didn't also talk about inclusivity not only in the schools and not only for children but of adults. Inclusivity in this province means having sufficient monies, having the programs available to look after oneself. ODSP rates are sadly inadequate. Most people who are disabled are on some form of ODSP. Even when they have that money, if they are able to find some small work, some of it is clawed back. The

amount of money that they are able to earn is altogether too inadequate. As a Legislature, it would virtually cost nothing for this province if we were to increase the amount of money that they would be able to make in jobs that they have without clawing it back.

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: Not enough. You haven't done it enough. The member thinks she has done something; she has done almost nothing. We still claw back the money that these individuals make, and we ought not to be doing it. We need to make sure that they live above the poverty level; most of them still live below it.

I can tell you about some of the workers as well. Many of you would know my executive assistant in my office, Laurie Orrett, but you would not know her daughter. Her daughter is a young woman who has just finished high school and has a job. She works for two of the largest agencies serving people with developmental disabilities here in the GTA, The Meta Centre and Reena. I know that her heart is in absolutely the right place. She has volunteered there. She now has a job there and makes some money, but what I see happen to her I know happens to many workers across this province. Many of us would consider what she is paid to be not an adequate wage. She is paid \$12 in one location and \$15 in another, and that is at the top of the range.

We know that people with developmental disabilities often have a very difficult time. I would commend all the groups that help them. In my own riding we have Pegasus, which I talked about last year. We have Three Guys. We have the Dream Team, which works throughout Toronto. We also have a group called Lemon and Allspice, which works to train people to bake and provide confectionary service for many locations in this city.

But all of these people together and all of the work that they do is simply not enough. We need to do more. We need to do more to recruit the very best people to work with those with developmental disabilities. We need to include those with developmental disabilities within the school system and within the broader range of society, and we need to help the families to make sure that they have the very best service available to them. Then, and only then, can this Legislature stand and say that the day dedicated to community living will be a success.

I look forward to that day and commend the people who have come out here today, and ask all members of the Legislature: Next year, make sure we can talk with total pride about what we do for this community.

ORAL QUESTIONS

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. Premier, I think there is broad

agreement in this House that Ontario needs a new deal when it comes to the country's financial arrangements.

Applause.

Mr. Tory: I thank the members opposite for the applause. It's certainly not a new statement from me, but I'm glad to have their applause any time I get it.

When asked about—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. Stop the clock. You know, this really isn't a participation sport. We're looking for one member to be asking one question, and then one response from one minister.

The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: That would be an innovation, Mr. Speaker, but most welcome indeed.

Premier, when asked about the equalization agreement from the fall of 2004 by the media this morning, you said, "It was something that I opposed." You went on to say: "I don't recall signing anything. That was the imposition of the Martin government." Can you please confirm for us that this is indeed what you said this morning, that this was an arrangement that you "opposed"?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this. The member opposite will want to understand, of course, something of the nature of the circumstances going into that meeting. In fact, there was a proposal on the table put forward by three of my colleagues to increase equalization from \$8.9 billion to about \$15 billion per year. We had a very healthy discussion, if I might put it that way, internally, where I expressed, as I had outside prior to the meeting, my opposition to any healthy enhancement to the equalization in the range of going from \$8.9 billion to \$15 billion. I'm pleased to say that, in fact, did not happen.

Mr. Tory: I think if we are fair with the context of the questions this morning, the reference the Premier was making was to the arrangements that were actually announced in October 2004 and have indeed been implemented. I have said many times the same thing that you've said this morning and in your briefings today; namely, that a system that has an automatic escalation, regardless of how Ontario's economy is performing, for example, is not the best one when it comes to the province of Ontario.

The difference is, you were at meeting in October 2004 and I wasn't. In October 2004, in commenting on the deal you reached with Prime Minister Martin, not about what had gone on before the meeting, you said, "From our perspective as an Ontarian, we have come to a reasonable accommodation." That's the Toronto Star. In the Ottawa Citizen you said, "We have come to a reasonable accommodation ... we think we have struck the balance between making a fair contribution to the strength of the federation without compromising our ability to invest in the kind of programs that enable us to act as Canada's economic engine."

There's quite a discrepancy between these two. Our ability to get a new deal for Ontario will depend on

consistency and credibility. Did you in fact oppose the 2004—

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I think the issue before us today is whether or not we should enrich equalization further. That's the issue that is before us today. I've made it very clear that at this point in time, I think it would be inappropriate and unfair to Ontarians to contribute to a further enhanced equalization program. There is now a built-in escalator of 3.5%. It was enriched by 30% during the course of the last four years; that is, the equalization program itself.

The issue that is before us today is whether or not we should enrich it further. What I'm saying is that we should not. The members opposite may know there is a proposal on the table to enrich it by 28%. That would take Ontario's contribution from \$4.9 billion to \$6.3 billion. I have been very clear. I think that would be unfair to Ontario taxpayers.

1430

Mr. Tory: I repeat to the Premier: I think we need a better deal for Ontario, but we need to have consistency and credibility in order to get that deal. My question—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. I need to be able to hear the Leader of the Opposition make his question plain.

Mr. Tory: You are going to have to deal on our behalf with the government of Canada and with the other Premiers, and that is where the credibility and consistency is important.

My question was not with respect to where we're starting from today, but with respect to comments you made this morning and in October 2004 with respect to the deal that is in place today and that you are a part of. My question was very simple: When you said this morning that you opposed it, did you mean what you were saying then, or did you mean what you were saying in October 2004, when you described the very same deal as a reasonable accommodation? I think our partners in Confederation who are inside that room deserve to know which of those two answers applies to that deal, and so do the people of Ontario. Which is it?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I can assure the leader of the official opposition that my partners in Confederation aren't talking about the 3.5% escalator, which has been nailed down. What they're talking about is further enrichment to the existing equalization program. I think what Ontarians want to know is whether or not Mr. Tory supports further enrichment of the contribution we're already making to equalization, what it would represent, understanding now that the proposal that's on the table would take us from \$4.9 billion to \$6.3 billion. That represents, on a per capita basis for a typical family of four, going from \$1,555 being contributed to support programs and services in the equalization-receiving provinces, and adding to that another \$429 to support programs and services in other provinces. We think we should hang on to that \$429 for purposes of investment in our schools, in our hospitals, in our infrastructure and in the health and growth of our economy.

MEMBER FOR PARKDALE—HIGH PARK

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question again is for the Premier. Just so we can all be clear, Premier, can you tell us what is your standard as Premier and as leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario with respect to the matter of attendance in the House by members of provincial Parliament and the allocation of their time to the carrying out of their duties as an MPP?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): What the leader of the official opposition is getting at, of course, is the question of Mr. Kennedy, but I would ask him, in considering Mr. Kennedy, that he consider Mr. Flaherty. He announced he was leaving the Ontario Legislature on April 22. He actually resigned his seat on November 29. The elapsed time was 221 days. In the case of Mr. Baird—

Interjection: He was here every day.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The member opposite says he was here every day, and that's news to Mr. Flaherty. I say, regarding Mr. Baird, he announced he was leaving the Ontario Legislature on April 15. He resigned his seat in fact on November 29. The elapsed time was 228 days. Mr. Kennedy announced his resignation just 35 days ago.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. I can wait.

The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: What we didn't get was any articulation on a standard by the Premier, but the difference in terms of the examples that he did cite is that those two people in fact were in the House on a regular basis, took part in votes in the House, asked questions in the House and participated in the debates in the House during the period of time that the Premier made reference to.

In the case of the former Minister of Education, he has missed 53 votes in a row in the Legislature since making the announcement the Premier referred to. I'm asking a simple question. Maybe the Premier will say 53 votes in a row and really not appearing here at all is an acceptable standard over the period of time you referred to; maybe not. My question is, don't you think it's your responsibility to set some standard and to ask him to step down from his seat in the Legislature, since he clearly is not devoting himself to those duties, based on the fact you can't be two places at once and doing two things at once when he's outside of the province almost entirely?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: As usual, I'm always appreciative of the advice offered by the leader of the official opposition, notwithstanding the precedent he set regarding Mr. Flaherty and Mr. Baird.

Mr. Kennedy remains devoted to his constituents. As recently as last week, he was part of a very important announcement which improves the quality of health care services available in his constituency. Mr. Kennedy has made perfectly clear that at some point in time he will in fact be resigning. A by-election will naturally flow from that. But that is a matter between Mr. Kennedy and his

constituents, and as he's indicated, he will choose, together with them, the appropriate time to do that.

Mr. Tory: There is at least some consistency on this matter, because you did say yesterday that it's a matter for discussion between himself and his constituents. I'm assuming, from what you just said, that actually he could win the leadership of the Liberal Party of Canada and could continue to serve in that capacity as an MPP, because you said it is simply a matter between him and his constituents as to when he decides to step down.

I would suggest to you, with respect, that it is a matter for your leadership and setting some standards as to what is appropriate in this case, where today he's spending the day in Ottawa, and then he's off to New Brunswick, having been across the Rockies and in various other parts of the country, not here in the province of Ontario, and when he has said he's moving to Quebec for most of the summer.

What is your standard on this? It's not entirely up to him. You should be asking him for his resignation, because he's not able to devote himself to these duties.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I just don't think there's anything further I can shed by way of light on the situation. Mr. Tory has his particular perspective on this; I have mine, and I have nothing further to add.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Premier, the Medicor cancer clinic is a private, profit-driven operation opening today in Toronto. Its owners plan to charge patients an upfront fee of \$2,500 for an initial consultation and \$1,200 a month after that for ongoing care. Premier, this operation is in clear violation of the Canada Health Act and Ontario's Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act. It is another example of the two-tier health care that is happening in Ontario under the McGuinty government. My question is, what is your government going to do about Medicor?

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

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): It's interesting to hear the honourable member, the leader of the third party, today talking about the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, a bill that he and his party colleagues did not have the courage to support in this place. It was that we understood as a government the fundamental obligation to ensure the longevity of the public health care system through making sure that we had stronger mechanisms in place to prevent two-tier health care.

The honourable member speaks about a clinic, an office that is open today. We have no knowledge at present that they yet have a client or patient. But I can assure the honourable member of this: The Ministry of Health is working so as to ensure that any clinic that proposes to charge a fee in exchange for access to an insured service, in other words, forcing people to pay a

fee before an insured OHIP service can be provided, is in contravention of the Ontario law, and the appropriate actions, which include very, very significant penalties, are part and parcel of the solution.

1440

Mr. Hampton: I asked the Premier what he was going to do; the Minister of Health says that he might act after the bank is robbed.

Private clinics like Medicor drain desperately needed doctors and nurses away from our public health care system. They undermine the principle of universal access to health care. They usually take the easiest-to-treat cases, leaving the public health care system with the more expensive and difficult-to-treat patients. The result is that they make wait times for cancer patients even longer and they are difficult to curtail once you allow them to set up shop. Again, my question to the Premier is this: When will the McGuinty government act to stop buy-your-way-to-the-front-of-the-line health care in Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The honourable member arrives a little late to the debate, and then he arrives with all of his legal training lost to the discussion. This is the honourable member who now says that it's possible in the province of Ontario to arrest someone for saying that they're going to do something in the future. A clinic purportedly opened today. No evidence is brought to this subject except a story from a newspaper, no evidence that any client or any patient has been engaged there and no evidence that any fee has been exchanged there for a service.

We put a strong law on the books, and this party voted against it. That law places strong penalties: prohibitions against the action of two-tier medicine and prohibitions against a charge in exchange for access to an insured service. I assure this honourable member, who did not have the courage to lead his party to support this legislation, that we understand our duties fundamentally. We are fundamentally in favour of a universally accessible public health care system, and we will take the appropriate action in response to the threat of this clinic and any other that occurs.

Mr. Hampton: The McGuinty government says it stands for medicare. We're asking the McGuinty government to finally take some steps to prevent two-tier health care, something you are so obviously reluctant to do.

Medicor says, "We also explore options for treatments—not routinely available to you—and will coordinate such care if you wish." In other words, those who can pay extra will get preferential access to medical services. Paying your way to the front of the line contradicts the Canada Health Act. Paying for intake services and medical records and turning away patients who can't or won't pay block fees are also illegal under Ontario law and Canadian law. The question is, is the McGuinty government simply going to lecture people or are you actually going to do something to prevent two-tier health care in Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Now today I get a lecture on lecturing from the lecturer. This honourable member in

his first question asked, “Why don’t you vigorously apply the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, a bill that we oppose?” By his third question, he asked, “What are you going to do about the fact that you don’t have strong enough laws to address this?” This is the inconsistency that comes from the honourable member.

Fundamentally, on the issue of cancer, here are the results that we’ve produced: cancer radiation waits are down 16% from 2004 to 2005; province-wide cancer surgery waits are down 4.3%. We believe fundamentally in investments in the public health care system, and we’ve acted to place a very strong law on the books of the province of Ontario, with very strong penalties, which this honourable member voted against.

I say to anyone that seeks to operate in this fashion in the province of Ontario that we will take all of the action possible within our laws and pursue other measures as required in order to ensure that patients in Ontario have equitable access to these services.

LAND REGISTRATION

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): The only inconsistency we have is a McGuinty government that has lots to say but won’t do anything to prevent two-tier health care.

To the Premier: Yesterday, you said that the Teranet initial public offering is good for Ontario. What you should have said is that it is a gift for corporate CEOs, because under this McGuinty government-approved scheme, 15 Teranet executives are in line for a \$90-million cash payout: \$6 million for each corporate executive. Premier, Teranet is a monopoly granted by the Ontario government to a private corporation, and the folks who pay the bills are the hard-working people of Ontario. My question is, how do you justify a \$90-million gift to corporate CEOs, paid for by the hard-working people of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I’d like to remind the leader of the third party that the Ontario government has in fact agreed to permit Teranet to proceed with an income trust initial public offering that will provide excellent value to the people of Ontario. In August 2003 the province sold its 50% interest in Teranet, but retained full approval rights for any future sale until August of this year. The province also retained the right to share in the value of any future sale. We believe Ontarians have received excellent value for their interest in Teranet as a result of the transaction. More importantly, as part of the arrangement, important service improvements and system enhancements for Ontario’s land registry system have also been negotiated. Most importantly, the Ontario government will continue to regulate the service levels and have full control of statutory fees to ensure the protection of consumers. Upon completion of the IPO, we believe the government will realize revenues of approximately \$400 million.

Mr. Hampton: When ordinary people dig deep into their pockets to pay the land registry fees, they trust the money is going to pay for the services they actually receive. Instead, they learned today that the McGuinty government has okayed \$90 million of their hard-earned money going into the pockets of 15 corporate insiders, at \$6 million per executive. As one investor advocate said, “Unless these insiders walk on water, \$90 million is a pile of cash.” Premier, you are supposed to stand up for the working families of Ontario who pay the service fees. How could you sign off on a \$90-million looting of the people of Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: The deal had its genesis in 1991, and one needs to examine what long-term plan for executives was in place at that time. I would urge the member to use great caution when he intimates about who did what to whom, when, because as his government did to so many people on other files, you did an awfully different kind of job on this one as well.

I would again reinforce that this deal brings good value to the people of Ontario. It will bring \$400 million that can be invested in health care, in education and in other priorities. It brings service level enhancements and improvements. It keeps control over statutory fees. This is a good deal for the people of Ontario, a deal we made better—

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

Mr. Hampton: I know why the Premier doesn’t want to answer this question, because it looks, oh, so much like the Highway 407 deal. A year before an election, the Premier is prepared to put up with a \$90-million looting of hard-working Ontarians in order that he can shove some money into an election-year budget. But here’s what happens when Bay Street is allowed to control essential public services that people need. Once those services are taken over, they are captured by a culture of greed, and working families end up paying for huge executive salaries and bonuses. We see it with what you’re doing in terms of privatizing our hydroelectricity system, and now we see it at Teranet.

Premier, when are you going to stand up and defend the working people of Ontario instead of handing out \$90 million in bonuses to corporate executives?

1450

Hon. Mr. Duncan: This Premier and this government stood up to defend the people of Ontario against a deal that his party and the official opposition had originally signed off on.

The executive compensation that was included in the deal was a matter that was arrived at in 1998, and it included New Democrats and Conservatives on the board at the time. At the time of the sale of the 50% interest, the province lost all of its ability to influence LTIP.

This is a good deal for the province of Ontario. This deal protects the people of Ontario on statutory fees, it ensures service enhancements to rural and northern Ontario and it ensures that a conservative estimate of \$400 million will come to the province of Ontario.

That long-term incentive plan was indeed a lot of money, and it was negotiated in a way that we could only try to fix it on other parts of the deal. We've done that, and we've done a good job of it.

NATIVE LAND DISPUTE

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a question for the Premier. Your minister responsible for aboriginal affairs says that Caledonia is “the issue that this government is seized with 24 hours a day.” But upon receiving questions about the expanded perimeter, the bridge blockade over Highway 54 and objects falling off the bridge, the minister responded yesterday by saying, “I’m not aware of an expansion of the area of occupation.”

Premier, if your minister is indeed seized with this issue for 24 hours a day, why is he completely in the dark on the latest turn of events?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): The minister responsible for aboriginal affairs.

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): Thank you very much for the question. I would say to the honourable member that the way the question was couched yesterday, the local member made it seem as if that day some new activity was happening. According to the OPP incident reports, no new activity had happened since the weekend. You made it sound like something was going on in the last few hours, and it hadn't. There had been no increase in any occupation or protest activity since the weekend. Everybody had been informed about that and nothing new had happened since that time.

Mr. Miller: Minister, perhaps you need to do what Mr. Barrett, the member from the area, has done, and that is to actually go to Caledonia and see first-hand what's going on, because there is indeed a lot going on.

I think when the question was put to you yesterday, you didn't respond at all to all the changes that have been going on. For example, we know from the weekend Brantford Expositor that over the weekend, protestors erected a new barricade on the north side of the Highway 6 bypass bridge over the Grand River. It seems that everyone knew about this except you.

Minister, you say that you have people on the ground in Caledonia and your people have the support of the whole Ontario government. Given these resources, why are you in the dark on the recent escalations? What steps have you taken to be better informed? And why don't you do what the local member has done, which is to go to the blockade and actually meet with the people?

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: What we have done, and I'll give you the latest details from this morning, is to facilitate discussions with the confederacy and other representatives of the Six Nations.

This morning, now for the first time, we launched the long-term discussions with the federal rep and the new provincial reps; Barbara McDougall and Jane Stewart

were there. Basically they sat down this morning and started to lay out what they're going to be doing over the next few days. Meanwhile, discussions are going on, as we speak now, in regard to the short-term resolution to this dispute.

I would just like to say again to the member that everyone in this government is seized with the importance of this. All the Ontario government's resources are focused on this issue, and it is job one from the McGuinty government.

ASSISTANCE TO ARTISTS

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): A question to the Premier. Before the election, you promised to produce a report on the status of the artist in Ontario within the first two years of your government. Your government is now into its third year, and no such report has been released and no legislation has been tabled on the status of the artist in Ontario. When are we going to see the report and the legislation that were promised?

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

Hon. Caroline Di Cocco (Minister of Culture): First of all, I want to say that I'm proud of the fact that we had a stand-alone platform on culture in which status-of-the-artist legislation was a commitment we made. Since that time, we have had the advisory committee to the minister, which has been speaking to and is being advised by a number of individuals—4,000 people have responded. We are now in the process of taking all of those perspectives and are planning to move forward.

Today, I'm pleased that I met with a number of people from ACTRA, who are supporting our direction. We will be moving to legislation as soon as we can.

Mr. Hampton: After three years, no report and no legislation, the McGuinty government says this is moving fast.

The McGuinty government talks a lot about valuing culture, but in fact you're letting down the very artists and actors, the very women and men, who work so hard to create culture in Ontario. Some examples: Child actors working in Ontario have virtually no legislated protection on the job. Often their education suffers or, worse, their safety is put at risk when they're forced to perform stunts. Also, under Ontario law, most artists and actors are classified as independent contractors. According to the Employment Standards Act, they are not protected by the minimum labour standards that protect the rest of the workforce. Older artists have virtually no income security and are left to live in poverty because government refuses to average their incomes.

My question again: After three years, when are we going to see the promised report and the promised legislation on the status of artists?

Hon. Ms. Di Cocco: Not only have we been working for a very long time, trying to get this right, but we have accomplished a great deal when it comes to our cultural industry in this province.

I want to remind the member of some of the things we have done in our cultural industries. We have just provided \$49 million to support capital projects. We have provided \$23 million, because we believe we need to support and develop our media and creative clusters. We also know that we need to support our actors and try to help their quality of life and standard of living. We have every intention of doing so. We've made that commitment and—

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

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I have a question for the Minister of Community and Social Services. As you know, Minister, today is Community Living Day. We're joined by a lot of people from Community Living from all over Ontario. I'm a frequent visitor to Community Living Oakville. Every time I go, I can't help but be inspired by the adults with developmental disabilities, because they see opportunities instead of barriers. They feel a sense of independence every day when they participate in day programs, and when they work in the workshop or in the various businesses in their local community.

As part of the McGuinty government's major transformation of developmental services, you recently announced an \$84-million injection into that service sector, the largest one-year investment that any government has ever done. I know it's going to go a long way. This investment is a strong indication that we support full inclusion in our communities. Can you please tell this House how agencies like Community Living will benefit from this investment?

1500

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for franco-phone affairs): I thank the member from Oakville. I know he's a very great advocate for Community Living, and he also welcomed a Community Living individual in his office. So thank you very much.

Once again, I want to make sure this House understands that it's the largest investment in that sector that any government has had before. It's the single largest investment, and this will bring the total investment in developmental services to \$276 million since we formed the government, bringing the total we currently spend in this sector to \$1.35 billion. This investment will surely benefit Community Living. This funding will go toward the special services at home program, new permanent funding to expand residential services, and permanent funding—

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

Mr. Flynn: Minister, I have a question now about the staff who work at Community Living. Those who work in this sector are tremendous individuals. They dedicate so much of their time to ensure that people who have an

intellectual disability continue to receive the quality supports and services they require in order to live meaningful lives in our communities. They're always working above and beyond so that individuals receive the highest level of care and so that they can have a full and productive life. As you are aware, Minister, members of all parties in this House have read petitions in the Legislature regarding staffing issues in this sector. Would you please explain what we have done to address these specific concerns?

Hon. Mrs. Meilleur: First of all, let me again thank all the people at Community Living and other organizations who help us to serve the most vulnerable citizens of our community.

In this year's budget, we have allocated \$30.2 million in new funding for agencies to address the pressures, including labour, wages and operating costs. We know there is still more work to be done. However, we are taking steps in the right direction. As we move individuals from the remaining three facilities into our communities, we will continue to need dedicated and committed staff in this sector.

I encourage young people who are looking at post-secondary education opportunities to seriously consider the different areas in developmental services. Through the Ontario development services career connections grant, we are giving students financial support for those who wish to pursue a career in this sector. Once again, I thank the staff.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): My question is to the Minister of Health. You announced on April 13 a new drug reform package that would give, you said, better access to drugs, approval more quickly, and rapid funding decisions were going to be made on breakthrough drugs.

Your announcement prompted Andrew McFadyen to call my office. His two-year-old son Isaac was born with an extremely rare and debilitating disease called MPS VI, which results in shortened stature, joint stiffness, clouding of the corneas, compression of the spinal cord, to include a few. However, Minister, there is treatment, namely, enzyme replacement therapy. This can reverse some of the problems of this disease and may even prevent them altogether. This is in accordance with what has been said by Dr. Joe Clarke of Sick Kids.

I ask you, Minister, will you commit today to ensure bridge funding for this enzyme replacement therapy until a national policy is put in place?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I note from the honourable member's question an acknowledgement that we have a new piece of legislation before the House. I'm proud to say that it's making progress, that it's going to go out to committee and that we're very committed to creating in Ontario a transparent drug system for patients that gives us the capacity, in a more transparent and timely way, to make important decisions. We believe that by seeking to

have the best possible pricing for drug product, we can expand access to innovative products to the benefit of patients in the province of Ontario, something we all share.

This is a very particular case, of course, brought to my attention by Minister Gerretsen. His staff have been offering support to the family. The drug in question does not yet have its notice of compliance, something that I think the honourable member will know. In a certain sense, this is resting, of course, with Health Canada and with the necessity of availing it only through the special access program. So I believe it's important for us to continue to work with the family to try and secure coverage for products that relate to enzyme replacement, and this is exactly what—

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

Mrs. Witmer: The response provides cold comfort to Isaac and his family, who are here in the gallery today. They have obtained special access approval. They also know that this treatment is available in other countries, including Britain, and BC is considering granting approval for the drug. I want to tell you that if you are not prepared to provide funding, they will be forced to uproot their family, sell their home and move to Britain for treatment, where the drug is covered. So I ask you today, are you prepared to consider committing funding, bridge funding, for ERT until such time as a long-term solution is found? I ask you to respond to the family in the gallery.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I will respond, as is appropriate, in a fashion recognizing that this is one of the more difficult circumstances that can be encountered by a family, of course, and by the challenges that it presents for a public health care system. This is an enzyme replacement product. I believe its cost—I'm working from memory here—is \$1 million per year per patient. The case is obviously an individual case that we have to treat as such.

I've worked vigorously and invested considerable energy, as has the government of Ontario, in working with the government of Canada with respect to coverage for Fabry patients. That's well known, and progress is rather close on that one, notwithstanding the fact that it has taken us a long period of time. We'll work through this on a case-by-case basis. I'm in no position today to be able to say that we can expand that coverage, but the evidence is there about the efforts that our government took and the time that I personally contributed to the resolution of the challenge with respect to Fabry. Of course, this is the same energy that we're going to bring to the circumstances for this matter.

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I have a question to the Minister of Education. Minister, last week in the estimates committee, I asked you to produce a report on special education prepared by your parliamentary assistant, and you refused to share it with us. In

fact, you refused to show it to anyone, including your fellow ministers and the members of the working group who are supposedly drafting it. Can you tell us when you will share that report with us, and especially with the minister for children, who is unaware of the report?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Education, minister responsible for women's issues): Thanks so much for this question. As I mentioned at committee last week on this question, what I said was that in the previous week, the task force on special education had just had their meeting while they were reviewing the draft of their report. Their report is going through its final writing. It will then be presented to me as a final report. I do not yet have the final report from this task force. I did say that they did just meet last week. I appreciate that the member opposite is anxious to see it. I am as well. I will tell you that I have been able to read one of their earlier drafts as I was just coming in as the new minister this month. However, they have not finalized their report and, as I mentioned at committee, I think I would be happy to share it with you, as I would all those who are interested in public education for those with special needs.

Mr. Marchese: Kids with special needs can't wait. One in five Ontario children has a mental health problem. People for Education reminded us today that there are over 40,000 elementary students who need special education support and are not getting it. Families with autistic children are spending up to \$60,000 of their own money because your government broke its promise to pay for the treatment.

The McGuinty government keeps promising integrated delivery, but all parents see is that things are worse for their kids and that ministers don't have any idea what they're doing. When are you going to produce some action plan, any action plan, that is going to help students with special needs?

1510

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: I'm very glad that this member mentioned this, because I believe he was at the press conference that was held by Annie Kidder and People for Education. You missed a couple of things that she also announced today. She began her press conference by saying, "The crisis in education is over." That is something I'd like to repeat often and loudly. I would love to say that again. I thank her for tabling a report today, because what she said specifically was that in 2006 class sizes are smaller. She said there are more special education teachers, more elementary teachers; more elementary students have access to phys. ed; there are more support staff in secondary schools—all as a result of increased funding in education.

Now, I appreciate that you don't like hearing this kind of news, and unfortunately, I can't even take credit for all of that tremendous work that's been done in education. That is thanks to my previous colleague in this position. But I will say—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you, Minister. The member for Northumberland.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): My question is to the Minister of Labour. Minister, this morning we held a special session of this Legislature. Three private members' bills were debated. One of these bills involved the Ministry of Labour. What makes these bills special is the fact that they were all inspired by Ontario students. As part of the CBC Making the Grade project, students from across the province were asked to come up with ideas for private members' business. They were required to research issues, debate ideas and learn about how legislation is passed. CBC News received over 100 suggestions, three of which were debated this morning. The success of this project proves that young people are interested in the political process.

Minister, while we cannot speculate on the fate of any bill, I was pleased to learn that your ministry has already taken action to address some of the students' concerns. Please explain to this House what changes you have just announced to the—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The question has been asked. Minister.

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): I want to thank my colleague for highlighting the Making the Grade project, and I want to thank and congratulate all those students who took part in this great initiative.

We do have a number of good resources in place within the ministry right now. We have an employment standards poster that is posted. We have the Occupational Health and Safety Act. But I think what we recognize today is that these students raised issues that made it very clear to us that we weren't reaching their demographic age group. I'm pleased to tell this House that because of the student involvement, I've directed the ministry to ensure that the Employment Standards Act now contains a section for young workers. The reference would direct young workers to a new Internet portal. In addition, I've directed the ministry to update its website to include a link for new young workers to the Internet portal. The revised poster and Internet portal were unveiled to—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Rinaldi: Thank you, Minister. I know how important it is to the Ministry of Labour to spread its message of workplace rights and workplace safety, and I know that you hold a particular interest in the well-being of young and new workers. The changes you have described prove that young people can make a difference and influence decision-making.

On the subject of sharing information, I know that the Ministry of Labour is a leader in its efforts to ensure that its message is heard. Many of my constituents have commented on the diversity of languages in which they can access critical information. For many Ontarians, English or French is not a first language.

[Remarks in Italian.]

For those who don't speak Italian, I just said that it's equally important that everybody understands their rights in the workplace. As you can see, it's difficult and confusing when you can't understand what is being said.

I know my constituents appreciate having access to important resources and to this message. Minister—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Peters: To my colleague from Northumberland, grazie per la domanda. I want to thank him for that. Sadly, I'm not as fluent in other languages as some of my colleagues. Sometimes I have enough challenge with English. But we do recognize the cultural diversity of this province. Right now, not only do we print our employment standards in French and English, but we also print that information in 19 different languages. We recognize that these languages represent an individual thread in our amazing cultural heritage and tapestry in this province.

For example, multilingual employment standards brochures from the Ministry of Labour that are available are Your Rights at Work: Employment Standards Act, which I discussed earlier; Claim Your Rights, a step-by-step guide to filing claims; and Information for Employees. As well, I've shared information with all members in this House.

I heard some comments today that we're not doing enough. We sent the information out nine months ago—

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. New question.

RENEWABLE FUELS

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): My question is to the Premier. In 2005, you announced a \$520-million ethanol growth fund toward capital projects that would increase the number of ethanol production plants in Ontario. You stated, "This fund will improve the air we breathe by encouraging ... the growing demand for cleaner-burning fuels." The application closed on November 10, 2005.

My question is, when will you be announcing that the successful applicants of the ethanol growth fund have received their funding, so that the companies can begin to build the facilities that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions for the people of Ontario?

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

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I'm happy to have the opportunity to talk about an initiative which I believe demonstrates that our government is committed to supporting the agricultural industry as well as cleaning up our environment.

We did establish an ethanol growth fund and invited participation in the fund. We have contacted those people who could be successful applicants, and indicated to them that we would like to understand from them their business plan and whether they would like to take us up on that. Within the weeks ahead, we will be receiving their confirmations as to whether they will be participating in the fund or not.

We see this as good news for the people of Ontario, and certainly a commitment of this government to a cleaner environment and to support of the agricultural industry in Ontario.

Ms. Scott: Ethanol production facilities are not built overnight; it would take at least a year. That would put it into May 2007, at the earliest, that we'd be having the ribbon-cutting and the photo op.

Premier, you are banking on the recipients of the ethanol growth fund to meet your target of 5% ethanol content in fuel by January 2007, so you need to get this promised funding flowing to these companies today. We know that if hot air could reduce greenhouse gases, you would breathe easier on that side of the House for sure. You're spending a great deal of time—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Stop the clock. Order. Order, member for Ottawa Centre.

The member for Haliburton–Victoria–Brock.

Ms. Scott: Everyone take a deep breath.

Having spent all your time congratulating each other on your incredible contribution to the environment, you hoped that no one would notice you haven't delivered yet again. So I ask you, is the ethanol growth fund just another Liberal broken promise?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I'm very happy that the honourable member has asked the question today. I'm disappointed with the tone, because I think it's an important issue.

I think it's important to educate the honourable member, with respect to the corn market in North America, particularly in Ontario, that a countervail action was launched. It was only a few weeks ago that it was determined that there was no injury to the corn industry, and until that decision had been made by the CITT, which is the Canadian International Trade Tribunal, it put into question, for those folks who had proposals in to the ethanol growth fund, if their proposals were going to be viable. So they asked us if we could wait upon the decision of the CITT, which we have done. As a result of that, we are now awaiting their final determination around the offers we have made to them from the ethanol growth fund.

Finally, I would simply like to say that this commitment that we have made to agriculture and the environment is so good that Stephen Harper copied it in his campaign.

The Speaker: New question?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Stop the clock. I can wait. I seem to be doing a lot of waiting. The leader of the third party.

1520

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION VEHICLES

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Contrary to the long-standing policy of Ontario governments, the McGuinty government is allowing the city of Ottawa to have its transit cars built in the United States rather than at Bombardier's Thunder Bay factory. This transit contract is worth over half a billion dollars and hundreds of long-term jobs.

Premier, it is the usual practice with very big transit contracts like this for the purchaser to ask the contract bidders for a best and final offer round of bidding to ensure that the lowest price and the best deal are possible for taxpayers. Normally, one of the bidders will shave \$30 million or \$40 million off their initial bid. My question: Has the McGuinty government insisted on a best and final offer round of bidding from the city of Ottawa transit contract?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I know that the member would want to be accurate in his portrayal of the question to this Legislature. Municipal governments have never been a part of the memorandum of understanding, which was signed by previous governments, which has long since lapsed. The member well knows that.

Now, of course we as a government make no apologies for encouraging not only the provincial government but our municipal partners to purchase and use Ontario suppliers. We think that is an important statement of fact. But I want to be very clear with this member, and very clear with the people of Ontario, that this was a procurement of the city of Ottawa. It was done in a fair, open and transparent way. The provincial and federal governments are partners only to the financing, and in fact it has adhered to the proper procurement process that all Ontarians would expect.

Mr. Hampton: I asked the Premier because not only is the McGuinty government allowing this half-billion-dollar contract to go to the United States and hundreds of goods jobs with it, but the McGuinty government is actually going to contribute \$200 million to this made-in-USA scheme.

Premier, your constituency is in Ottawa. Your Minister of Community and Social Services' constituency is in Ottawa. Your Minister of Health Promotion's constituency is in Ottawa; in fact, he's a former mayor of Ottawa. The now mayor of Ottawa is a former Liberal MPP. It's very clear that all the powers that be in the city of Ottawa are Liberals.

My question is this: Have you told your Liberal friends in the city of Ottawa that these transit trains should be built in Thunder Bay, Ontario, and have you insisted with your Liberal friends in Ottawa that there be a best and final offer process?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: It is passing strange and somewhat ironic. This member sits at a cabinet table, sells the rolling stock of GO, sells it to a consortium in the Caribbean, and now stands in his place in this Legislature trying to excoriate the government for living up to the proper procurement procedure and the long-standing policy that has existed in the province of Ontario. It is an enormous leap for this member to try to suggest that something untoward is going on here.

The government has, of course, encouraged our municipal partners to source a product in the province of

Ontario. But members of this province, citizens of this province, would fully expect a fair, full, transparent and open procurement process for trains, and that in fact is what the city of Ottawa has done in its procurement for the O-Train. This is the first time that a provincial government has supported light-rail expansion in eastern Ontario. It's a great—

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

EDUCATION

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): My question is to the Minister of Education. As the school year begins to wind down, students, teachers and parents are beginning to experience the incredible progress made by the McGuinty government in improving and strengthening the quality of our education system, from junior kindergarten right through to post-secondary education.

I understand that today a group called People for Education has released their annual report on the state of education in Ontario. I understand from a previous question earlier on that the leader of People for Education, Annie Kidder, said that the crisis in public education is over.

My question to the minister: In this report, it states that there's a lot of good news that has taken place in our education system, but we still have some more work to do. My question to the minister is, what is some of that work that we have left to do, and what progress is she making—

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

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Education, minister responsible for women's issues): I appreciate this member in particular and his serious interest in education. He takes that home to his riding in Scarborough all the time.

I am again pleased to say that I was heartened to hear and to receive the report that Annie Kidder and her group, People for Education, put out. Let me say again, if you don't mind, that I was pleased with the way she began: "The crisis in education is over." I only wish that at this point I could take more credit for that. But again, I have to say that when you have a Premier who is the education Premier, it is very hard to go in a backwards direction, because we are moving forward.

There is something else that Annie Kidder said today, and in fact her release suggested as much: "We have more work to do." That is what we say all the time. We know we have more work to do, but these are critical areas that we are working on: lowering primary class size, getting that dropout rate down for those graduating in—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Duguid: I think the minister is quite right: When a government is led by a Premier who believes to his inner core in the value of education, great progress can really be made, and that's certainly what's being done

here in the province of Ontario today. It is so important that progress is made in education to ensure that we do reach our goal of having the best and most skilled workforce in the world. That's something that I think is going to benefit all Ontarians and benefit our economy well into the future.

My question to the minister is this: What else are we doing to give all students in Ontario the education advantage?

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: I'm very pleased that he would reference our student success programming through our high schools: \$1.9 billion being poured into our high schools so that we can improve those student-teacher ratios, with very specialized attention to see that we are working with every student to see that they graduate. When we took over this portfolio as government, we had a dropout rate in Ontario of 30%. I don't think people realize that there were literally 30% of all of our students in fact not graduating from high school. We have a very determined, aggressive target, that by the year 2010 we will have an 85% graduation rate. That will take very much work on our part. We understand we have more work to do. We applaud the efforts of our teachers, our support workers throughout our system. We applaud them, and we will be there as their partners for the success of students in our system.

1530

VISITORS

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I hope all members of the House will join me in welcoming my third daughter, Michelle Jackson, and her best friend, Michelle Miller, who are job-shadowing their dad today. We're about to go in and do estimates in French, and they're both bilingual, so it's going to be a wonderful experience. Michelle Jackson and Michelle Miller, stand up.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I've noticed that we've had a lot of debate concerning Community Living Day here at Queen's Park. I just wanted the Legislature to recognize Marty Graf and the largest contingent of Community Living here today, from Tillsonburg in my riding.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I wish to introduce to the House Don Ainley and Gerrie Ainley, who are here in the member's gallery. They're the grandparents of Connor Maitland, one of our pages.

PETITIONS

LANDFILL

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I'm sure you recognized me first because of the enormous number of petitions I have here with me. Some 8,500 people have signed this petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“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, Janet Stavinga, Peggy Feltmate, and the MPP Norm Sterling”—and Lisa MacLeod—“all oppose this expansion;

“We, the undersigned, support our local representatives and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure the Minister of the Environment does not approve the expansion of the Carp landfill and instead to find other waste management alternatives,” as I would have as a Minister of the Environment.

Here are 8,500—

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

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I’m pleased to present a petition from Ontarians in support of Bill 95, the Making the Grade bill in regard to posters informing students of their employment rights. I see Majd El-Samrout is still here from Ottawa from Lisgar Collegiate. It was Majd’s idea to bring this bill forward. The petition reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there seems to be a rising issue amongst teenage workers in that they are unaware of their employment rights in the workplace, employers today are not fulfilling their obligation to inform their employees of their rights;

“Therefore, we ask that the government of Ontario create legislation that will make it mandatory for every business in Ontario to post employee rights in a visible place in the workplace;

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

“It is made mandatory for every business in Ontario to post employee rights and health and safety regulations in a visible place in the workplace. This poster must be written in language that can be understood both by teenagers and adults. Businesses that do not comply with this will be penalized by the government of Ontario.”

I agree with this petition, affix my signature and send it to the Clerk’s table by way of Monika.

IDENTITY THEFT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I keep receiving petitions from the Consumer Federation Canada, and the petition reads as follows:

“To the Parliament of Ontario and the Minister of Government Services:

“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; ...

“Whereas 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 (masked-out) form, protecting our vital private information such as SIN and credit card numbers.

“(2) Should a credit bureau discover that there has been a breach of consumer information, the agency should immediately inform the victimized consumer.

“(3) Credit bureaus should only report inquiries resulting out of actual applications for credit and for no other reasons.

“(4) Credit bureaus should investigate any complaints within 30 days and correct or automatically delete any information found unconfirmed or inaccurate.”

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

CAFETERIA FOOD GUIDELINES

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): As you are well aware, Nupur Dogras’s private member’s bill under the Making the Grade program was passed this morning by this House. I have a petition in support of that bill. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas childhood obesity rates have tripled over the past two decades in Canada; and

“Whereas the annual amount of money the health care system uses to mend preventable obesity-related illnesses is \$1.6 billion; and

“Whereas the Ontario food premises regulation only provides safety policies that must be followed by the Ontario school boards’ cafeterias, but no defined regulations regarding the nutrition standard of the food being served at the cafeterias; and

“Whereas there is a need to encourage nutritious standards in high school cafeterias that support Canada’s Guidelines for Healthy Eating; and

“Whereas the private member’s bill proposed by Nupur Dogra under Making the Grade and her fellow students at Iroquois Ridge High School will require all Ontario school boards’ cafeterias to adopt and abide [by] healthier eating standards (similar to Canada’s Guidelines for Healthy Eating) that will govern the food choices;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the private member's bill that will amend the Ontario school boards' cafeteria food guidelines to follow healthier food standards in all Ontario high school cafeterias."

As the sponsor of that bill, I am willing to put my signature to this petition and hand it to page Isaac for delivery to the table.

AUTISM SERVICES

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that has been sent to me by Andrew Kavchak of Ottawa, and I appreciate that. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the incidence of autism spectrum disorders has dramatically increased in recent years and Ontario's schools lack the required resources to accommodate this growing number of pupils; and

"Whereas children with ASDs are capable of academic success when they have appropriate support; and

"Whereas under the Education Act of Ontario, children with ASDs are legally entitled to receive appropriate special education programs and services; and

"Whereas many ASD pupils are denied their education rights and are suffering academically, socially and emotionally because of a lack of resources available to assist them with their disability-related needs; and

"Whereas the resources required to accommodate ASD pupils may include (but are not limited to) educational assessments; educational assistants; specialized personnel such as behavioural therapists, speech and language pathologists, and occupational therapists; specialized programs and curriculum (including social skills and life skills); transitional programs; and assistive technology;

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

"(1) Increase funding for special education, and ensure that this funding reaches ASD pupils to meet their disability-related learning needs;

"(2) Develop educational best practices and pilot projects for educating children with ASDs so that every student with ASD across Ontario has access to the best possible programs and services."

I agree with the petitioners, and I have affixed my signature to this.

CHILD CARE

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

"Whereas the people of Ontario expect the government of Canada to honour existing agreements with the government of Ontario;

"Whereas provinces and territories negotiated agreements with the federal government to ensure Canadians

would have access to early learning and child care programs that are high-quality, affordable, universally inclusive and developmental;

"Whereas parents in Ontario have demonstrated a high demand for greater access to high-quality early learning and child care programs;

"Whereas Ontario's early learning and child care agreement with the government of Canada would provide Ontario families with at least 25,000 new high-quality, regulated child care spaces in the first three years;

"Whereas Ontario's early learning and child care agreement represents a \$1.9-billion investment over five years in high-quality early learning and child care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the government of Ontario in calling on the government of Canada to honour Ontario's early learning and child care agreement, for the sake of the thousands of Ontario families who would benefit from it."

I support this petition, and I affix my signature on it as well.

1540

LONG-TERM CARE

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

"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)."

I affix my signature.

GASOLINE PRICES

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that's been signed by constituents in my riding. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the average price of gasoline has skyrocketed to over \$1 a litre, the highest price at the pumps in Ontario history;

“Whereas high gas prices are causing great hardship for ordinary motorists, small business owners and industry;

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberals promised to take action to keep gas prices low;

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberals have broken that promise and have done nothing to help ordinary families getting hosed at the pumps;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Ontario government to immediately pass Bill 91, the Keep Your Promises at the Pump Act, 2006, which would make the McGuinty Liberals keep their promise to freeze gas prices for 90 days.”

I agree with the petitioners. I’ve affixed my signature to this.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): “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).”

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. John O’Toole (Durham): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

“Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25%

less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

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

It’s Community Living Day in the Legislature, and I’m pleased to sign and endorse and present it on their behalf.

BORDER SECURITY

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

“Whereas the United States government, through the western hemisphere travel initiative, is proposing that American citizens require a passport or single-purpose travel card to travel back and forth across the Canadian border; and

“Whereas a passport or single-purpose travel card would be an added expense, and the inconvenience of having to apply for and carry a new document would be a barrier to many visitors; and

“Whereas this will mean the loss of up to 3.5 million US visitors in Ontario, losses of \$700 million, and the loss of 7,000 jobs in the Ontario tourism industry by the end of 2008; and

“Whereas many of the northern border states in the United States have expressed similar concerns regarding the substantial economic impact of the implementation of this plan; and

“Whereas the safe and efficient movement of people across the border is vital to the economies of both of our countries;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the establishment of a bi-national group to consider alternatives to the proposed border requirements and inform Prime Minister Harper that his decision not to pursue this issue with the United States is ill-advised.”

I agree and I’m delighted to sign my name to it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TRANSPARENT DRUG SYSTEM FOR PATIENTS ACT, 2006 LOI DE 2006 SUR UN RÉGIME DE MÉDICAMENTS TRANSPARENT POUR LES PATIENTS

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 27, 2006, on the motion for second reading of Bill 102, An Act to amend the Drug Interchangeability and Dispensing Fee

Act and the Ontario Drug Benefit Act / Projet de loi 102, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'interchangeabilité des médicaments et les honoraires de préparation et la Loi sur le régime de médicaments de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Pursuant to the order of the House, dated May 9, 2006, I am now required to put the question. On April 20, Mr. Smitherman moved second reading of Bill 102, An Act to amend the Drug Interchangeability and Dispensing Fee Act and the Ontario Drug Benefit Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1547 to 1557.

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

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Peters, Steve
Balkissoon, Bas	Gerretsen, John	Peterson, Tim
Bartolucci, Rick	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Brownell, Jim	Kular, Kuldip	Ramal, Khalil
Bryant, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Ramsay, David
Cansfield, Donna H.	Levac, Dave	Rinaldi, Lou
Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Ruprecht, Tony
Colle, Mike	Mauro, Bill	Sandals, Liz
Cordiano, Joseph	McMeekin, Ted	Sergio, Mario
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Smith, Monique
Dhillon, Vic	Meilleur, Madeleine	Smitherman, George
Di Cocco, Caroline	Mitchell, Carol	Van Bommel, Maria
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wilkinson, John
Duguid, Brad	Oraziotti, David	Wong, Tony C.
Duncan, Dwight	Parsons, Ernie	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Patten, Richard	Zimmer, David

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Klees, Frank	O'Toole, John
Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLeod, Lisa	Prue, Michael
Elliott, Christine	Marchese, Rosario	Runciman, Robert W.
Hardeman, Ernie	Martel, Shelley	Scott, Laurie
Horwath, Andrea	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tory, John
Hudak, Tim	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Jackson, Cameron	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 54; the nays are 24.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Pursuant to the order of the House dated May 9, this bill will be ordered to the standing committee on social policy.

BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2006 LOI DE 2006 SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES

Mr. Duncan moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 81, An Act to implement 2006 Budget measures and to enact, amend or repeal various Acts / Projet de loi

81, Loi mettant en oeuvre certaines mesures énoncées dans le Budget de 2006 et édictant, modifiant ou abrogeant diverses lois.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I'm honoured to rise today and speak once more about the Budget Measures Act, 2006. I will be sharing my time with the member for Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge, my parliamentary assistant.

In my earlier remarks to the honourable members of this House, I outlined some of the highlights of our recent budget, including Move Ontario, our government's \$1.2-billion investment in Ontario's public transit systems and municipal roads and bridges. I also touched on what this bill would do to support economic growth in Ontario by including measures to strengthen and promote Ontario as an innovative economy. Today I'd like to take this time to reiterate some of the highlights of this important piece of legislation to gain your support for a bill that would help us build opportunity for our great province and for everyone who calls it home.

When we came to office in 2003, we inherited a health care deficit, an education deficit, a skills deficit and an infrastructure deficit, as well as a fiscal deficit. In the last two and a half years, we have set about addressing each of these challenges in a planned and deliberate way. In our first budget, in May 2004, we laid out for debate and consideration our government's four-year plan for the province. In our 2005 budget, we continued moving forward with this plan, making a historic \$6.2-billion cumulative investment in post-secondary education by 2009-10 to improve access, quality and accountability. Our 2006 budget is the next part of our plan to invest in health and education, to restore the province's finances and to position Ontario for growth today and tomorrow.

I ask for your support for Bill 81 in order for us to put our plans for Ontario into action. We are investing in people and in the things that matter most to them. We are investing in roads, bridges and transit to help keep people and goods moving. We are strengthening Ontario's economic advantage by creating a climate for job creation now and in the future. Our plan is balanced and responsible, our plan puts people first and our plan is working.

In 2005 the Ontario economy outperformed average private sector and government projections, resulting in unexpected additional revenue. Our government has made a strategic and prudent choice to invest over 60% of this additional revenue to begin paying down Ontario's infrastructure deficit in order to support much-needed transit, road and bridge projects across Ontario.

At the same time, our government remains on track to eliminate the fiscal deficit no later than 2008-09. A balanced budget will be achieved a year earlier if the reserve is not required in 2007-08. We are optimistic about Ontario's economic growth. Despite this rosy picture, we will continue to be prudent, focused and disciplined in our approach to fiscal management. We will continue to strengthen the economy through investments in post-secondary education, infrastructure, research and

innovation, and key economic sectors, including a continued focus on education and training by government and business; better integration of new Canadians into the economy, including in high-skill, high-wage jobs; increasing research and innovation capacity; investing in infrastructure; a reliable, sustainable electricity supply; a healthy business environment; ongoing fiscal discipline; and by managing health care costs.

Bill 81, the Budget Measures Act, 2006, which includes amendments to 17 provincial statutes and proposes three new statutes, is a key piece of legislation to help us move forward with our plan for Ontario. Bill 81 includes such important measures as accelerating the capital tax rate cut, extending the tax credit rate for foreign film productions, doubling the tax rebate on the purchase of hybrid electric vehicles, granting the Minister of Natural Resources the power to make grants from our forest prosperity fund and introducing four-year terms for municipal elections.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): It's the first time you've said that.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Well, I thought it needed emphasis, because I support it.

I'd now like to briefly touch on these points. A key element of the government's strategy for strengthening the Ontario economy is maintaining a competitive tax and business environment to encourage investment growth. Your support for Bill 81 is an important step in supporting a strong and dynamic Ontario economy.

In 2004, we announced a plan to eliminate Ontario's capital tax by 2012. The 2006 budget proposes to accelerate the capital tax rate cut. Effective January 1, 2007, the current rate would be cut by 5%, a full two years earlier than the first currently scheduled rate cut. Further, we intend to fully eliminate the tax in 2010, a full two years earlier than planned, should the fiscal position of the province allow.

By proposing to accelerate the capital tax rate cut, we are further enhancing Ontario's competitive tax system. This is a key element in our strategy to promote new investment, economic growth and job creation. Let me reassure members of this House that we are promoting economic growth and that we do have a plan to see our economy thrive and prosper.

Last week, we received new job creation numbers for the month of April, and I'm happy to report that the people of Ontario created 23,800 net new jobs last month. Since we've come to office, almost 254,000 new jobs have been created, with eight out of 10 of them being full-time employment. In March, more jobs were created in Ontario than in any other province. We are seeing job creation, growth and strong investment. Don't take my word for it; here's what Doug Porter, deputy chief economist at BMO Nesbitt Burns, had to say just a few days ago: "Ontario's job creation performance in the last two months has been nothing short of astounding." He's right. The province's economy is flourishing, and this government is creating a climate where we can continue to see further gains.

Another one of the many success stories of Ontario's diverse economy is the entertainment and creative cluster. To support Ontario's film and television industry, Bill 81 would also amend the Corporations Tax Act to extend the enhanced 18% rate for the Ontario production services tax credit for another year, from April 1, 2006, to March 31, 2007. I spoke about this initiative during second reading debate, but I'd like to remind members how important this is and why they should support this bill for measures such as this.

The Ontario production services tax credit is a refundable tax credit available to qualifying corporations for qualifying Ontario labour expenditures in respect of eligible film and television productions. The extension of the 8% tax credit rate for another year reflects our commitment to support Ontario's film and television industry, foster growth and job creation, and help maintain competitiveness in the entertainment and creative cluster. I would hope that members of the opposition will vote in favour of Bill 81 in support of this measure and in support of Ontario's film and television industry.

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Our government is also committed to further encouraging energy conservation in Ontario. Hybrid vehicles help conserve energy, as they are more fuel efficient than comparable traditional models. Hybrids also provide a positive environmental benefit by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Bill 81 includes an example of our government's interest in supporting sound and healthier choices in an amendment to the Retail Sales Tax Act. To encourage those consumers who choose vehicles with a less harmful impact on the environment and on the air we breathe, we propose to increase the amount of the maximum retail sales tax rebate for qualifying hybrid electric vehicles to \$2,000. This would apply for vehicles delivered to the purchaser after March 23, 2006, and purchased before April 1, 2012. Every step towards improving Ontario's air quality is a step towards improving the health of Ontarians.

I'd like to move on to another section of the bill which I hope members will support. I know that my parliamentary assistant will be elaborating on this shortly in his remarks, but I wanted to take a moment to address the measures in Bill 81 that will give due respect to municipalities across the province. I'm referring to amendments that are being proposed to the Municipal Elections Act. If passed, these amendments would extend the term of office for municipal councils and school boards from three year to four years, commencing from this year's election. As the Premier and Minister of Municipal Affairs have said in this House on several occasions, establishing a four-year term for local government representatives in Ontario is something the Association of Municipalities of Ontario has asked for. It's a matter of respect for our municipalities.

In wrapping up my remarks, I'd just like to say how proud I am of the steps our government has taken to invest in health and education, restore our province's finances and position Ontario for growth today and tomorrow.

When we took office, we inherited deficits in health care, education and infrastructure. Each of our budgets has made important investments in each of these three areas to benefit all Ontarians. To ensure that we can provide opportunity to all Ontarians through the measures introduced in our 2006 budget, I urge all members to support Bill 81.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Questions and comments? The member for Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge—

Interjection: Shared time, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Shared time? All right. Further debate.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Whoa, whoa. Is shared time for further debate or questions and comments?

The Acting Speaker: What are we sharing, time? Further debate.

Mr. Kormos: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Are there questions and comments available to parties in a time-allocated debate like this?

The Acting Speaker: Not in this debate.

The member for Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge): I'm very pleased to follow the minister, Mr. Duncan, in the third reading of our bill, the House bill in respect to the 2006-07 budget. It really is quite a pleasure to be able to follow on some of his comments and provide just a little more detail in respect to some of the matters.

I want to draw back, though, to the process by which these bills come to this stage. As a matter of fact, it was in the latter part of last year that the minister began his series of consultations in the preparatory work in the development of, first, a budget itself and then obviously, subsequently, the budget bill. I recall as early as December 12 last year, the minister was in my riding of Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge doing one of those consultations, and it wasn't very long after that, in the middle of December last year, that the standing committee on finance and economic affairs first met to begin its formal deliberations and consultations as part of this Legislative Assembly in preparation for submitting the ideas of the people of the province of Ontario through the standing committee to the minister to assist him in developing the budget. So it has been some five months at the very least that this process has been ongoing. During that time frame, the Premier, at ROMA during the early winter, made representation on a matter that's in this budget bill, which includes the extension of municipal electoral terms from three to four years.

This has been a long process, an elaborate process, one with a lot of public consultation and political debate to get to the point we're at.

I'm very pleased with this particular budget, having recently sat through the second reading public hearing on this matter. There was only one matter that the public had expressed an interest in, and that was the matter of four-year terms. I take that to mean a couple of things. I take it to mean that it's an important matter to those who were

there, but equally I take it to mean that for the vast majority of people in Ontario this budget has been very well received. There have been accolades on many fronts in regard to the budget content, and certainly we didn't see people after second reading coming to budget hearings to speak about things they might have liked to see in the budget. There was a high degree of consensus around this particular budget.

We came into power some two and a half years ago. At that point in time we inherited not only a fiscal deficit but also a health care deficit, an education and skills deficit—

Mr. Kormos: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I don't know, is there a quorum present?

The Acting Speaker: Is there a quorum?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Call in the members.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table: A quorum is now present.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge.

Mr. Arthurs: I'm pleased to be able to continue with the time available. I don't know whether the member from Niagara Centre wants me to start over again, since he was busy counting heads and may have missed some of my preliminary comments about the extent of the consultation and the good work done by the minister and his staff, both on the minister's side and ministry staff in developing the budget and in the development of this particular budget bill.

I was just referencing that we inherited multiple deficits some two-plus years ago: a fiscal deficit, a health deficit, an education and skills deficit and an infrastructure deficit, to name a group. Methodically, during each of our budgets, we've been working our way through those on behalf of the public, the people of Ontario. We started in the first year, working our way through the health deficit. We followed that up in the second year with a strong concentration on the education deficit, including post-secondary education. More particularly in this budget, we had a strong focus on the public infrastructure deficit.

Part of our objectives is to ensure that, in this global economy we live in, we build opportunity in the province. Part of that is ensuring that we have a strong infrastructure. I can tell you that the people who live in my riding have seen the difference since we came to office some two-plus years ago, and they can certainly see it in this particular budget. I want to just provide you with a couple of examples, which include almost \$2 million for new technological education equipment at the Durham Catholic District School Board. The Durham District School Board has achieved some \$4.6 million as part of that, and Durham College also has had funding for operating cost enhancements, facilities renewal and student support. So we've focused very heavily on the education agenda.

On the health agenda, in my own riding and the neighbouring communities that are serviced by it, the Rouge Valley Health System has seen some \$400 million in new funds being provided for the people of Pickering, Ajax, Uxbridge, Whitby and east Scarborough.

The riding has also benefited from our gas tax initiatives. Some \$300,000 has gone to funding in Pickering, Ajax, Uxbridge and Scugog to support transit systems and transit support mechanisms. So it's not just my riding, but it's people throughout Ontario who have benefited from this budget and from preceding budgets over the past couple of years.

I know that the members in opposition are prone to paint a story of doom and gloom, but that's not the reality. I'm here to tell them that we're here to help, represent and, quite frankly, stand up for the people of Ontario.

1620

In this most recent budget, we announced some \$400 million in one-time funding to municipalities for roads and bridges. The vast majority of that money is going to rural and small municipalities so they can build on their infrastructure in a way that they see their needs best met. The funds are going to municipalities like the member from Erie-Lincoln's, which is receiving some \$15 million from Move Ontario, and municipalities and ridings such as Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey, which is benefiting to the tune of some \$16 million in funding. Kenora-Rainy River will also be benefiting, receiving a total of over \$5 million. So the monies I'm speaking of have been democratically distributed throughout the province of Ontario to all ridings, representing all parties and all members.

We're delivering to municipalities in a great variety of ways, and I want to take a moment to speak more fully about that. I know that the Minister of Municipal Affairs would like to have been here today to speak to a particular matter, but he was unable to be here for this part of the debate.

I want to take this opportunity to reiterate what has been said on several occasions. The government is introducing an amendment to the Municipal Elections Act. If passed, it would extend the term of office for municipal councillors and school boards from three years currently to a four-year term, commencing with this fall's municipal elections. Last week, the Premier spoke to this House about how this is something that the Association of Municipalities of Ontario has been asking for. Frankly, it's also an initiative that 47 other municipalities in the province have independently requested of the government. So this is not news to this House, nor is it news that the government is recommending to this House an amendment to the Municipal Elections Act; it's a matter of respect to municipalities.

Here at the provincial level we now have four-year fixed terms, and the federal government can still run to a maximum of five years. Why should Ontario municipalities be treated that much differently, given the role

they have and the complexity of the activity they undertake on behalf of their constituents?

I think it's also a matter of some degree of efficiency. A four-year term is a better time period for a council to both generate an agenda and move forward on that agenda, and to a large extent to see that agenda implemented, and then seek the judgment of the people in their communities as to whether or not they've done an effective job on their behalf.

The reason this amendment is in Bill 81 is that it's a matter of providing certainty to our municipal partners. The Premier announced this proposed change in February at the ROMA conference. The amendment provides a certainty with respect to elections that candidates in this municipal election require. If the amendment is passed, the government wishes to provide candidates running in this fall's municipal elections ample opportunity to take into consideration their desire as to whether or not they want to seek office for a four-year term rather than the current three-year term.

As the first bill that our government had the opportunity to introduce when the Legislature resumed in March, Bill 81 provided the Legislature with the first opportunity to deliver on that particular budget commitment. As a matter of fact, for those who read the budget document itself, they would have found deliberately in there on page 147 specific reference to our intent to move forward on four-year terms. Finding it in the budget document, it should not have been a particular surprise, to those who had read the budget bill, to find that matter included in the budget bill. It would seem to me that budgets and budget bills go hand in hand; it would seem that one should mesh with the other to the extent possible.

As part of the legislative process, we've spent much time debating the overall bill in this House. It hasn't been rushed through by any stretch of anyone's imagination. This process has spanned over four months now. We've spent some eight hours on second reading debate, a further five hours of debate on the bill last Tuesday, and we spent last Thursday listening to presenters at public hearings and further debating the bill in clause-by-clause. That process continues here this afternoon with third reading debate.

Compare this to the record of the opposition, who were then in power, when they passed the Fewer Municipal Politicians Act, which was rammed through this House in less than two weeks, with no public hearings whatsoever. The act literally slashed the number of locally elected representatives to municipal governments across the province, ignoring the positions of locally elected councils.

Mr. Speaker, we are and have been listening to municipalities on a great number of fronts and delivering what they need. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Premier have both reiterated our commitment to municipalities, and this bill is delivering on that commitment.

But the amendment is not the only reason why we should support this bill. There are many reasons we

should vote for it tonight. I'm not going to go into all of that level of detail. I know there are others here who want to speak to the bill, other members of our caucus who would like the opportunity.

Thank you for the opportunity. I look forward to seeing the vote on the bill and hope that all members will see the wisdom of supporting the budget bill.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Hudak: I thank my colleagues for their comments. I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 81.

My colleague the parliamentary assistant had an interesting way of concluding his remarks, by talking about all the attention to detail in his remarks about Bill 81. I just wonder, if he had committed that much attention to detail, how come he missed schedule H, which was part of the bill. He wasn't the only one who suffered from that malady of missing schedule H during introduction, during second reading debate. In fact, the minister himself, the Minister of Finance, noticeably ignored schedule H. For those watching at home or reading Hansard, schedule H of course is the part of the bill that reduces the frequency of municipal and school board elections. It sort of snuck into the bill. Buried between unrelated finance measures, you find this measure to reduce the frequency—

Mr. Kormos: Nobody likes a sneak.

Mr. Hudak: Well, somebody must like sneaks, I say to my colleague, because there was a whole bunch of them when it came to this bill. Not a single member of the Liberal caucus—no minister, no MPP—had the courage to stand in this House to discuss schedule H during second reading or introduction, or they may have been told not to. Or, lastly, because it was so—it could have been the power of the whip. We can never underestimate the power of the whip, the member for Brant. But I suspect the reality was that that aspect was hidden so cleverly, so deeply inside the bill among unrelated finance measures, that I bet you most members of the government caucus didn't even know it was there until it was brought up through the media.

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: The parliamentary assistant disagrees. Then I ask him why, as a former mayor, he had no comment on that whatsoever when he spoke on this bill before. Did you know it was in there? I got a wink. I will go on about schedule H a bit more, but I do want to note that once again, while we're having another time allocation initiative here ramming this bill through the Legislature, what is particularly ironic about this bill is that there is a change in here impacting on democratic institutions, the frequency of municipal and school board elections, that no member spoke to and that was, I guess, because it is being rammed through tonight, successfully snuck through the Legislature without adequate debate and really, really no public debate at all.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): You would have been happy if they'd snuck in the Homestead Act.

Mr. Hudak: My colleague from Peterborough says I'd be happy if we had snuck in the Homestead Act.

Well, listen, there has been a lot of public debate on the Homestead Act.

Mr. Kormos: It's more relevant to a budget bill.

Mr. Hudak: It certainly is a lot more relevant, as my colleague from Niagara Centre says, to a budget bill.

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: If the Homestead Act had been included as schedule H, for "Homestead"—good point. I say to my friend from Peterborough, schedule H should have been the Homestead Act, right? It starts with "H" for Homestead Act. It would certainly have been consistent with a budget bill, because it is a finance measure impacting on something for which the Ministry of Finance has responsibility; for example, the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. But no; instead, they snuck through this measure to reduce the frequency of local elections, as opposed to the Homestead Act.

1630

Let me just make some general comments; I know my colleagues also want to address this bill. Aside from the rather sneaky nature of the government's manoeuvring with respect to schedule H—

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: The irony, my friend from Brantford; I was discussing the irony.

Dalton McGuinty actually campaigned—I know there's a lot of things he said during the campaign that he didn't really mean, and we found that out after he had won office. During the campaign, he said it would be up to the people to decide how elections would take place, and individuals would decide the democratic reform measures, if any, brought through the Legislature. But we didn't know that by saying "the people" he meant only members of his cabinet. He didn't mean average taxpayers in any part of the province, whether it's Huron-Bruce, Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, York North, Durham, even Simcoe-Grey. You'd think he would have public hearings in Simcoe-Grey, but none took place. So it represents a broken promise.

Let me make a more general case about why I call my colleagues to reject Bill 81. Bill 81, as a budget bill, is an important piece of an overall budgetary policy that is dramatically misguided and harmful to the province of Ontario. Let's not forget that this budget saw a 9.2% increase in program spending in the province of Ontario in the last fiscal year. My goodness; that would make Bob Rae blush back when he was an NDPer.

Mr. Kormos: He was never an NDPer. He was a Liberal all his life; the best Liberal Premier this province ever had.

Mr. Hudak: Apparently revealed. It would have made David Peterson blush.

Mr. Kormos: Buzz, Bob and Belinda: The Liberals won the trifecta.

Mr. Hudak: Regardless of what Bob Rae or Belinda or David Peterson would say, I think they'd all blush at the rapid increase in spending happening in this government, which is unsustainable when the economy, on a nominal basis, is growing at less than half that rate. How

is it sustainable to increase spending by 9.2% when the growth rate is less than half of that on a nominal basis?

Secondly, this is a government that has taken in some \$17 billion in additional revenue since taking office, a significant portion of which was squeezed out of the pockets of working families in the province of Ontario or from the pocketbooks of seniors, who can barely make ends meet in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. Despite that gluttonous attack on the pocketbooks of Ontario taxpayers, they're still running a deficit. In fact, they intentionally ran a deficit.

I think we all know the story, but it's worth repeating, since this time allocation motion severely restricts how much debate we are actually having, but I will make the point one more time. The finance ministry has some \$3 billion. Like they hid schedule H in the bill—they're not having public consultations of any note on schedule H—they also were hiding over in the vault of the finance ministry some \$3 billion in windfall revenue, and I've heard no rebuttal. The Dalton McGuinty government doctored the third-quarter financial reports to dramatically underestimate how much money they actually knew they had in their pockets. Instead of using that \$3 billion to balance the books—a deficit of \$2.4 billion was projected at that point in time—they used practically each and every penny in increased runaway spending. Some have said they're like drunken sailors, but at least drunken sailors use their own money, I say to the member from Huron—Bruce.

Mr. Kormos: And they pay for their own booze.

Mr. Hudak: And they pay their own expenses.

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: I'm getting lectured by the member for Huron—Bruce, but it's true that you spent taxpayers' money like it's going out of style.

The only thing that limited how quickly Dwight Duncan could sign cheques was the physical ability to put his initials on those cheques. Otherwise, they rushed some \$3 billion out the door without a real plan on how that money would be invested. We've seen now the finance minister relatively embarrassed yesterday in his scrum with the media about the future of the subway project, which I suspect is just another Dalton McGuinty promise to buy votes—no true intention to invest in that infrastructure.

The finance minister had also talked about the film tax credit improvements. From the official opposition, my colleague the member for York North, our culture critic, had helped with amendments to actually enhance those tax credits, which were brought in by a Conservative government, I might remind you. But the Liberal committee members voted them down.

It's curious. The finance minister talks about the capital tax reduction and now boasts about it. They've actually had three different positions on the capital tax. There was a capital tax elimination schedule that was part of the previous Progressive Conservative government. When the Liberals came into power they said, "Oh, that's a terrible thing," and they scrapped it altogether. Do you

remember that? They scrapped the capital tax reduction altogether and postponed it well into the future.

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: Actually, no, I don't think there was a schedule at first, but then finance minister Greg Sorbara came back and said, "All right, we made a mistake there," and brought in a schedule for capital tax elimination, which I think was up to 2012. And now finance minister Dwight Duncan brings forward one aspect of that capital tax elimination, a very small enhancement. But it represents the third policy by the government on capital tax changes. If you're trying to encourage investment in the province of Ontario, if you're trying to attract capital to this province, how changing your mind three times in just over two and a half years—

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: It's true. You've had three different policies on capital tax in the last two and a half years.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): How many did you have on the municipal tax?

Mr. Hudak: He's asked me how many we had on the municipal tax. We had a very clear policy: Municipal taxes should go down, which is completely different than this government, that is encouraging tax hikes at the municipal level. The City of Toronto Act is another act. The City of Toronto Act is now pushing tax increases onto the city of Toronto and the hospitality sector, which is already hurting; onto cultural attractions by a new ticket tax, for example; and opens the door to a land transfer tax to further put the screws to working families or seniors who are trying to buy a new residence. The member asks me about municipal taxes. Well, I'm certainly proud of our record in pushing those taxes down, compared to a government that is pushing those taxes forward and higher.

I know my colleagues opposite don't like to hear this, but we also made sure that the annual education tax hikes that would happen under previous Liberal governments became a thing of the past. I know these guys haven't met a tax hike they don't like. We've seen that in their legislation and we continue to see it in their budgeting process.

My colleagues want to speak a bit about this, so let me just go back to schedule H. We reject fundamentally a budgetary policy of the McGuinty government based on false campaign promises. Dalton McGuinty promised that he wouldn't increase taxes. One of the first bills he brought in was the biggest tax hike in the history of the province of Ontario, squeezing more money out of the pocketbooks of working families and seniors and businesses. We reject a policy that sees spending increases at a rate that would make David Peterson and Bob Rae blush, the fastest spending increases in the history of the province. It took from Confederation, from John Sandfield Macdonald, here in the province of Ontario, to Ernie Eves to get provincial spending to \$68 billion. Dalton McGuinty will put it at over \$90 billion in one term only—irresponsible spending increases based on the biggest tax hike in the history of the province. Working

families and seniors, who are paying higher taxes, higher user fees, higher hydro rates, and now have to pay out of pocket for chiropractic care, for optician's care, are finding it increasingly difficult to make ends meet. And this budget has no break for taxpayers.

On schedule H, just to give you an example of some of the letters we received at committee: I'm sure the town of Hanover would have loved to have made a presentation at committee but were not able to do so because of the heavy hammer of the time allocation motion. This government didn't want a debate on this bill or on schedule H. His Worship the mayor of Hanover, Bob White, says,

"This is to advise you that the town of Hanover has gone on record as being opposed to the proposed changes to the Municipal Elections Act that would extend the term of office to four years.

"We hope that the government will give full consideration to keeping the term of council at three years."

Evidently, no consideration was given.

1640

The corporation of the county of Grey, submitted under the name of Sharon Vokes, county clerk, director of council services: "Grey county council is on record of supporting the current three-year term of office for municipal councillors and school trustees." It's actually a very nice, very well thought out letter submitted under the name of Warden Pringle, on behalf of the county council, objecting to the government's move, and I'm sure objecting to the fact that there were absolutely no public consultations of merit on this move.

There were a number of other submissions—my desk is littered with them—from people who were not able to come to the committee to make their voices heard on their objections to the manner in which schedule H was handled. They were Liberals, they were Conservatives and they were NDP members.

Michael Walker, city of Toronto councillor, in a media release:

"McGuinty's Liberals Ignore Public Process....

"Increasing the term to four years is not justified. The people have not been asked what they think and only two hours of public hearings is outrageous.... And the way the provincial government has hidden this major change in an omnibus bill dealing mostly with budget measures is insulting."

I think he identifies himself with the Liberal Party; I'm not sure. But Councillor Walker had that to say about the way this was handled.

Colin McMaster sent this in to Mr. Sorbara. Colin is a constituent from Woodbridge, Ontario. An ordinary taxpayer sent this in to Greg Sorbara, saying:

"Dear Mr. Sorbara:

"I understand that within the government's budget bill, Bill 81, is a provision (schedule H) that reduces the frequency of municipal council and school board elections from every three to every four years.

"I also understand that debate in the Legislature was prematurely cut off on this issue on Monday evening and that only a few hours of public hearings"—two hours—

"will be conducted on this issue on Thursday. I am disappointed that a government who claims to pride itself on governmental transparency seems unwilling to give much opportunity for public input on this issue."

Mr. Leal: What did Ann Mulvale say?

Mr. Hudak: I'll tell you what Greg Sorbara had to say.

That was from Colin McMaster—sorry, it was an e-mail from Kate McMaster, Woodbridge, Ontario.

In the media we actually did see former Minister Sorbara indicating some discomfort with the way this has been brought forward. I suspect, I say to my friend from Peterborough, that there are a number of members in the Liberal caucus, I bet a significant number, who aren't happy about this. I know it's a budget bill and it's a budget bill that, if they vote against it, they fear would be a vote against confidence in the government. They're worried about that. But Greg Sorbara did speak out about it, and I think there are a number of people who were happy with Mr. Sorbara's saying so because they don't support that measure. And they certainly don't support the way it has been handled by a finance minister who didn't have the guts to talk about it at second reading and a municipal affairs minister who didn't have the guts to stand up here and talk about it. They tried to hide it as part of the bill. I know there are members of the Liberal caucus who are unhappy about that.

threeyears.ca: Josh Matlow, Guy Giorno and David Meslin are three young, intelligent individuals from three different parties: Josh Matlow, Liberal; Guy, Conservative; Dave Meslin, NDP—all impressive individuals. It was fascinating to actually see Steve Gilchrist and John Sewell, one after the other, united on this bill. Mr. Gilchrist and Mr. Sewell did not often see eye to eye on legislation and the two individuals were united. In fact, at Mr. Sewell's presentation he made a very passionate presentation, as we would expect, in opposition to the government's tactics on this bill.

I know the three individuals, Mr. Matlow, Mr. Giorno and Mr. Meslin, have put together a website called threeyears.ca, which has been visited by all kinds of taxpayers in the province objecting to the way the government has approached this issue. I wonder if there are some pseudonyms used by some Liberal members of the House right now on that website. There may very well be, the name slightly changed.

I've gone on quite awhile here, probably too long. My colleagues are anxious to speak to this bill. But let me say as finance critic that we object to the irresponsible budgetary policy of the Dalton McGuinty government based on broken promises of higher taxes and runaway spending. We strongly object to this notion of reducing the frequency of local campaigns and not taking it to the people. If you had taken it to the people, if you had gone for public hearings and this is what they demanded, that would have been an interesting debate. But in fact it was quite the opposite, with this legislation being rammed through the Legislature without the ministers having the guts to stand up and defend it.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? I recognize the member for Niagara Centre.

Mr. Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. You can bet your boots there's going to be further debate. Unfortunately, because this government has little interest in the democratic process, that further debate is going to be limited to about an hour and 15 minutes, even less, before 6 o'clock this afternoon. I can't for the life of me understand how a government that wants to talk a big game about democratic reform would show such disdain for the democratic process when it rams Bill 81 through this Legislative Assembly.

In the limited time allowed us, New Democrats are going to speak to this bill. I am joined by Andrea Horwath, our colleague from Hamilton East, who has some very important things to say about Bill 81 as well.

How many hours in committee, Mr. Hudak, listening to the public?

Mr. Hudak: Two hours.

Mr. Kormos: Two hours—not because there weren't people who wanted to appear before that committee, and not because there weren't important things to be said, especially about schedule H, the Rob Ford amendment, the one that extends municipal terms from three years to four years. You could do a whole lot of extra drinking in that additional 12 months, couldn't you? Maybe you want to call it the Giorgio Mammoliti amendment: You can do a whole lot of traveling and take a whole lot of junkets at taxpayers' expense with that extra 12 months. Or maybe you want to call it the Tom Jakobek amendment: You can get a whole lot of payola, a whole lot of grease in that extra 12 months, can't you? Boy, the parking lot under city hall—give it 12 more months and the brown envelopes will just be whizzing. It'll be like Toronto airport on a busy day. They'll have to go into a holding pattern; they won't have time to land. The lobbyists' Pavlovian saliva will be dripping. I remember when I was a teenager, I used to hitchhike and get picked up, and somebody had a St. Bernard on the back seat of a Volkswagen—a St. Bernard just drooling. The lobbyists will just be salivating over the prospect of getting their claws into four-year terms.

Look, there's a debate to be held. I understand there are advocates for the four-year term. We heard a couple of them at the Bill 81 hearings—two hours. I want to tell you that I was just incredibly impressed with the submission of the troika of Steve Gilchrist, Josh Matlow and David Meslin. I've known Gilchrist for a long time and I've known David for a long time. It was an incredibly articulate and thoughtful submission. While it addressed and spoke to their concerns about expanding municipal terms to four-year terms from three-year terms, more significant, far more important and far more poignant was the appeal for a meaningful public debate.

Some of the obvious observations are that municipal councils—let's face it, there are two different worlds in Ontario in so many respects: There's Toronto and I suppose Ottawa, large cities with full-time councillors, but then there's the rest of Ontario, the kinds of places I

come from, like Welland, Thorold, Pelham and Port Colborne, and I suspect places like Peterborough too, where you've got part-time councillors. Councillors earn a modest stipend, and in many cases it is, for public service. But these are the political representatives who in fact are closest to the community.

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Ms. Horwath knows that; she was a very effective and very active city councillor for a number of years in the city of Hamilton. I was fortunate and blessed to be a city councillor down in Welland for about one term before the folks got me the heck out of town and sent me up here to Toronto.

I understand that city councils work, on a daily basis—you're working with nuts-and-bolts kind of stuff—whether it's something like waste removal from the trash bin that's put out in front of the house, to the stop sign that should be there, to the 15-minute parking sign at—as a matter of fact, I'm still waiting for the city of Welland. I wrote a letter to the mayor and the acting CAO about the poor Lee Wah Laundry downtown. They got stuck in the Hellems Avenue restoration from hell, one that lasted a good 12 months or so, dug up, and business dropped incredibly. The 15-minute parking sign that was in front of Lee Wah Laundry on Hellems and the little corner store beside it got taken out during the course of the construction and still hasn't been replaced. You understand what I'm saying, Mr. Hudak? What that meant was that people could stop for 15 minutes—because it's a residential area, an old part of town, central Welland. The problem is that the sign got taken down. So a month or so ago, I wrote a letter to the mayor and the CAO, saying, "Please, get that 15-minute parking sign up," because residential parking is taking place and people don't want to stop at the corner store that, again, suffered for a whole year.

City councillors do very important work, but they are the level of politics which is most engaged. I argue, for instance, that the second-most-engaged level of politicians are provincial members. Your federal members—these guys junket so many—well, you know, Speaker. Junkets. Whoa. You've never seen anything like it. You've got junket junkies in Parliament who make some of the guys around here look like pikers. You've got junket junkies in Parliament who make provincial members who have an addiction to those things look like small fry.

You folks know it from your constituency offices. You're the people who are expected to be at the events. The federal member can be—because, after all, he or she is doing important business in Ottawa, the deep-buried backbenchers. You never hear from them. They're never on their feet in the Legislature.

Interjection.

Mr. Kormos: It's true, Mr. Hudak. You know that.

City councils perform an incredibly important role, and there is a whole, strong argument out there that if you're going to keep people interested and active and concerned about participating in democracy, changing

municipal elections from three years to four years is not the way to do it.

Look, I quite frankly would live quite comfortably with the decision that was made at the end of a thorough and meaningful debate, one that involved not just consulting city councils, because we did hear from spokespeople who spoke about the AMO survey wherein a small majority of the respondents supported four-year terms from councils, but it was only a minority of councils in the province that participated in the survey. So that really wasn't a very accurate representation. But at the end of the day, so what? It's not what elected councillors say about three- or four-year terms that's important; it's what folks say, what people say, what residents of this province say, what voters say. And this government has no interest in them.

The problem is, you can't trust the McGuinty Liberals. The McGuinty Liberals promised to extend IBI treatment for kids with autism beyond the age of six. Ms. Horwath, if I'm wrong, say so.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): No. You're right.

Mr. Kormos: Ms. Horwath heard the promise too. The Liberals promised to extend IBI treatment for kids with autism beyond the age of six, and the Liberals broke that promise. You can't trust Liberals when it comes to kids with autism.

Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals promised to end the child benefit clawback—you know, the theft from the poorest kids in our province. They promised. It amounts to \$1,500 or \$2,000 a year, doesn't it, Ms. Horwath? And the Liberals broke that promise, leaving these kids in poverty. You see, you can't trust the Liberals when it comes to kids and poverty either.

The Liberals and Dalton McGuinty promised to cap and control and regulate electricity rates in this province, and Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals broke that promise. So now we've got electricity rates skyrocketing and 110,000 value-added manufacturing jobs, industrial jobs, lost over the course of the last 14 months. So you can't trust the Liberals when it comes to their promises about electricity prices or about jobs.

The Liberal time allocation of Bill 81: First of all, nobody likes a sneak. It's creepy. Ooh, I hate sneaky people.

Mr. Hudak: What about a rat?

Mr. Kormos: Rats, sneaks, scabs and finks: Nobody likes any of them. They're the most despicable class of things—ooh. And here McGuinty and the Liberals sneak schedule H into Bill 81. They waited till nobody was watching and then they sneaked it in. It makes you want to go take a shower when you think about it, when you touch the bill. You look at the bill and, "Oh, it's a budget bill?" I'm sorry, but New Democrats are not going to support this government's budget agenda. Where's the amendment ending the child benefit clawback? Budget bill? Okay. Budget bill, no, sorry, no, no. We do not approve of the unfair and excessive and regressive health tax and reduced and more delisting of health care. No, we don't approve of the budget bill.

Oh, because the Liberals promised \$6,000 a year per resident of long-term care, the oldest people in our community, the folks, the men and the women who worked so hard and sacrificed so much building this province, building their homes, building schools, building hospitals, building factories, making communities, raising their kids, raising their grandkids, investing in our country's future. These are the folks in long-term care. The Liberals promised—you promised—\$6,000 a year of new money per resident in long-term-care facilities. Day after day, New Democrats have been telling this chamber about our seniors, proud, dignified people, having to sit in their own waste because there aren't enough staff in long-term-care facilities to take them to the bathroom. Day after day, New Democrats have been telling this Legislature about seniors in our long-term-care facilities, understaffed and under-resourced, who aren't getting even one bath a week. As one staff person said, it's not uncommon just to sprinkle some baby powder on them, instead of bathing them, to disguise the odour. And food budgets that are a fraction of what we spend on inmates in our jails.

Liberals promised to invest money in long-term care so that our folks and our grandfolks could live out their final years with some semblance of dignity. Instead, they're living those final years sitting in their own filth because you don't have enough staff to bathe them and take them to toilets. You can't trust the Liberals when it comes to our seniors either, I have no qualms in telling you.

We'll go through this budget bill and say, "No, these are not budgetary measures that New Democrats"—when, lo and behold, we come upon schedule H—the Rob Ford amendment, the Giorgio Mammoliti amendment, the Tom Jakobek amendment—with no public consultation. I applaud Josh Matlow, Guy Giorno and David Meslin for forming their little coalition of opposition and concern, and for mobilizing people around the need for a debate.

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Look, these people of all three political stripes—Giorno, Matlow and Meslin, all three political stripes—activists, all three of them, know what political debate is all about and know what winning is all about, as compared to losing, and know what losing a debate is all about. But at least they say, "Let's have the debate." Let's listen to the public, the folks, the people out there, the 12 million or 13 million Ontarians who pick up the tab every day, the 12 million or 13 million Ontarians who have been suffering the job losses, the 12 million or 13 million Ontarians who have been suffering the skyrocketing electricity prices, the 12 million or 13 million Ontarians who's parents and grandfolks are being treated with such disdain in our long-term-care facilities by this Liberal government.

Dalton McGuinty and his big words—I'll give these to Ms. Horwath; she may want to refer to them in the time she's got to speak on this bill. Dalton McGuinty, with all his pompous Harnicking in this House—looks like

Dalton McGuinty but sounds like Charlie Harnick. That's Harnick with a capital H, for the purposes of Hansard. Big game about democracy, but when it comes to deliver, zip.

Down where I come from, people expect more from their provincial government. Down where I come from, people change provincial governments when those governments Harnick the way this one has.

Thank you kindly, Speaker. Ms. Horwath will be using the rest of this scarce amount of time.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe): Je vous remercie de me donner l'opportunité de parler à propos de ce projet de loi 81, car il est important que les Ontariens comprennent et sachent le but de ce projet de loi 81.

Mr. Speaker, before I start, I want to tell you that I'm sharing the time with my colleague from Huron–Bruce.

I'll repeat what I said: It's important that all Ontarians know what this government is doing for them. I was listening to both the member from Erie–Lincoln and the member from Niagara Centre. I want to start with the member from Erie–Lincoln. You're talking about balancing the books and balancing the budget. I want to tell you, it's very important to us to fix the mess you gave us when we got elected, because we inherited not just one deficit, not just a fiscal deficit; there was a health deficit, an education deficit and an infrastructure deficit. That's why our government is determined to fix the mess of the Conservative government.

That is why we want to continue investing in health care. It's very important to us, and very important to all Ontarians, to have health care accessible; to have health care able to help all the sick people in Ontario; to invest in the hospitals, build more hospitals, despite what the previous government did—closed many hospitals; to invest in more cardiac surgery, heart procedures, cataract surgery, hip and knee replacements and many other procedures across the health care spectrum. That's why we want to continue investing in health care. We believe it's vitally important to maintain health care publicly and accessible for all.

Also, we want to continue investing in education, because we believe strongly that education can take us into the future. Education is a way to keep us competitive in international markets and give us the scientific ability to compete in the future. That's why education is important to us. We're going to continue investing in the education system.

It is the first time in many years that we've seen peace and tranquility in the education sector and that we've seen happiness among the teachers, school boards, unions, families, students—all happy because we created peace and tranquility in the education system.

I want to continue: We've invested money in infrastructure, which is a sector that has not been invested in for a long, long time. Our roads, our highways, our bridges, our hospitals and our schools need repair badly and badly need to be rebuilt. Why is that? The previous government neglected all these areas.

With our continuous investment in all of the segments of our economy, we also want to tackle the fiscal deficit. I was listening to the Minister of Finance talking about how we're going to tackle all these issues together and how we're going to continue to be a healthy province, because this province contributes a lot to the whole national economy. I was pleased to hear a couple of days ago that the index of economic growth in this province was great, and the performance and productivity of this province helped the total productivity and the national growth. This province's economic health is vitally important, not just for Ontarians, but for the whole nation. Due to our investments in our economy, we are helping many different sectors to keep us prosperous and to continue to be a prosperous economy.

Despite what the member from Niagara Centre said, that we didn't do what we promised, I want to tell him that this is our third budget. We still want to continue working hard in order to achieve all of the promises that we said we want to do before the election, because our promise has to be fulfilled. We believe strongly, under the direction of our Premier, Dalton McGuinty, that we are going to continue building this province and building the economy of this province, building the education of this province, building the health of this province, fixing all the infrastructure of this province, because it's very important to us to link all these elements together. By working on all of these elements together, we are going to have a prosperous and able economy, not just to help Ontarians, but to help all Canadians.

He represents a party that has a bad government record. When they were the government in the 1990s, what did they do? They had a huge mess on every front, from labour to health to education to infrastructure to the fiscal deficit.

So I believe the record and the results of the government show great indications of their ability to govern this province. Therefore, the people of Ontario can judge us in an election according to our results in education, our results in infrastructure, our results in health care, our results in balancing the budget. That is why I am honoured and privileged to be part of a government working on a daily basis to tackle all these issues together, without forgetting the people of Ontario, without forgetting how we can balance the budget, and showing the Conservatives and the NDP and the people of Ontario that we're an able government and able to balance all the books, all the deficits which we inherited from the past government.

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): I'm pleased to be able to add a few comments in the brief time that we have to look at the budget.

The first thing that I would like to respond to is the question of this government in fact having a minister responsible for democratic renewal. It's really rather interesting, because this was a significant part of the McGuinty platform, that they would be looking at the need for and the kind of ideas that could be put forward to introduce democratic renewal.

When my colleague from Erie–Lincoln asked the minister the other day about the kind of consultation process that she as the minister would have engaged in before the decision was made to put in the change to the municipal term of office—hidden, actually, in the budget—she was not able to answer the question. One is left to assume then that she didn't know anything about this or making those kinds of changes, which are, frankly, extremely important and quite significant in municipal life. She handed the question off to the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

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From our perspective, this was really quite disappointing and makes one question the whole area of democratic renewal and just how serious this government is in naming a minister and not having any consultations on making a very significant change to the way in which our municipal governments are organized. As we look at this, we discover, of course, that there was no consultation. People have made reference to the fact that a survey was sent out. Of course, a survey was sent out, not to every municipal politician, but to some. I think that what we're accustomed to in our democratic process is an opportunity for everyone to speak on an issue. You don't just go out and selectively choose those people you are going to ask.

So, first of all, we have the question of the interpretation of what in a McGuinty world "democratic renewal" means, and, secondly, the fact that there was no public participation in this process.

Many have begun to look at the question of the value of three years versus four. There are four municipalities in my riding, and it seems to me that on a three-year cycle there's an opportunity, frankly, to provide for greater public participation and engagement. We are constantly aware of the fact that voter turnout isn't ideal. We would like to see more voter turnout. But in being able to establish interest within the community at the municipal level, it has to be issue by issue. We don't have political parties, we don't have a parliamentary system at work, at the municipal level. Individuals are there generally because they see a particular need in their community and this has then caused them to go forward and make themselves available to run for public office. So it's much more on an issue-by-issue basis. When you look at a three-year term, you can, I think, have a greater chance of engaging the public in looking at those municipal issues and being able to see the position taken by both the incumbents and the candidates. That is the very stuff, frankly, of the democratic process.

What this does by stealth, I would argue, is actually create fewer times for that kind of grassroots political engagement to take place. So I find it extraordinary that the government would pay lip service to democratic renewal and yet create an environment where all of a sudden people are going to find themselves only able to exercise their franchise every four years at the municipal level. I think it will do exactly the opposite in terms of increasing public interest, because people are going to be

discouraged. They're going to think that taking any kind of stand on a municipal issue is going to have a time frame where it's all going to be done by the time they would be able to exercise their franchise and influence some outcomes.

I'd like to turn for a moment to the question of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, and particularly the issue around children's treatment centres. There are 21 children's treatment centres across the province. They have made, I think, a very cogent argument as to their particular needs. They are looking at our most frail and vulnerable children in the province. Their need is to be able to address the growing need for their services.

The Minister of Health and the government have put a great deal of resources into wait-lists. In children's treatment centres, there are wait-lists. If one is going to embrace the importance of wait-lists in health care, one should also then be prepared to look at the wait-list for that particular vulnerable part of our population with the same interest. Instead, we see that individual children's treatment centres are having to manage their lists by reducing services to those they already serve in order to manage to provide some level of service to a greater number. We would certainly like to have seen some specific funding that would allow those children's treatment centres to look at wait-lists in a way that serves the needs of those children who are in treatment and those children who are on waiting lists.

Another area that is of interest to my constituents is the question of infrastructure. This government has made a great deal of commitment in terms of funding to transit, but we need a balanced approach to the issues around transit and highways. Highway 404 has been through a process now that dates back about 12 years. In the interim, we have had enormous growth alongside the proposed routes. The importance of this kind of infrastructure—it actually is under even greater pressure when you look at this government's initiatives around the greenbelt and Places to Grow. Obviously, in order to have places to grow, which we have identified in my riding, you need those kinds of infrastructure investments. When you look at any of the 400-series highways, you can see that they become the magnet for commercial and industrial activities. They are the things that provide the jobs. If you're really serious about transit, about gridlock, you reduce the time people spend trying to get to work. That is not being done by stalling on building the extension of the 404.

The final area I would like to speak on is the question of interest on the debt. I think it's really important for people to have a sense of where the government spends its money. If we were to take that as a dollar, you are looking currently at 11 cents on the dollar; that is, 11% of all the expenses of government is spent on just maintaining the interest on the debt. Clearly, this government has chosen not to use its \$3-billion windfall to create a balanced budget, to be looking at the importance of debt management. We think this is something people need to understand. Those are dollars that obviously could be spent on programs, on initiatives, on infrastructure, on

whatever the government chooses to do, but not when you have 11 cents on the dollar.

In concluding, obviously the question of extending the term of office at the municipal level does not belong in a budget bill. It's clearly there to limit discussion, to prevent people from having that fulsome debate that, quite frankly, is the essence of democratic renewal.

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The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Horwath: It's my pleasure to participate in the very truncated third reading debate on Bill 81, the budget bill. I say "truncated" because people who have been watching tonight will already know that the government has decided to restrict further debate on this bill. They've decided to shut down the debate through a time allocation motion, which other members have said, and I would agree, is completely anti-democratic. It is undemocratic to shut down debate simply because the pressure is getting too high, not on—well, yes, on the main parts of the bill, which I'll be speaking to as well, but particularly on the little piece that this government tried to hide in the back of the bill through schedule H, which is what everybody is talking about tonight, and that is the idea of extending municipal terms of office to four years.

I was quite frankly shocked. I was surprised. I really didn't realize, and I shouldn't admit that in front of my own House leader, Mr. Peter Kormos from Niagara Centre, because I actually didn't realize that the government even restricted the amount of time at committee for this bill. So even if there were councillors and residents, community members, just people concerned about this issue of how you elect your municipal councillor, how you elect your councillor at your closest level of government, how often you get to do that, how often you get to give them a report card, if you will, through an election process, even that was restricted to only two meagre hours of hearing from people on that issue. That's extremely unacceptable, and it's unfortunate that this government continues to slide things by, to hide things at the back of bills and try to get away with it without bringing it into the light of day and without getting ample and adequate discussion and public debate on the issues.

I'm going to perhaps speak about that a little bit more at the end of my remarks, if I have time. I think it has been well covered off thus far this afternoon/evening. But I did want to talk about a couple of other issues because, really, for all intents and purposes this is a budget bill, and the bill sets out what the government sees as its priorities over the next year. What it also does, though, is shine a light on the things that the government doesn't see as priorities for the province of Ontario, for the people of Ontario, for working families in Ontario.

I can tell you that I was sorely disappointed by some of the things that just didn't seem to be able to make it on the priority list, notwithstanding absolute promises by the McGuinty Liberals both during the election time frame, prior to that and even since that. Many promises have come forward that have not yet been fulfilled by the government.

When I look at the timing of the next election for members here—expected next October—you have to acknowledge and recognize that this is the last full budget this government is going to be able to bring forward, because the next budget that they bring forward next spring is only going to last until a new government is elected and they bring in their first budget.

Mr. Kormos: It will be a BS budget.

Ms. Horwath: Yes, it will be a BS budget likely, just like this is a BS budget.

I wanted to talk a little bit about the one thing that the government, when they were running for election, had spoken a lot about. They made big commitments around the children of the province. They made huge commitments. In fact, one of the major planks of their platform was around early learning and care. It's absolutely shocking, it's stunning that in this budget, in this Bill 81, the government has purposely ignored their obligation, their responsibility and their promise to the children and families of the province of Ontario. How have they done that? Not only have they not fulfilled their promise of a \$300-million investment in child care in the province of Ontario; instead they turned around and cut the budget, so they're spending even less this year than they did last year for child care in the province of Ontario.

What kind of leadership is that? What kind of leadership is that, that the minute things get a little rocky—certainly we would all agree the federal government has done the wrong thing on their child care file. Nonetheless, as soon as it gets a little rocky, they turn, hightail and run away from the child care commitments they've made to the families of this province. That is absolutely unacceptable.

You'll remember it was a mere year and a half ago that the then-minister was so proud, making all kinds of announcements and taking all kinds of photo ops about the Best Start program. Where are we now? The Best Start program is a non-starter, a false start, because this government has decided that they do not see a role for the provincial government to take leadership in the provision of child care in the province of Ontario. Do you know what? You only need to look at the province of Quebec if you want to see a model for leadership in child care. It's not impossible to undertake that if you're committed to it, but you're only committed to it if you can provide the dollars through the federal transfers. If you all of a sudden have to fulfill your promise for \$300 million to be invested in child care, it's not going to happen.

If there was one big disappointment, it was that this government refused to step up to the plate and fill in with even their own \$300-million investment in child care that they promised, to start to build from where we are now as the federal government withdrew its support. But no, this government's commitment to child care was very, very fleeting. It flitted away the minute the federal government decided to change their direction on child care funding, and that's unacceptable.

The government likes to talk about the fiscal gap. They have all of these efforts they make around talking

about how Ontario gets a raw deal, and that's fine; I think members of this House unanimously talked about the fact that that certainly needs to be addressed. But you can't on the one hand say that you're taking a leadership position and speaking out on behalf of the people of Ontario, and at the same time back away from something that you had said was one of your fundamental beliefs in your campaign: a provincial child care program built on all the appropriate principles—access, quality, licensing. They wouldn't go as far as to say “not-for-profit”; no, they don't believe that not-for-profit is the best way to deliver it, although all of the studies that are available will indicate that that is the best way. But as Liberals often do, they hedge on that issue and decide they're not going to go for the not-for-profit model even though that is the best one.

Do you know what? It's all moot now, because this government is not prepared to invest in child care in the province of Ontario. If there is one huge disappointment, it is to see that this government really had no commitment behind their very nice words and their very pretty plans around a child care program for the province of Ontario. Instead, what we see in this budget, in this bill, is a 22% reduction to child care; \$186 million taken away.

That's not the only failure this government has when it comes to children. The member for Niagara Centre, Peter Kormos, my colleague here, has raised it already very briefly in his remarks: the issue of the national child benefit clawback, another very clear, very precise, very big promise that the Liberal Party made when they were running for election. Before the election, they were livid that the province was clawing back the national child benefit from the poorest families in Ontario. They were up one side and down the other of the former government for clawing back those dollars. They said it was wrong; they said it was inappropriate. They said that if they got elected, they were going to stop the clawback; they were going to end the clawback.

Here we are, with yet another budget bill—what is this one? Is this the third budget bill of this government? I think it might be, or the third budget of this government; maybe not the third bill, but certainly the third budget—and we still have the national child benefit being clawed back from the lowest-income families in the province of Ontario, \$1,600 a year that could be in the pockets of those families, where they could be providing a better standard of living for their kids; where parents don't have to be going to the food banks as often; where they don't have to move because they've run out of rent; where they don't have to have, for example—and this happened in my city just a couple of days ago—a family whose utilities had all been cut off because they could no longer afford to pay them. They were using candles for hydro, and their house burned down. Of course, they had no insurance, so they've now lost everything. Why? Because this government refuses to acknowledge that people who are living in poverty need to have some assistance to get to a subsistence level that enables them to have at least a quality of life that keeps them out of harm's way.

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That's another issue that's so extremely problematic. This government, notwithstanding all of the railing that they did against the previous government, has not addressed the deepening poverty in the province of Ontario; they have totally ignored that issue. They have not built a stitch of affordable housing. They'll say they have, but you know what? They haven't. Perhaps some 63 or 64 units have been built of real affordable housing. I'm not talking about public-private partnership, condo-type schemes and deals; that's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about real affordable housing, where there are tens of thousands of families on the waiting list here in Toronto, there are thousands and thousands of families on the waiting list in the city of Hamilton, and I'm sure that most of the major cities in the province have waiting lists for affordable housing. But this government did not see its way in this budget. I want to know what they're doing with those federal dollars, because I know the federal dollars are flowing. But I also know that the provincial government has not seen fit to develop a program that quickly gets bricks and mortar built so that people no longer have to be waiting on waiting lists in the streets of our cities without a place to live. It's absolutely unacceptable that in this province, with so much wealth, we have the shame of deepening poverty on our streets.

Today, I met with some people from Children's Mental Health Ontario. They enlightened me as to what their concerns are about yet another broken Liberal promise around children's mental health. I raise it because it's an extremely important issue and one that unfortunately doesn't really get raised very often in this House.

The provincial government, the Liberal McGuinty government, had made a commitment. They knew and they have known for a long time that children's mental health is suffering significantly in the province of Ontario, and I'm going to go through some of the stats very briefly in a minute. They were promised that the government was going to undertake a process to review the situation and develop a framework for children's mental health. They weren't even asking to have all the solutions right away. But the service providers, Children's Mental Health Ontario and the member agencies, engaged in a process of consultation to try to solve the problem. They came up with a summary of some of the discussions that were taking place around the possibility of this framework and what it would look like.

Guess what? This framework was supposed to be in place, introduced and begun to be worked on last year. It didn't happen. That was the promise: “The framework will be ready.” It wasn't ready. So they were told, “Wait until the spring. We'll have it ready for you in the spring.” Spring has come and is almost gone, and they've just recently been told, “Perhaps June.” I was surprised at the meeting that one person was saying, “They told us June,” and another person at the table was saying, “We were told it might not even be ready until October.”

When you have a children's mental health system in the province of Ontario in crisis, and I'm going to tell you a little bit about that now, you have to get around to not only the plan, but then making sure the plan gets implemented. If you're not even going to put the plan in place, when are we ever going to get to the implementation? How many more children and families in the province of Ontario are going to have to suffer because this government cannot get its act together enough to put in place a system of programs and services that actually help young people who are dealing with mental health problems?

I'm going to say this, because it's absolutely true: If you reach young people, children and youth, when they are getting diagnosed and when they are acknowledging or finding out that they have a mental health problem, then you are going to save that person and their family so many years of anguish and pain.

Funding for Ontario children's mental health service centres has been cut or frozen for 12 of the last 13 years. What that means is that when you add in inflation, the capacity of that system to serve children who need mental health services has been reduced by more than 25%. Every single year, these agencies are having to cut back and move around their staff. In fact, what's happening is that their staff are leaving. People are leaving that system because the job cuts are coming every year, year after year, and they're not getting any signs from government that they're prepared to deal with the problem.

Children between the ages of four and 17 are the ones most likely to have a mental illness in Canada. Anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress, panic, separation, obsessive-compulsive—6.4%; attention deficit and hyperactivity conduct disorder, depressive disorder, substance abuses—these are some of the ways children's mental health issues arise. Young people with mental health disorders are at a greater risk of dropping out of school, ending up in the criminal justice system or the youth justice system and not being functional as they reach adulthood.

Depression and suicide in our young people are at an enormous rate. In fact, suicide is the second-highest cause of death for youth in the province of Ontario. Suicide: totally preventable if children and young people get the resources they need out of the mental health system. But sadly, this government has not prioritized children's mental health, certainly not in this budget bill or the budget it refers to. That is another shame of this province.

What did this government prioritize? They prioritized some good capital tax cuts for banks and insurance companies. They made sure they got their money. They had a \$3-billion slush fund at the end of the year and they were able to talk proudly about that. They didn't take any of that money and invest it in some of these programs that can really help people, that can save our children, that can save some of our families from the blight of poverty. They didn't do that.

What else didn't they do? They didn't do a lot of things. We talked about some of the health issues earlier.

Instead of fulfilling their promises around turning their backs on privatization of hospitals or private financing models, what did they do? The minute they had the chance, they thought they'd find another way of talking about it: "Give it a different nomenclature and everything will be fine; nobody will know we're really talking about P3s," or alternative financing or whatever you want to call it. What is it? It's private financing of hospitals. They said they weren't going to do it; they've done it.

Look at the long-term care system. This has been raised by New Democrats time and time again in this Legislature. They have failed the senior citizens of this province. They have still not invested the \$6,000 per resident that they promised they were going to invest. What do we have? We have our vulnerable seniors in long-term-care facilities all across this province crying out for some dignity, crying out for a little bit of help, crying out for a decent meal—\$5.34 a day to feed a senior citizen is unacceptable. That is unacceptable and exactly contrary to what this government promised the seniors of Ontario.

So what do we have? We have a budget bill that gives some favours to some sectors, but totally ignores some of the major planks this Liberal McGuinty government ran on in the last election. When you look at the spectrum, they're failing children on the one side, failing them through all the issues I raised, but we also know from our education critic that there are still significant problems in the schools, with special needs, with not being able to access things like French-as-a-second-language and English-as-a-second-language resources in the schools, that there are still problems with the funding formula and transportation. So children have been written off, pretty much, by this government. Then on the other end of the spectrum we have our senior citizens, our other most vulnerable group in Ontario. Again, the government turned a blind eye to those vulnerable seniors.

I don't even have time to talk any more, about schedule H, the odoriferous schedule on municipal terms.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

1740

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): I'm so happy to have the opportunity to bring some facts to the table. The member from Hamilton East works really hard, but I want her to do an even better job than she normally does.

Here is what she should know: She should know, for example, that in her own riding of Hamilton East, 829 new child care spaces will have been created by September of this year. As a matter of fact, I'm really proud that, as a result of steps taken in this budget, our government, the Liberal McGuinty government of Ontario, is taking care of kids and their families with a commitment to sustaining the 14,873 new spaces that will have been created by September of this year. This means more spaces for children, more high-quality, licensed, regulated, developmental spaces for children. This also means more income-based subsidies to help make child care more affordable for these parents in Ontario. It also

means wage improvements, which should be really, really important to the member from Hamilton East. It also means sustaining our Best Start program, and the member from Hamilton East should know of the excellent work that is going on in Hamilton East, her riding, where we have one of our demonstration sites.

I want to congratulate everyone who has worked, unlike the member opposite, to help us advocate on behalf of families in Ontario, rather than playing partisan politics with our children and their families. I say shame on them, because they have yet to say to the federal government, the government of Canada, "Stand up for kids. Stand up for kids all over this country."

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): In the very limited time there are several items that need to be put on the record. Listening, as I am today, I would say that we are dealing with a problem here, that this is a time allocation bill. In fact, they've shut down debate and contradicted themselves in this whole process of free debate, specifically around the budget. When you really think about it, one of the most important documents that sets the table, if you will, for the government's agenda for the next term is clearly identified in the budget and the process that flows from that.

As the remarks have been made to date, a lot of the stuff in the budget bill itself is quite traditional and expected, I suppose. If you look at some of the language in any detail, you will see that quite often they are amending certain acts with respect to regulations and tax provisions.

I thought there was one particular section in the bill—I'm not talking about schedule H; schedule H has been talked about. That is the anti-democratic insertion of that four-year election term municipally. There's been much said about it, and it appears that they've secretly slipped it into this budget bill, hoping that no one would notice, and then time-allocated it so that no one had time to respond. It's a theme that I see becoming consistent and predictable with this government.

But there's one other small, often not mentioned—our critic Tim Hudak and the member from York, Ms. Munro, have made an eminently considered appeal for how undemocratic this is. But this is a budget bill, they are the government and they are again raising taxes and spending more. But there's one little schedule E here under the Gasoline Tax Act; quite an interesting little piece here. There is a tax exemption for ethanol. There is a requirement under the regulations made under the Environmental Protection Act that ethanol be added to gas. They are going to add that to gas, but they're also going to permit the provision to tax that portion of the gas that would otherwise have been exempt.

The health tax was what set the high-water mark for the current McGuinty government—about \$2.5 billion of additional revenue. I think at the end of the day, with all of these revenue expenditure questions, the people listening and the people observing should ask themselves, "Is it any better?" That's the acid test of all governments at the end of the day: Is it any better?

We all probably agree to some extent with many of their priorities, like health care. I ask the viewers, those listening, and those reading Hansard to ask yourselves, "Is health care any better?" They've got the wait-time strategy. A lot of federal money flowed to make that happen. Is it any better? They had a strategy that I think is part of the economy, a failed strategy, and that's the energy strategy. Is it any better? You're paying more and getting less. That seems to be an emerging theme. You're going to pay more under a Liberal government of any stripe and you're going to get less. Those are two points I've pointed out here that are consistent with their theme of tax and spend, which is the traditional Liberal definer; it's the defining phrase.

If someone asks me what I think, I would say that all people in this chamber would like to make Ontario a better place to live, work and raise your family—no question of that. But when you are paying more and getting less, you have to ask yourself the question: Is it justified? Then on top of that, to rub salt in the wound inflicted by Dalton McGuinty on every citizen, I put to you that you are paying more and you are getting less. That's the test of the budget, despite all these phrases and clauses. Even intensifying that mistrust is slipping in schedule H at the ninth hour, a secret clause—schedule H, payback time for the municipal partners.

The member for Hamilton East made a couple of very good points. I think she failed to mention their commitment to education. Certainly we all want education to be better. There's a bill before the House, Bill 78, which is now in committee. There's not a lot of receptivity to it by many of the leaders. I have a letter signed by Dalton McGuinty where he actually promised autistic children and their families that he would fix that problem. This is in addition to the promise of the national child benefit, the clawback that keeps being discussed. These are signed promises, the signed commitment of a political leader.

What I say is missing from this—when persons tell you they promise something, you better hold them to it, because they're the leaders you've elected, to whom you've entrusted your voice and your will. They may be giving the appearance that they're doing the right thing; it's clearly anything but. Just ask the autistic families of Ontario. Ask the people from Community Living who were here today. Ask the people in long-term care. Ask the people waiting for surgery. Ask the farmers of Ontario if they're happy. Ask the chiropractors. Ask the optometrists. The pharmaceutical bill is another one that's being rammed through. I tell you that even with the Rae report that said they were going to spend six-point-something billion in post-secondary education, students' tuitions went up. Your transit passes went up.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Pursuant to the order of the House dated May 1, 2006, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Duncan has moved third reading of Bill 81, An Act to implement 2006 Budget measures and to enact, amend or repeal various acts.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Oh, well, that is a legitimate point. I am sorry. Further debate?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate the opportunity to speak to such an important bill.

I want to start off by saying to the member from Durham, who said, “Ask yourself, is it any better today?” that when I have the opportunity to go out in my riding and I say, “Is it any better today?” the answer I receive from my constituents is, “Yes, it is better.”

Here’s why it’s better. When we took over government, we not only had a health care deficit, an education deficit and an infrastructure deficit, but we started with a fiscal deficit. I know that from across the way there isn’t an acknowledgement that that in fact is what we had when we started in government, but that is what we had. So I think that on the qualifier, the benchmark we have, “Is it any better?” what I hear is, “Yes, it is better.” I think that is probably what the member from Durham meant to say and probably where he was going. So I want to finish what he probably would have said had he had longer to talk.

One of the things I want to speak to is the constant messaging that we hear from the other side of the House. “It’s misguided, harmful,” the member from Erie–Lincoln said. And one of the things I want to speak to specifically is something which affects his areas directly. This “misguided and harmful”—his language. I wonder if the grape growers would agree with him when \$1 million was allocated to that. I just wonder when we’ll talk about that. Through the hearings that member had the privilege of hearing from constituents throughout Ontario. He heard from the grape growers the need that they have within their agricultural community and what they need to do to bring forward the hardier varieties.

But I want to speak to the fallacy that the ag budget was not increased. It was increased and has been increased. Certainly a commitment to the agricultural community was also made for a multi-year strategy with a federal component. Clearly the ag community has heard that. You can pick up any paper and read that today, from our commodity representatives as well as our ag rep.

Because of my background, I also want to speak to three-year terms versus four-year terms. Some of the comments that were made during the hearings—“Well, there is no cost to campaigns.” That was a comment made by one of the presenters, but we know that’s not so. In the riding I represent we are not in the same pay scale. The workload is as hard, but our pay scale isn’t in the neighbourhood with many of my urban counterparts. But the work is still there and the commitment is still there. I do want to say that this clearly was a decision that was put forward to municipalities and AMO did—

The Speaker: Thank you. I apologize for my error.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated May 1, 2006, I am now required to put the question. Mr. Duncan has moved third reading of Bill 81, An Act to implement 2006 Budget measures and to enact, amend or repeal various Acts. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say “aye.”

All those opposed will say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1753 to 1803.

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

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Balkissoon, Bas	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bartolucci, Rick	Kular, Kuldip	Racco, Mario G.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Kwinter, Monte	Ramal, Khalil
Brownell, Jim	Leal, Jeff	Ramsay, David
Cansfield, Donna H.	Levac, Dave	Rinaldi, Lou
Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Ruprecht, Tony
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Matthews, Deborah	Sandals, Liz
Colle, Mike	Mauro, Bill	Sergio, Mario
Cordiano, Joseph	McGuinty, Dalton	Smith, Monique
Delaney, Bob	McMeekin, Ted	Smitherman, George
Dhillon, Vic	McNeely, Phil	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Di Cocco, Caroline	Meilleur, Madeleine	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol	Van Bommel, Maria
Duguid, Brad	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wilkinson, John
Duncan, Dwight	Oraziotti, David	Wong, Tony C.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Parsons, Ernie	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Fonseca, Peter	Patten, Richard	Zimmer, David
Gerretsen, John	Peters, Steve	
Gravelle, Michael	Peterson, Tim	

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	MacLeod, Lisa	Runciman, Robert W.
Elliott, Christine	Marchese, Rosario	Scott, Laurie
Hardeman, Ernie	Martiniuk, Gerry	Sterling, Norman W.
Horwath, Andrea	Miller, Norm	Tabuns, Peter
Hudak, Tim	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Jackson, Cameron	O’Toole, John	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 58; the nays are 20.

The Speaker: I declare the motion passed.

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

It being after 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 of the clock this evening.

The House adjourned at 1806.

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