



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario
Second Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario
Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 1 June 2006

Jeudi 1^{er} juin 2006

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Copies of Hansard

Copies of Hansard can be purchased from Publications Ontario: 880 Bay Street, Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1N8. e-mail: webpubont@gov.on.ca

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Exemplaires du Journal

Des exemplaires du Journal sont en vente à Publications Ontario : 880, rue Bay Toronto (Ontario), M7A 1N8 courriel : webpubont@gov.on.ca

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 1 June 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 1^{er} juin 2006

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

**PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS**

ONTARIO CHARACTER

Mr. Tony C. Wong (Markham): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should declare the province of Ontario to be a “province of character” by encouraging the citizens of Ontario to foster a climate which promotes, supports and celebrates excellence in character in its schools, businesses, homes and community-based organizations in order to strengthen Ontario’s families and communities.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Wong has moved private member’s notice of motion number 16.

Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr. Wong, you have up to 10 minutes.

Mr. Wong: This is certainly a very exciting day for me. Before I start, I want to recognize two very important people, and I’m honoured they’ve joined us this morning: Lina Bigioni, executive assistant to regional chair of York region Bill Fisch and director of government relations, and Christine DeHaas, executive director of York Region Character Community Council. Just a personal note: I’ve known Lina for many, many years, and she has done such great, conscientious and impressive work for both Markham council and York region council that she is just a jewel for us.

The purpose of my resolution is to engage the citizens of Ontario, including elected officials, community leaders, businesses, school boards, health professionals and our youth in recognizing and promoting the importance of good character. By declaring Ontario a province of character, we would serve as an example for cities, towns and municipalities across the province to adopt a similar culture of good character. In a province of character, everyone works together to ensure that families are strong, neighbourhoods are safe, education builds character, and businesses are productive.

There are two very important people in York region who have spearheaded the character community initiative since, I guess, the year 2000.

Becoming a province of character is about defining and practising in our everyday lives a better way to be. It

means to show respect for one another, demonstrate good citizenship, teach our children how to participate responsibly in a civil society and foster democratic ideals of justice. There is a better way to build a strong spirit of community among Ontarians, and declaring the province to become a province of character is the first step in that process. By designating the province of Ontario as a character-building province, the government of Ontario would encourage the citizens and community leaders of the province to promote and foster excellence in character in all sectors of society.

As a province of character, the government of Ontario would work together with communities across Ontario to nurture positive character attributes such as respect, inclusiveness, honesty, fairness, compassion, integrity, initiative and responsibility. A province of character is one in which the elected officials, community leaders, business leaders, school boards, health professionals and citizens recognize and promote the importance of good character. In a province of character, everyone works together to ensure that families are strong, streets and neighbourhoods are safe, education is effective, businesses in the community are productive, neighbours care about one another, and citizens continue to share the freedom to make wise and healthy choices for their lives and families.

I was saying that there were two very important people in York region who spearheaded this process, and of course I refer to my mayor—and I say that because I was on Markham and regional council before I was elected to the provincial level: Mayor Don Cousens. I would like to quote him:

“The character community initiative that we started five years ago in York region has become a movement that schools, businesses, families and communities are beginning to take seriously. Living with character affects everything we do, the way we drive, play sports and deal with family and friends.”

“Good character is fundamental in all societies and has a common thread through every culture, language and religion. We are already seeing a difference in York region with anti-bullying and the way people work together more effectively.”

“It would be a great step forward for the province to endorse this program.”

Another very important person—my idol—is Dr. Avis Glaze, who was formerly with the York Region District School Board and subsequently worked in the Peterborough board of education, but recently joined the

Ontario Ministry of Education as the chief student achievement officer and CEO for the literacy and numeracy secretariat. She started this in the York region district board of education and subsequently educated us about character communities. She said:

“The qualities demonstrated by individuals affect the quality of our lives within our communities positively or negatively.

“To ensure that our society continues to be a just and harmonious place for all, it is important to find common ground on the values that are important to us.

“It matters—that we demonstrate qualities such as fairness, empathy, honesty, optimism each day. Employers often say that they want their future graduates to have initiative, to be honest and responsible. These qualities are taught and nurtured in homes, communities, churches, synagogues, mosques and temples.

1010

“It matters how we treat one another. It matters that our children know what we care about as members of our communities. It matters what kind of province and country we want to build for future generations.

“I have seen first-hand what it means to have a community of character. When individuals take these issues seriously, it has a positive impact on all that we do.

“There is a lot of generosity among Ontarians, but we cannot take it for granted. It is important for all of us to invest time in determining the kind of province our children and grandchildren will inherit—by creating it now.

“I strongly support this initiative.”

This actually went back to five, six years ago. Weeks after the municipal election of 2000, Mayor Don Cousens spoke to me about this exciting idea as introduced by Dr. Avis Glaze. I was fortunate enough to have been invited by the mayor to be one of the two vice-chairs. My good friend Mayor Tim Jones from Aurora was the other vice-chair, and I think he still is vice-chair of the York region character council.

I am so proud that York region has taken this initiative. Another good friend of mine, Regional Chair Bill Fisch said, “In January 2002, York region became the first Canadian municipality to be declared a character community. Our nine area municipalities have all declared themselves to be communities of character. Since that time, York region residents, businesses, community groups and sports organizations continue to embrace the 11 principles of character community and make it an important part of their daily lives.”

There’s so much to say but there’s so little time. And I just want to tell members the 11 attributes that York region has selected for its character community. They are respect, responsibility, honesty, integrity, compassion, courage, inclusiveness, fairness, optimism, perseverance and initiative. Both the York Region District School Board and York Catholic District School Board have implemented character education in their schools. Their school boards hosted a conference called Quest for Character, which brought together community leaders,

local politicians and educators. Former Ontario Premier, the Honourable David Peterson, a person of good character himself, made a strong case for a return to fundamental values in his keynote address, energizing the crowd with examples and a call to action.

York region’s character community initiative was born out of that conference. Learning what they could from character communities in the United States, York region developed its own made-in-Canada model based on the principles that I’ve set out.

I want to say that it really is important for us to recognize the people who have done so much, but I will have to do it in my two-minute wrap-up. I do want to say that in York region there are a lot of positive impacts of a character community.

I just want to describe what happened with Recreationists of York Region, ROYR. They incorporated the spirit of character community initiative into their accreditation program, and Parks and Recreation of Ontario developed a program entitled High Five, a certification program that trains leaders in program development and evaluation. Embedded within the five principles are the character attributes and instruction for incorporating respect, responsibility, honesty, integrity, inclusiveness into programming for children.

Another group, the Ramer’s Wood Co-op in Markham—the board of directors expressed concern that residents weren’t taking an active role in the daily operation of the co-op. Vandalism was on the rise, and residents seemed to be turning a blind eye. By implementing character community, great things have happened and residents treated each other with great respect, sat on more committees, and encouraged each other to keep the co-op litter-free and—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I’m pleased to rise and speak to this motion presented by my colleague. I want to state at the outset that, of course, I will be supporting this resolution. I will be very direct in my remarks on this issue. I don’t want the honourable member to take offence, because I believe he has introduced this in good faith, and he has done so twofold: first, to compliment and to recognize the good work of York region and the leadership of York region Mayor Cousens specifically and Mayor Tim Jones, both of whom I consider to be very good friends and have the highest regard for.

I too want to recognize Lina Bigioni and, as well, Christine DeHaas for their good work, because we know that often it’s the staff who really drive the initiative. None of this would happen without that kind of support. I want to recognize, as well, the associates, those members of the character council who have been doing such great work: Steve Hinder and Doug Mottram, Errol Lee, Jacquie Hermans, Kathleen Redmond, Edward Nelles and, of course, Randy Taylor.

There are many others who are involved in this program. I often travel to schools throughout York region, and it’s wonderful to see how our school boards have

taken on this issue of character communities. Many of them that I've seen have various halls and parts of the schools named after some of these character identifications. All of this is so important as we focus, not only as individuals, as families, as communities; as the honourable member states, we, as a province, should be having this character focus.

I will now move to what I believe is a challenge for this government, for all of us. I would point out that I would have worded this resolution somewhat differently. I would have worded it as follows: "That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should declare the province of Ontario to be a 'Province of Character' by," and is where I would change the wording. Instead of "by encouraging the citizens of Ontario to foster a climate which promotes ... character," I would have rather seen this to say, "by showing leadership on the part of members of the Legislature and the government to demonstrate character in how we do our business in this place and in the province of Ontario."

You know, it's unfortunate that often in government it's much easier to say to people, "Do it this way," rather than demonstrating how it's done. I would say to the honourable member that in the case of this government and his leader, it's simply not enough to say, "Do as I say." He would not often want to say, "Do as I do," because all too often over the last number of years since this Premier has been our Premier, he has been caught. He has been caught out of character and out of many of these character traits as are proposed under character attributes.

The honourable member listed some 11 character attributes, and don't we all agree that they are fundamental? But it's interesting that the character attribute for June is honesty. What I would ask the member to do, and all members in the Legislature to do, is to contemplate on the importance of honesty and demonstrating honesty as a lead characteristic for those of us who hold offices here and certainly for the Premier of this province. I want to bring the leader of this government face to face with what honesty means. I want to put it at his doorstep and remind him of a pledge that he made on September 11, 2003. He signed this pledge in the presence of literally millions of people because he did it as a demonstration in the middle of an election campaign of what his commitment was going to be.

1020

I read this pledge:

"I, Dalton McGuinty, leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario, promise ... that I will not raise taxes or implement any new taxes without the explicit consent of Ontario voters," and further that, "I promise to abide by the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act."

We know that Dalton McGuinty did not keep that promise. Broken promises are not part of the integrity definition, and they should not be part of a character province. They should not be part of a character Premier. They should not be part of a character government.

It's interesting that July is noted as Integrity Month, and so it should be, because integrity flows from honesty,

and integrity means having the courage and intestinal fortitude to tell it the way it is, to be forthright and direct and to show leadership based on principles. Principled leadership: that means not saying what you think people want to hear but saying what is right and showing leadership. Often, I question whether we have that kind of example coming out of this place.

August has the character attribute of compassion and would, as the prayer that you read at the opening of this session, Speaker, that we act and conduct our business in this place that would in fact represent social justice.

To that effect, I cannot leave this debate without pointing out the many hundreds of thousands of parents and children in this province to whom Mr. McGuinty made a promise in no uncertain terms about what he was going to do when he was Premier. This is a letter that was written by the Premier of this province to Nancy Morrison of Bradford:

"Dear Ms. Morrison:

"Thank you kindly for your e-mail requesting information on the Ontario Liberal Party's position on IBI treatment for autistic children. I appreciate the vital issues you raised and would be pleased to address them at this time.

"First of all, let me say that I admire your determination and all your hard work, not only on behalf of your son but all autistic children in our province. You have clearly put a lot of time and effort into ensuring that autistic children of all ages are able to enjoy the best ... quality education."

I go on, the same letter: "I also believe that the lack of government-funded IBI treatment for autistic children over six is unfair and discriminatory. The Ontario Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six. We are not at all confident that the Harris-Eves Conservatives care to devise any innovative solution for autistic children over six, especially those with best outcome possibilities that might potentially be helped within the school system with specially trained EAs.

"In government, my team and I will work with clinical directors, parents, teachers and school boards to devise a feasible way in which autistic children in our province can get the support and treatment they need. That includes children over the age of six."

I want to remind the people of the province, and I want to remind the honourable member and the honourable members of the government caucus that they have yet to step up to the plate and demonstrate the characteristics of compassion and integrity and honesty and follow through on that commitment that they made while on the campaign trail.

I quote Jeff Bostick in a letter to the editor, Toronto Star, April 2:

"Families of autistic children counted on Premier Dalton McGuinty, at election time, to keep his promise to fund the medically necessary treatment these kids so desperately need ... McGuinty has been exposed for what he is, a liar."

I'm quoting, Speaker. I would not personally say that. I am quoting from the newspaper article.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm reading directly from the standing orders [*failure of sound system*]:

“(h) Makes allegations against another member.

“(i) Imputes false or unavowed motives to another member.

“(j) Charges another member with uttering a deliberate falsehood.”

This has been going on for the entire 15 minutes, very close to the line on a regular basis, and I would ask the member to fulfill his responsibilities of trying to avoid such discussion in this House.

Mr. Klees: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would suggest that while the government whip introduced this point of order, perhaps we could stop the clock so that we're not interfering with debate.

The Deputy Speaker: We have a couple of hours dedicated to private members' business, so I'd say get on with—

Mr. Klees: My point of order, in response to the member's comment: I, at no point—and I was very clear—made any reference to any issue that is contrary to any standing order. I was very specific that I was quoting other people to whom commitments were made. Speaker, from that standpoint, I have absolutely nothing to be in any way ashamed of with regard to my comments. In fact, I would suggest that if this is coming close to the nerve of the issue of integrity and honesty, then those who are being offended by it should take note.

I want to close my remarks by once again commending the member—

The Deputy Speaker: Have you finished your comment on your point of order?

Mr. Klees: I am. That's finished.

The Deputy Speaker: I've listened to the points of order. I'm inclined to suggest to all members that this is private members' business. We are all equal in here at private members' business. There are no ministers, no whips, no House leaders, so if we can attempt to keep our remarks in that fashion, I would appreciate it. What I'm saying is, let's just move on from here. Thank you.

The member for Oak Ridges.

Mr. Klees: Thank you, Speaker. I want to simply close my remarks by saying that I commend the member for bringing this initiative forward. I am simply suggesting that on the issue of character, we have a responsibility to show leadership before we ask anyone else to do anything with regard to that issue.

I commend York region for their initiative. I commend all who have been involved in demonstrating and advancing these character attributes. We look forward to the day when this government will do the same.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Needless to say, I found it somewhat ironic that a Liberal member of this Legislature would bring a resolution before this chamber talking about character, talking about setting examples, talking about raising the bar—what, the way Joe Volpe and Jim Karygiannis had when it comes to fundraising: cheques from 11-year-olds for \$4,500 a

crack? What, Gomery-style inquiry standards? Is this the kind of character we're talking about? Broken promises: Is this the kind of character-building we're talking about by the leadership of Dalton McGuinty? Make a promise to get what you want, to opportunistically seize an election event, but then break it as soon as you're elected.

I would suggest to the author of this resolution that if he wants to create higher standards of character in this province, he should ask his Premier to demonstrate, by action, appropriate character; to be forthright with the public; to keep promises once he makes them, whether it's promises not to raise taxes, whether it's promises to ensure that kids, once they reach the age of six, get IBI treatment for autism; whether it's the promise to control the rate of hydroelectricity—that would be a demonstration of character, if the Premier were to have kept that promise; whether it's the promise to show regard for democracy and enhanced debate—the Premier would be best suited to demonstrate some character by keeping that promise. The litany of broken promises goes on and on.

It is amazing that in a place where character seems to have so little value and importance to the highest levels of leadership in the province, this bill would be put forward without a smirk, or at the very least someone's tongue planted firmly in their cheek.

1030

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): First, let me congratulate Mr. Wong for this resolution. He's right on when he says that in this province, in every one of our schools, every one of our children should be subjected to character education. I'm disappointed that the member from Oak Ridges and the member from Niagara Centre began to politicize the very important introduction of this bill by Tony Wong on a province of character. I am disappointed because they know better. They know better because we say, “Let him who is without sin throw the first stone. Let him who is the kettle call the other kettle black. Let him throw the first stone.” We don't want to get into this, talking about broken promises by the Progressive Conservative Party or even, for that matter, what happened under Bob Rae. We don't want to talk about that. We're here to talk about a wonderful resolution by Tony Wong, who has introduced a private member's resolution on the province of character.

For too long we've taken character education for granted. For too long we've subjected our own children to learning about character by osmosis or by accident. As we know, we used to receive most of our character education not only from our parents, but also from our religious institutions, might they be churches or temples or synagogues. Now of course it's somewhat changed.

While I'm looking at the list of character ideas that have been introduced by my colleague—respect, inclusiveness, honesty, fairness, compassion, integrity, initiative and responsibility—there seems to be just one missing, which is almost all-inclusive, which Mr. Klees came very close to, and that is the idea of love.

We take a lot of our idea of character from biblical references, if you're a Christian. I remember one specific

story, even though I'm not a biblical scholar, about a man called Nicodemus. Do you remember that man? This man, Nicodemus, was sitting apparently in a tree—I don't think literally—and Jesus passed by, and Nicodemus said to Jesus, "Jesus, tell me what must I do to get to heaven?" Apparently Jesus answered, "Love your God with all your might, with all your strength, with all your soul, and love your neighbour as yourself." Looking at the character traits introduced by Mr. Wong, that idea of love is really all-inclusive in all of these characteristics.

It's easy, Mr. Speaker, to love you or to love our colleagues. You're all nicely dressed. You have money in your pockets. But how hard it would be sometimes to love some of the members here who are in opposition when they're politicizing an event like this. How hard it would be to go out and be fair to a squeegee kid or an unemployed immigrant. How hard it would be to open one's pocket to a beggar we meet even here in Toronto. How hard it would be to open one's door and be fair with a mentally challenged person. How hard it would be to be fair and to open one's door to a drug addict. How hard it would be—even in my own office, someone comes in, an older senior citizen who wants to actually kill himself, and he smells and the people sitting next to him are saying, "I wish that man wouldn't come in here because he smells." How hard it would be to open up that door and show some character.

We're all challenged with this as individuals. We're all challenged today by Tony Wong, who brings his resolution forward, as politicians and as persons to open our doors and to live in the province of character. That, to us, is a matter of congratulations to this member.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the member from Markham's resolution before us today on the province of character:

"In the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should declare the province of Ontario to be a 'province of character' by encouraging the citizens of Ontario to foster a climate which promotes, supports and celebrates excellence" in their communities.

I represent a riding, Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, that has stellar examples of people who have made initiatives to strengthen their communities. I wanted to mention a few. I wanted to mention Amy Terrill who received the Bernie Gillespie Memorial Award by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce in Hamilton. It recognizes excellence and work within their organization, which is the Kawartha Lakes Associated Chambers of Commerce, and the overall wellness of the community that she has promoted.

Paul and Robin Brown received the Ontario Farm Animal Council award with their children to raise awareness of the importance of agriculture.

There are all the Kawartha Lakes associations and volunteer administrators who received awards: the Easter Seals Society, the Boys and Girls Club of Kawartha Lakes and the Ross Memorial Hospital, just to name a few examples of stellar people in my community.

I want to remind the members of the Legislature that we are leaders in our communities and the examples we set are very important. When the Liberal government has gone out and made promises and broken over 50 of those promises to the people of Ontario, that is not an example we want to be setting.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I read this resolution as it came across my desk, with the imploring of the member from Markham that people come forward to speak to this. I thought I had to come and speak to this. I have very mixed feelings—I'm going to explain—about supporting this bill.

Of course, at the outset, we should all be people of good character. I don't know of anyone who would say we should be people of bad character, or anyone who would espouse for us to do wrong things, or anyone who would condone those who do wrong things.

I've looked at the experience of York region and how this program seems to be working in that community. It's not unlike a program we used to have in East York, a program the citizens participated in, a program the citizens loved, and it was called the Good Neighbours community program. Every year, we would hold an awards ceremony. We would invite people to nominate their neighbours, people who had distinguished themselves within the community, within the neighbourhoods, by doing neighbourly deeds, by providing prime examples, by helping those who could not help themselves. It could be something as simple as taking a senior out to buy groceries, or helping someone who was disabled, or providing funds or working in the school free of charge. It was all kinds of things. We handed out those awards and we had a reception. It was a much loved institution. I do truly believe, even to this day, that it helped the safety and harmony of our community.

So when I looked at this resolution, I thought this is something along the same vein. But I have to say that I started to reflect about the community of East York and what existed in those days and, sadly, some of the bad things that are starting to happen in our community, in part, it may be said because we no longer have our own municipality, and in part because of the social conditions of Toronto, and in part it can also be said that what we used to strive for in terms of our community and our neighbourhood is no longer possible.

1040

By and large, 95% of the people from those days are still there, but they have seen a real change in our neighbourhoods. They have seen the megacity imposed. They have lost control over their council, their councillors, their mayor. They've lost control over the boards and committees on which they once belonged. They have seen that people from far away now make the decisions.

They have seen the bylaws that we used to have in our neighbourhood become subject to the city of Toronto, bylaws that we had that helped to make a safe community. We didn't allow pool halls. We did not allow adult entertainment. We did not allow the sale of adult videos in video stores and all of that proliferation. If you

lived in East York, you could be absolutely assured that none of that would happen in your community. But today, as part of the megacity, we have adult entertainment; as part of the megacity, we have pool halls. We didn't even have a bingo parlour in those days because we didn't want to facilitate gambling. All of those things that we had that helped to develop a safe community have now gone by the by. I think you can see that this has happened throughout Toronto and, in fact, throughout much of Ontario, as cities were amalgamated, as people lost control.

It's instructive that this resolution is coming from York region. I travel very often to York region. It is a beautiful place, but one of the things that would strike anyone who goes there is that it's largely brand new. If you go, you'll see row after row of beautiful homes in subdivisions that cost \$400,000, \$500,000 or \$600,000. You will not see on the face of a casual observer any poverty. You will not see on the face of a casual observer any kind of social upheaval. You'll see brand new schools, brand new subdivisions, gleaming malls. Everything looks fine. I would suggest it's pretty easy in a place like that to have a community of character. I think that for York region it's probably a good thing to have instituted this.

But I want the member opposite, and all people thinking about this, to contrast that with the reality of far too many places in this province. I had an opportunity last week to go to Attawapiskat, where the only high school in the north has been closed for seven years. Nobody has a high school and there's nowhere to teach this kind of stuff. I want to contrast that with the town of Kashechewan, which has, for the third time this year, been forced to evacuate its residents. I want you to contrast it with downtown Toronto. There was a question in this very Legislature yesterday about vermin and rats in a school, about asbestos that the kids have to breathe in, about the mould growing in the corners and the tiles falling off the roof.

I want to ask the member and everyone, how is this kind of life going to build citizens of character, that kind of life in the inner city, with so many people forced on to ODSP, on to general welfare, where the levels of unemployment are infinitely higher than they are in the suburbs? How can the society in which they live, in which welfare rates have been virtually frozen, in which welfare rates have not even matched inflation since this government came to office, in which the poorest of the poor in Toronto are worse off today than they were during the deepest, darkest days of the Mike Harris government—I ask you, how can this program work when our poorest children of welfare mothers have the federal government money clawed back by this government? How can they aspire to be citizens of character when they don't have enough to eat, when they live in squalid conditions, and when the very government that is supposed to and is entrusted to help them chooses not to do so, but instead chooses to claw back the money for whatever purpose the government wants to use it for?

How can people who live in places like Jane-Finch, portions of Regent Park, and all of those public housing developments in this city and in public housing developments across this entire province, who live with the problems that have been documented so well in the past, who live with mice and cockroaches and vermin and mould, who live in places where no one has any hope, in places where there is gun violence in the street, in places where their kids don't finish school or don't even have a chance to finish school, aspire to be in a community of character?

How can all of this happen? How can it happen in communities across northern Ontario and even in Toronto and, I dare say, probably even in York region and in smaller municipalities, where over 100,000 jobs have been lost this year alone, where people are struggling to try to build for their families and to keep what they already have? How, in a one-industry town like Smooth Rock Falls, if the mill shuts down, are they supposed to maintain and be a community of character? There is nothing there to have character for. There are no jobs, no livelihood, nothing to which the citizens can aspire or in many cases can do. They look to this government to do more than this resolution will allow.

I don't blame the member from Markham for all of those social ills; he is but one person in this Legislature. This resolution attempts to do something which I think is premature at best. It's premature until all of those social ills are looked at. We have an obligation as legislators to try to do something so that the people who are in the hardest circumstance, the people who are having the hardest time in this very prosperous Ontario, have an opportunity to participate. What we need to do is to draw them in, not to tell them to be of good character, not to say that we are of good character, not to go into the schools and tell the kids who have no chance for a higher education, who can't afford the increases in tuition and who simply are forced to drop out—how can you tell them to be of good character? How can you train them to be of good character when they see the affluence all around them and have no opportunity in which to participate?

I looked at this resolution and what this resolution says. This resolution says five things.

The schools are supposed to try to give at least 10 minutes a day to build character among the youth. I question how this is going to be done when so many children have so many problems within our schools directly related to poverty. One in six children in Ontario lives in poverty. This government has done nothing to alleviate that poverty. How can you build character amongst those children when they know that all around them is affluence and all around them they are not participating? I don't know how the 10 minutes is going to engender something which I am sure most of them are bitter about.

The second thing it says is that the community is to find resources and tools. How are cities that are struggling and do not have sufficient monies, especially smaller towns and towns in which the manufacturing

base has been destroyed, to find this kind of money for the tools and resources? I don't know that many cities are going to be able to participate in this or will feel that it is important enough, with all of the other problems they have with infrastructure, with education and with everything else, to find the wherewithal and the monies to find the resources and the tools.

The third thing is the creation of a character council. I suppose that's kind of benign, but I am not sure that many will want to put the resources and the time with so many other pressing problems they have.

The fourth is an education committee to provide resources and tools; that is, to take the work away from the duly elected councils, the duly elected school boards, and to have a parent group or other group find the resources and tools which I believe this government has a moral and legal responsibility to provide. I have to question why that is in there at all.

The last one is a character council made up of a board of directors and a non-profit organization, another non-profit organization, which I think will probably suffer the same fate as literally every other non-profit organization in this province. They are starved for funds. They do not have an opportunity to have enough funds to do the jobs they need to do. They come cap in hand every year, and every year they go away empty-handed.

The member is trying his best. I do not blame him for one minute for putting forward this resolution. But I have to ask, how is it possible in a province that has so many glaring social issues in front of it and so many that have not been resolved, especially so many children who are living in poverty, going to declare itself to be a province of character, and how is it going to enforce what this resolution would do upon municipalities that simply do not have the wherewithal to carry it out?

1050

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It is indeed a pleasure for me to provide a few comments this morning on this resolution from my colleague from Markham.

But first, one of the great friends of the member from Markham, His Worship the Reverend Donald W. Cousens, announced today that after 12 years as mayor of Markham—and an MPP who had a very distinguished career here—he won't be seeking re-election as mayor of Markham because of health reasons. That will be quite a loss to that community, because he did show outstanding leadership. He and my colleague the member from Markham, who served on that council with Mr. Cousens, were indeed part of what many have called the Markham miracle: the growth of business and industry in that area and the development of many positive programs, through the work of the member from Markham when he was a city councillor there.

Just to talk about a few things that have gone on in my own riding to develop character and good citizenship: For many years, the Peterborough Rotary club would hold an essay contest, leading up to July 1, Canada Day. That was organized by a former Speaker of this Legislature, my good friend Mr. John Turner. John took it

upon himself to organize the essay contest. In the essays that the former Speaker would judge, an individual would talk about the essence of character and the essence of citizenship, not only within my community of Peterborough, but on a provincial and a national basis.

During my time as a city councillor in Peterborough, we developed the Peterborough youth awards. I would recognize a number of people—Mayor Sylvia Sutherland, who will retire this November as the longest-serving mayor ever in the history of the city of Peterborough; Councillor Doug Peacock, a former colleague of mine; and Ellen Stewart, a staff member of the recreation division at the city of Peterborough—who came together a number of years ago to come up with a Peterborough youth award. These awards are awarded annually to students who show good character and good citizenship, and recognize their contribution to the community of Peterborough.

Of note is Avis Glaze, who was a superintendent of York region. After she finished her work as a superintendent of York region, she became the director of education for the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board. Through her work, she brought about the character education that she developed as superintendent of education in York region and certainly brought that to her new assignment as director of the Kawartha Pine Ridge board. Dr. Glaze of course went on to become head of the secretariat for numeracy and literacy with the Ministry of Education here in Toronto. Through that process, I had the opportunity to visit classrooms where Dr. Glaze was directly involved in promoting character, 10 minutes a day. It was interesting to see, over a period of time, after students had been involved in the character-building exercise, the change in their outlook and in their attitude, and really the building of their self-esteem, which is so very important, and getting confidence in themselves as young persons in the classroom.

I feel this resolution, talking about respect, responsibility, honesty, integrity, compassion, courage, inclusiveness, fairness, optimism, perseverance and initiative, is important, and highlights very well the key characteristics one would talk about when one was describing what we think is a good citizen and a good individual who will make a contribution to our society. My late mother used to always tell us that good manners never go out of fashion. Taking the opportunity here this morning to discuss this resolution, I think, brings us together to look at some things that sometimes are not talked about at any great length. I certainly commend the member for bringing this resolution forward this morning. I intend to support it.

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): It's indeed a pleasure for me to rise in the House today to support the member from Markham and his resolution in declaring Ontario a province of character. I have watched the member and his hard work in the riding of Markham. He has shown that character to his constituents.

I just want to make a comment about the character I saw in the member and his work that I brought back to

my riding. Last November, it was announced that the Domtar paper mill in my riding would close. On that very day, I shall never forget the member from Markham getting out of his seat, walking over to my desk and indicating to me that he had an idea to help me out. He had an idea that he thought I should bring back to the riding, and I did. The member would understand that it wasn't long after that that the mayor of my community was here at Queen's Park and met the member from Markham in his office, and he presented this idea to the mayor. It's something we are certainly following up on. This is what we have to do in our province: reach out to each other. On that day I saw compassion and honesty and initiative and integrity. This is what the resolution is all about. I saw them in an individual, which I now bring back to my riding and comment about and spread out across this province.

In my riding in 1998, I was the reeve for the new municipality of the township of South Stormont. We had a natural disaster where everyone in my riding—and I noticed especially in my community—reached out. I saw true community character. This is what we have to build on. This community character was shown for sure, because it was at that time that my wife was critically ill in the hospital. I was reeve of the township. I was running back and forth between Ottawa and the municipality of South Stormont; she was in the hospital there. I saw people reach out to me. But I also saw people in the community reach out to their brothers and sisters to lend a hand of support as they tried to cope with the loss of power, the loss of getting to jobs, the loss of networking in the community. I saw people reaching out to each other. I saw people from Long Sault to St. Andrews, from Lunenburg to Ingleside, from Newington to Osnabrock Centre—people all across my municipality—and I also saw, because I was on county council and had an opportunity to fly over the area where power lines were down and whatnot, people in other communities reaching out to lend that hand of support, to show that support and that character. This is what happens all across our province.

I also look, in my municipality and in my constituency, to our local newspaper. I think this is the fourth year, if memory serves me right, that they have supported and profiled the great kids of our community in the Great Kids contest. They reach out every year and have a great celebration of what is good in children. That newspaper, the Standard-Freeholder, also has a page every week where they reach out to all those organizations and have a full page of pictures of people. Whether it's the diabetic society, heart and stroke, Alzheimer's, the OSPCA, people who work in the environment, they profile these people with photographs. This is what we have to do; we have to promote and foster that spirit of what's great in our communities. That's what this is all about. That's what my good friend the member from Markham is doing with this resolution: profiling what's good in Ontario and making sure that we never lose sight of that.

1100

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Wong, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Wong: I want to thank the members from Oak Ridges, Niagara Centre, Davenport, Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, Peterborough, Beaches–East York and Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh for participating in this debate. It is a bit unfortunate that some members have turned something extremely positive into something negative, but I'm going to stay on the positive side. I'm repeating: In a province of character everyone works together to ensure that families are strong, neighbourhoods are safe, education builds character and businesses are productive.

There have been a number of comments about Premier Dalton McGuinty. Let me tell you, the Premier is the province's greatest champion of working toward character education programs in schools. In his first throne speech, in November 2003, Strengthening the Foundation for Change, the Premier spoke to this government's commitment to excellence for all in public education. Part of that commitment was that communities would be asked to help define citizenship values for Ontario's new character education program in our local boards, to strengthen our students' education experience. He also acknowledged that the path to a better society and a more prosperous economy runs through our public schools.

I think it really is important to introduce the book that has been published by York region, Building Character: A Community's Success Story.

I want to address a point that's been raised by the member from Beaches–East York with respect to poverty and social issues: This is not about money. This is about how we can build and foster a great society. I want to advise and inform the members here that there have now been 11 cities or municipalities in Canada that have declared themselves as character communities. I am sure this would be helpful and I urge all members to support this resolution.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (SPEED LIMITERS), 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (LIMITEURS DE VITESSE)

Ms. Scott moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 115, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to improve air quality by reducing truck emissions / *Projet de loi 115, Loi modifiant le Code de la route pour améliorer la qualité de l'air en réduisant les émissions de camions.*

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

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): Two weeks ago, I introduced Bill 115, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to improve air quality by reducing truck emissions. The act requires all trucks operating in Ontario to activate the electronic speed limiter that exists in every truck engine to limit the truck's maximum speed to 105 kilometres per hour. I introduced the bill for three reasons.

First, as my party's environment critic, I fully support the introduction of measures to reduce greenhouse gasses and smog-causing emissions created by trucks. It's a simple matter of physics that you use less energy when you reduce speed. By slowing down trucks on our highways, we will reduce the amount of fuel that they burn. A reduction in fuel consumption means a corresponding reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. The math is very simple and incontrovertible.

The trucking industry has estimated that over 140 kilotonnes of greenhouse gases would be eliminated each and every year, a number which I believe is probably low. I believe that the reductions will probably be much higher. It's not just the trucking industry who thinks that slowing trucks down is good for the environment; Pollution Probe, the Lung Association and Fleet Challenge have all publicly endorsed speed limiters.

The Minister of the Environment and I may disagree from time to time, but on one thing, at least, I know we are in full agreement: We need to act now to stop global warming by reducing our greenhouse gas emissions. The minister has described the efforts to reduce greenhouse gases as the greatest environmental challenge of our generation and I tend to agree. Whatever our differences, what matters is that we start taking action now rather than later.

Climate change does not have to involve big, sweeping changes. Each of us doing our part can combine our efforts to achieve real, positive, lasting change for our environment. We have witnessed that in waste diversion through the blue box program, where every household does their part to reduce, reuse and recycle. The bill is a great example of a key industry stepping up to the plate as a willing partner to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reduce consumption of fossil fuel. Together, we can all reduce greenhouse gases. While I would never suggest this measure alone as the sole solution to global warming, I think it's a step in the right direction. Global warming is a complex issue and there is no single magic solution. We need a lot of different measures dealing with each source of greenhouse gases. For the trucking industry, using limiters to reduce trucking speed is a good strategy, one that is supported by the industry and by environmental experts. I am pleased to be able to bring forward a bill implementing it.

I'm also mindful of the fact that at the same time other pollutants like NO_x and particulate matter that cause smog and affect our health will equally be diminished. Given the smog days we are experiencing in Toronto right now, I should think that we can all agree we need to act now to reduce smog.

My second reason for introducing this bill is that when the private sector takes the lead and offers to support tougher environmental and safety legislation, I think we have an obligation as members of this Legislature to encourage that kind of leadership and support their efforts. The trucking industry deserves a lot of credit for coming forward with this proposal. It was their idea originally. How many industries are coming forward

begging us to help them improve their environmental performance? How many have really grasped the challenge of dealing with global warming and offered a constructive solution? Do we have so many willing volunteers for new environmental legislation that we can afford to reject good-faith offers of government-industry co-operative initiatives? I don't think so. I think it would be a shame to have an industry come forward asking for new legislation that will help our environment and then have we as legislators refuse to act. What kind of message does that send out, that industry cares more about the environment than we do here? So my second reason for introducing this bill is to show my personal support as a member of this Legislature for the efforts of an industry that has been proactive, shown real leadership, and is looking to government to work with them to implement a good idea, an idea whose time has come.

That brings me to my third reason for introduction of this bill. I'm a frequent user of our provincial highways as I drive back and forth from my home in the beautiful riding of Haliburton-Victoria-Brock. I know first-hand how dangerous it is to have to share those highways with trucks that are speeding. I also know that the majority of truck drivers are professional, courteous, and among the safest drivers on the road. But unfortunately, there are a minority of drivers who drive their fully loaded trucks far too fast, putting at risk not only their own lives but the lives of those who have to share the highway with them.

If enacted, this bill will ensure that all drivers slow down to a reasonable speed. I firmly believe it will improve road safety, a belief that is shared by a host of safety organizations that have also endorsed this idea. The CAA, the Canadian Safety Council, the Traffic Injury Research Foundation, the Ontario Safety League, Road Watch, the Transportation Health and Safety Association of Ontario, the insurance bureau of Ontario, the Markel and Old Republic insurance companies and Smart Risk have all come out and said that speed limiters for trucks will make our roads safer. In all honesty, I can't claim to be a road safety expert; however, the myriad organizations I've just named are the leading road safety experts in this province and they agree that slowing down trucks will make our roads safer.

Despite the obvious environmental and safety benefits and despite the fact that it is the trucking industry itself that is calling for this kind of legislation, I recognize that there are still those who question why the government should force truckers to obey the speed limit, just as there were those who vehemently opposed mandatory seat belts in the 1970s and just as there were and are those who opposed forcing motorcycle drivers to wear helmets, and just as there are those independent drivers who oppose the logbooks that restrict the number of hours they can drive in a day, who oppose the laws that restrict the maximum weight of their truck, and who oppose efforts by MTO to inspect their vehicles at roadside truck inspection stations. There will always be those who don't like any kind of government interference, but when their actions have an impact on the rest of us, on the en-

vironment we live in, on the safety of the roads we drive on, it is appropriate—it is imperative—that we enact sensible legislation. No one today would question whether mandatory seat belts were a good idea or whether motorcycle drivers should be required to use helmets, yet at the time, many did.

Let me deal now briefly with what the bill does and, more importantly, what it does not do.

What the bill does is require all trucks operating in Ontario to activate the truck's speed limiter, which is a built-in electronic microchip that allows an engine's top speed to be pre-set. The maximum speed that the limiter would be set at is 105 kilometres per hour. All trucks manufactured after 1995 are equipped with these chips now. Setting the maximum speed for a truck is a relatively simple programming change that can be performed in a matter of minutes at minimal cost. In many ways, it is no more complicated than changing the password on your home computer.

1110

Enforcement will be easy because if every truck is staying at or under 105 kilometres per hour, a cheater is going to be pretty obviously speeding past the other trucks. Cheaters will be easy for the police to spot and deal with. In addition, MTO on-road inspectors can very easily check if a vehicle has been properly governed using a hand-held device. The law would apply to all trucks, regardless of their home jurisdiction, who choose to operate in Ontario.

This is not unusual, as North American jurisdictions have a variety of laws governing operation of commercial vehicles, and they're expected to comply with the laws of the jurisdiction in which they are driving. You can use examples of Canadian truck drivers in the US in respect of the US drug-testing law that we don't have in Canada, the rules that govern vehicle weights, axle configurations and even the hours that drivers can work. So the trucking industry has long adapted to these different changes in jurisdiction. In the long term, I hope that all North American jurisdictions will follow Ontario's lead.

So what the bill does is reduce fuel consumption, thereby reducing emissions. What the bill does is improve road safety.

Now let's deal with what the bill does not do. What the bill does not do is affect the competitiveness of Ontario's trucking companies. Who would know better the competitive situation than the trucking companies themselves? They are the chief advocates of this policy. If there were a chance that this would hurt their competitiveness, they wouldn't be asking the government to bring in such a law.

What the bill does not do is affect the competitiveness of Ontario shippers. The fact is, over 50% of trucks operating in Ontario and around 70% of those operating in the US are already governed by this technology. The simple fact is that those trucking companies who have already governed their fleets are effectively competing with those who haven't, providing the same level of service at competitive rates.

What the bill does not do is affect a driver's pay. It does not affect the amount that independent truckers or owner-operators earn. It's not unreasonable to suggest that in order to make money, an owner-operator has to operate at excessive or unsafe speeds. Furthermore, whatever increased risk of rear-end collisions, it's going to decrease that. That's proven by many statistics.

I see my time is almost expired. Let me just conclude by urging all members of the House to consider the environmental and safety benefits, to consider the fact that the industry itself wants this law and to consider the fact that a broad cross-section of reputable environmental and safety organizations are also in favour of this law. Having considered all this, I urge you all to join me in support of Bill 115 this morning.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I will be supporting this private member's bill by the member from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, but as with most bills, it has its pros and it has its cons.

Let's look at the pros. The member says that speed limiters on large trucks have the potential to deliver these benefits, especially in terms of reduced speeds, fuel economy and reduced greenhouse gas emissions. Obviously that is a very good point, a point taken up already in terms of reducing greenhouse emissions by our government. We have already, in terms of specific actions, produced a number of almost immediate results, and let me just go through some of them here.

This government has introduced North America's toughest emission-testing standards for large diesel trucks and buses and has toughened the Drive Clean emission-testing standards for light duty vehicles by 23% in the past two years. We've implemented a five-point clean air action plan and provided gas tax funding so that municipalities can make meaningful investments in public transit. This is cleaning the air we breathe by getting people out of their cars, and obviously it enhances public transportation. The government has introduced Ontario's first-ever HOV lanes to help reduce gridlock. The Premier, in fact, has hosted the first shared air summit.

We've closed the Lakeview coal-fired generating station, and we consistently have maintained, and will continue to maintain our desire to reduce emissions, especially in terms of our coal goal, which is about cleaner air.

There are a number of points in terms of reducing gas emissions that the government has already taken. But let me now look at the cons. I hope the member from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock will answer some of these questions.

I have a trucking company in my riding and I asked, "In what way would this specific private member's bill affect you?" He said to me, "Well, we have shipments to make of car parts to Georgia. And who do we call? We're looking for the person or the trucking company that takes the transportation route that is the closest and shortest route in terms of hours." I said, "Why is that?" "It's obvious," he said. "First, it reduces the cost, but

second, which is much more important, the company and the factory in Georgia is waiting for these parts. The plant shuts down at 6. The truck that doesn't have a governor or a speed limiter on it will get there at 5. The Ontario truck that has a governor on it will arrive there at 7, which is one hour past the closing time of the factory, which means a hell of an extra cost."

I'm simply wondering whether the member from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock can answer this question for this specific trucking company. Are we saying with passing this bill, and I will support this, that we're disadvantaging and adding extra costs to those trucks that are registered in Ontario, as opposed to those trucks that come from south of the border, whether it be Tennessee, South Carolina, North Carolina or Virginia?

So the question is one of cost and disadvantage. I, for one, would not want to, with this bill—obviously we would not want, as a government, to try to disadvantage those trucking companies, in terms of competitiveness, which have to compete with those who won't be governed by the specific legislation.

But there are some other cons, and I hope the member will address these specific questions. The bill does not specify whether this restriction applies to motor vehicles only in Ontario, or does it also apply to vehicles operated in and through Ontario? Will it create confusion for other provinces' carriers and drivers? In other words, will any truck driving through Ontario be subject to this law?

The bill intends for this offence to be enforced. There will be an offence, obviously, if a truck is found guilty of not providing a governor or speed limiter on the truck and on the motor. The bill intends for this offence to be enforced by conventional police officers who are not commonly involved in the enforcement of weight and equipment requirements for commercial vehicles. There will have to be special training provided for these police officers to know just what fines to give to these drivers.

Deeming the driver of the vehicle to be in contravention of a vehicle equipment requirement is unfair in most cases because the driver has no control over the components of the motor vehicle that he or she is driving. This will be the responsibility of the vehicle owner or operator. The bill does not address the responsibility of the motor vehicle owner. Is it just the driver who's being fined? Should there not also be a special fine for the person who owns the vehicle or who leases the vehicle when he or she knows the governor is not being provided?

Obviously, then, there are a number of cons, and I would hope the member would be able to specifically address these questions, especially for my trucking company that would be at a disadvantage in terms of competing with other trucks out of the province. I will be supporting the bill, but I would hope that the member would be able to answer some of these questions that are distinctly important.

1120

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I'm pleased to rise and speak to the bill introduced by the member for Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, based on a proposal from the

Ontario Trucking Association to put limiters on trucks on the highways so all trucks would not be able to go beyond 105 kilometres an hour.

Right off the top, I will suggest that I will be supporting the bill, as I believe anything we can do, first of all, to improve our environment, but even more, to improve the safety and the expediency on our highways, is a good thing to do. It's also important to recognize that this isn't necessarily the answer to all the things that are wrong. This isn't going to all of a sudden clean up our environment to the extent that none of the other things need to be done. I think the government still needs to work on cleaning up the air that's coming out of our electricity plants that they keep saying they're going to close, but they're not. It seems they're saying they're going to close them so they don't have to clean up the air that's coming out of the stacks. I think that's very important.

My support for this bill is not so much on the environmental part, but on the rest of it. I've often heard in my community that good environmental policy is also good financial policy when people and businesses are conducting their business, and this is one of those examples. I would find it hard to believe that anyone who is operating a vehicle or truck on the road and who is trying to make a living would not appreciate that putting this in place, making a level playing field so all trucks are doing a similar speed and it does not create an uncompetitive edge by slowing some down, and they can save the number of litres of fuel that the studies show they can save—I would be hard-pressed to find someone who wouldn't be interested in finding a more economical way to get from one place to the other and, of course, at the end make more money.

The studies show that if they install these—I guess I should clarify the installing. Trucks already, since 1995, have the ability to function by putting a chip in the diesel fuel pump that is there. They can make that the limiter. It isn't a program where you have to put new equipment on the truck to make this work. As was said, there are many trucks that already have it. I think the member for Haliburton–Victoria–Brock mentioned that 50% of the trucks on our highways and 70% on the American side already use this type of technology in order to save fuel. As I said, I think this is a good business case. Not only that, the safety of the trucks on the highway is a very important issue.

The Insurance Bureau of Canada supports the proposal, as they see it will make our highways considerably safer. A number of other insurance companies are all suggesting it will make our highways safer. So again, it's not just for the environment, it's not just for the money saving, but it will make our highways safer. I think we should have all members of the House supporting it.

Having said that, there are some challenges. That's why I would hope that my colleague will agree to have it referred to committee for some hearings to deal with some of the issues that could cause a problem in the industry. One is the uniformity of the speed limit and how we make sure that people coming into Ontario are

governed by the same rules as our trucks will be, to make it a level playing field for all our truckers.

The other thing is that I noticed from driving to Toronto every day to come to the House, as trucks are coming down the highway, particularly in the area where there are just two lanes of traffic, as they go by, sometimes even now, as they do have the variance of speed, it takes a long time for one to get by the other. I have some concerns with this process, if 105 is the speed of all the trucks, that we have one going at 100 and the other one wanting to go at the 105, which would then be the legal speed limit. If they get out beside, it could take many kilometres before the process of passing that vehicle was completed. Again, that would have a detrimental impact on the movement of traffic on our highways, recognizing that one of the other big challenges in our society is to have enough room on the highways for all the traffic that's presently there. That is quite noticeable in the mornings as one travels into the city.

I think those types of things need some discussion and some committee time to come up with solutions. But I think that a compromise can be found on those issues to make this an improvement for the environment, an improvement for the profitability of our trucking industry and an improvement in the safety on our highways. I'm happy to stand today in support of this bill.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): Before I start to speak, I wish to preface my remarks by congratulating the member from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, because not only has she come forward with a good idea, but I do not remember, in my five years here and in all the private members' bills that I've ever had an opportunity to debate, being sent such a package by a member. Not only is it researched, not only is it clear, cogent and coherent, but it also has many endorsements contained within the body that literally answered every question that I might have had.

In fact, like the member who spoke before me, I had a great number of questions. I remember some of the difficulties in previous legislation and in other governments, where there was a whole bill about the length of trucks in Ontario and there was a whole thought that we should lower the lengths of those trucks because that was going to involve efficiency. But then we found out that if we did that, it was going to cause great discomfort to the Ontario trucking industry, much of which was sent into the United States, where their trucks tended to be longer, and it would also make it virtually impossible for American trucks to travel into Ontario. So I was looking for this kind of stuff. I was thinking maybe we ought not to be going here, because I remembered that.

I also remember the 400-series highways, going back a number of years, and the 401 in particular in Toronto. There were two different speeds. There was a speed of 65 miles an hour—because in those days we were non-metric—and then there was a speed of 55 miles per hour for trucks. I know that caused considerable angst, difficulty and driver discomfort. In the end, it was determined that all trucks and all cars should travel at 60 miles

an hour, and then that subsequently became 100 kilometres an hour. It seemed to me that having a differential speed, as we have in some places in the United States, was not the way to go either. So I was looking into the body of the bill and had some considerable difficulty should that be one of the suggestions.

Last but not least, I continue to be worried and need to know whether other Canadian jurisdictions are going to follow suit, because it's very clear in here about the American jurisdictions, but I think we also need to know whether other Canadian jurisdictions are contemplating similar actions. Although a great deal of our truck traffic ends up in the United States, there still is a considerable amount that is interprovincial, particularly along the corridor leading from Quebec and the Maritimes. Quite a bit of traffic still flows that way and, to a lesser extent, from British Columbia. But still, a fair amount of traffic is involved both ways coming in and out of Ontario. I want to make sure that if this is done, it is coordinated across the country. Certainly if the idea is good enough for Ontario—and I suggest it is—other jurisdictions may want to follow suit, or at least our own law must be very clear as to whether or not it will involve interprovincial transportation. I do not want to see people coming from Manitoba, Alberta, British Columbia or New Brunswick facing problems in transporting goods and services into Ontario.

I talked about the list of endorsements. I'd just like to read those. My friend, in her 10-minute opening, obviously didn't have time, but I was very impressed by the length and breadth of those who have come forward in support of this bill.

1130

The first is the Ontario Trucking Association, and that should come as no surprise. Then there was a whole bunch of them after that: the Canada Safety Council, Pollution Probe, Smart Risk, the Canadian Automobile Association, Road Watch, the lung association, the Insurance Bureau of Canada, the Traffic Injury Research Foundation, Old Republic, Markel, the Transportation Health and Safety Association of Ontario, the Ontario Safety League and Fleet Challenge. All of these groups, as disparate as some of them may be and having completely different mandates and people they serve, came to the same conclusion: that this was a bill whose time has come.

The bill, in effect, will limit speed. The limitation of speed has its own reward, and that greatest reward is probably in terms of human safety. I don't care how old you are or how long you've been driving or how long you've been a passenger: If you have travelled sufficient miles or sufficient kilometres on the roadways of this province, you have seen car accidents. There are many causes for those accidents, almost all of which are human error. But in the end, the accidents that tend to be the worst, the accidents in which lives are lost or severe injuries take place, are those in which excessive speed is involved. Anything that helps us to limit that speed, anything that helps us to make people understand that a

slower speed is always a safer speed, is a good thing. I commend the member for this aspect of the bill.

We also know that in Ontario, about 500 people die every year as a result of truck accidents. Again, some of this involves human error, but a great deal of it may involve—I don't have the statistics for this; it's only anecdotal from my life, having driven some 40 years on the streets, roads and highways of this province—speeds in excess of 100 kilometres an hour. For reasons of safety, and for reasons of safety alone, this should be supported.

There are two other important aspects to this. The first is, it will save money. It will save money because if you run the truck at 4% to 5% less speed, you're also going to correspondingly save the same amount, 4% to 5%, of fuel cost. You'll burn less fuel. The cost of that fuel will allow the trucking companies to save money. The second one is related to the environment, and I'm going to deal with that in a moment.

If there's one thing that I have to say I'm sad is not contained in this bill, it's the provision not only that it deal with trucks but that it in many cases should deal with automobile traffic as well. Everybody in this province who opened up a paper this past week saw the horrific accident of a young couple who were out to celebrate their anniversary. They hardly ever went out to celebrate an anniversary, but they got a man to come out and babysit their seven-year-old daughter so that the couple could celebrate something, as is quite normal in many families. They got together; they went out for a pleasant meal. They were driving home. Two young guys were having a road race going at what the police estimated, according to the paper, as 140 kilometres an hour. One of them side-swiped the car and killed the couple on their way home from a normal family celebration.

I would like to think that this bill may, in committee, be expanded. I would like to see that people who recently received their licences, or at least for the first number of years of the licence, have such a limiter placed on a car. I'm specifically thinking about younger men who have just got a licence and who think that this road race, this thing of going down and seeing who's got the fastest car, this thing about seeing how fast you can go on the streets without the police catching you—it needs to be curtailed.

I have seen that the federal government is considering increasing the sentences for those who would act in this irresponsible way. But this is a bill and this is a provision which would clearly ensure that speeds of 140, 150, 200 kilometres an hour, which some people travel on our roads, and for no real purpose other than to see how fast they can go—that there should be a limiter placed on them too. I would think that anyone who's getting a new licence or anyone who has been convicted of driving excessive speeds, above 140 or 150 kilometres an hour, on the roads of this province should have, as one of the conditions of getting a licence back, a limiter placed on their car. I would like to see that. I hope, if this goes—

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): It's a private member's bill.

Mr. Prue: This is a private member's bill. I think, though, that when this goes to committee, this can be easily added. If somebody does that, if they go 30 or 40 kilometres above—it is possible, in a 30-kilometre-an-hour zone, for someone to be caught going 60, and I know they shouldn't be doing that, but I'm talking about those who really want to speed. I'm talking about those who drive excessively. I've seen them on the 401; we all have. I've seen them going as if I'm standing still driving at 100. They just pass me as if it's nothing. I have no idea what speed they're going, but I'm sure it's 160 or 170. I think if the police catch them and if they are convicted—because I believe in due process—that they should have a limiter placed on them as well, because what's good for them will be good for all of us.

The thing about the trucks, though, I have to say, is that it has been my experience, and I want to state it publicly through this debate, that the safest people on the road are probably truck drivers. If you drive and you watch them, they are the most courteous. They are the ones who will let you pass; they are the ones who will wave you through if it's going to take a long time. They are professionals. They are the least likely to be involved in accidents and also the least likely to take any abuse of their licence, because, after all, it is their livelihood. I don't remember the last time I read anything in the paper about somebody drunk-driving a transport truck, not the same way as somebody is drunk-driving a pleasure car. I'm not saying it's without the realm of possibility, because it could happen, but it's simply not something that one sees every day. So I want to commend all of them for the job they do and the way they do it safely. This is not an issue in terms of their driving, but it is in an issue in terms of public safety and those who may not be as professional as they are.

I wanted to talk about this for a minute, and there are only a couple left: pollution, because pollution, of course, affects all of us. Yesterday was a smog day of some horrendous proportion in this province, and the day before that as well. There were poor readings in Toronto, Hamilton and all of southwestern Ontario. A poor reading is that between 50 and 99. The smog days are getting horrendous. They seem to be building up, with more and more and more of them as I grow older. I don't remember this many smog days in my youth, although all of these things were tested even back then. I do see it on a basis that we even have smog days in the winter now, which we never used to have. They used to be confined usually to the summer months, with the air inversions, but today that is not the case. These were smog days in May, which years ago just didn't happen.

We need to get the amount of fossil fuels that are being burnt down. It has been estimated—again, I thank Ms. Scott for her wonderful research—by Pollution Probe that 27% of the smog produced in Ontario comes from transportation: large trucks, cars, those kinds of things. If we can reduce the amount of fuel being burnt by 50 million litres, we can reduce the CO₂ emissions and other emissions into the atmosphere, as they say, by

140 kilotonnes. That is such a huge amount of weight that one cannot even fathom it, and it's simply in the air.

This has to be done. It has to be done for safety and health. It has to be done for transportation. It has to be done so that our roads are in better condition. It's going to save the trucking companies money. In the end, the best thing that's probably going to happen for all citizens is that we will not have to endure the smog days; we will not have to endure what has become, all too often, the norm.

When this bill goes to committee, I am asking the member from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock—I'm hoping she is going to send it to committee and not allow it to go to the committee of the whole House—

Interjection.

1140

Mr. Prue: —I'm getting an indication that that is what she is going to request—that some of these excellent groups be called forward and be made available to answer the questions.

I heard the member from Davenport and his suggestion that this is going to cause some difficulty for a transportation firm who may not want to limit the speed because they can't get to Georgia, that it's going to take an extra hour. The only suggestion I can make to that firm is that they leave an hour earlier, for the safety of all of us.

I think that he and others need to hear that there are alternatives. One of the alternatives is simply to time yourself better. One of the alternatives that is here is to limit the speed. But clearly, if all members can feel comfortable about this, if we can draw on the experiences of other provinces and states, if we can coordinate this across North America, it is an idea whose time has come. I commend the member for her efforts.

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): I'm pleased to rise in my place today to join this debate. I would like to begin by congratulating the member from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock for bringing the legislation forward. Any legislation that speaks of reducing emissions is certainly welcome in this House.

While, ultimately, I think this bill has been brought forward without thorough consideration of all issues, this bill gives us the opportunity to highlight the importance of responsible driving to fuel conservation in this province. Ontario boasts the safest road system in North America, and the Ministry of Transportation is very proud of that achievement. This enviable record is due in no small part to the strong partnerships the ministry has forged with its safety partners, including the Ontario Trucking Association and the trucking industry as a whole.

More specifically, Ontario also has an excellent truck safety record. In fact, data tell us that trucks are the least likely type of vehicle to be speeding. That was mentioned by a member previously. The vast majority of truck drivers drive safely and responsibly, and our excellent truck safety record reflects that. The facts are these: Despite the fact that the number of large trucks on Ontario roads increased by 43% from 1990 to 2003,

fatalities involving large trucks decreased by 21% over that period. This is tremendous movement forward in safety.

I just want to say that the men and women who drive trucks in this province are dedicated professionals who take their safety responsibility seriously. Still, we can do more to promote road safety and cleaner air in the province of Ontario, and we must. Bill 115 is based on an Ontario Trucking Association proposal and has received broad support from the larger trucking companies. I congratulate them for taking this initiative. Other supporters include AMO, the Canadian Automobile Association, the Ontario Safety League and the Ontario Lung Association.

Not only does the legislation aim to increase road safety, but it will also diminish greenhouse gas emissions by reducing the speeds at which large trucks are able to travel. However, smaller independent owner-operators are strongly opposed to this legislation because it could impact their ability to compete with the larger trucking firms. The member from Davenport spoke to this matter, and the member from Oxford spoke to it as well.

Interestingly, in Europe, where they've mandated speed limiters, drivers are generally paid on an hourly basis; however, in Ontario, drivers are paid on the mileage travelled, so this initiative would have a real impact on the earnings of truck drivers who already work long hours for modest pay. The negative impact on independent business is one of the factors that must be weighed against the obvious environmental benefits.

Another potential issue that this bill raises is the issue of economic competitiveness. Trucking is, by nature, an interjurisdictional enterprise, and we compete with various provinces and with the United States. Ontario-based carriers run 25% of their miles in jurisdictions with a speed limit of 105 kilometres or more. What will be the impact of this proposal on Ontario carriers that travel through jurisdictions where it is legal to drive 105 kilometres and more?

On the other side of the coin, what will be the impact of this proposal on the non-Ontario-based carriers that deliver goods to Ontario or through Ontario? These are all questions which were raised earlier and which must be dealt with before we can move forward.

In terms of road safety, intuitively, we could reasonably expect that slowing down trucks could reduce collisions, yet Europe and Australia, which implemented speed limiters, have not yet produced any data to support this intuitive belief. So, are there safety concerns? If there are safety concerns, we have to have that data, that information, because we are the leader in safety in Ontario. We must stay there.

Enforcing consistent speeds of truck travel would suggest that roads would be safer. However, this may pose problems for companies competing to maintain a solid reputation for just-in-time delivery. Certainly there are going to be some adjustments that have to be made.

To summarize, Ontario roads are the safest in North America, and we intend to keep them that way. Ontario's truck safety record is equally enviable.

Bill 115 promised some real benefits in terms of the environment. However, speed limiters would have broader implications for the trucking industry and could have unintended consequences. There remain questions around the economic competitiveness and the lack of road safety data. I know that the Ministry of Transportation is playing a leading role in a working group that includes the Ministries of Transportation from Manitoba, Quebec and New Brunswick, and they will no doubt be looking at the impact that trucking will have in the states to the south of us.

A report on the impact of mandatory speed limiters is expected this fall, so we don't have to wait that much longer. This initiative deserves some real consideration, but we just aren't there yet. All the issues must be considered before moving ahead with this proposal. We look forward to reviewing the report from the federal-provincial working group on this issue.

Mr. O'Toole: As the critic for the John Tory caucus, the opposition caucus, I want to first start by commending Laurie Scott, the member for Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, for the work she has done in preparation for Bill 115. In fact, most of the comments today have been of the nature of the previous parliamentary assistant, Mr. McNeely, the member for Ottawa–Orléans. He wasn't absolutely critical, and he's sort of the spokesman for the minister. I'm sure he read the speech the minister prepared for him.

Mr. McNeely: Who wrote yours, John?

Mr. O'Toole: I haven't got one, actually. Also, the member from Beaches–East York was quite complimentary, and correctly so, because when you're preparing a private member's bill—this is mainly for the viewer—there's pretty much a consensus that this is the right thing to do for a lot of different reasons, whether it's the environment, the road safety issue or, as the parliamentary assistant has pointed out, the due diligence that's important.

The presenter of the bill, Ms. Scott, has done a wonderful job, because she has talked to the major stakeholders here. I can attest that she gave each of us who wanted to participate in the debate a package which was quite informative on such a technical subject in the commerce of Ontario. This came, I believe, from her work with the Ontario Trucking Association. Dave Bradley and Doug Switzer brought this to our attention. In fact, through her office, there was a meeting arranged with John Tory, the leader of our party. He was quite receptive to the meeting and the input they gave him. You might suggest it's resulted in Ms. Scott drafting this legislation.

There are others that she's worked with as well which are worth mentioning. The Insurance Bureau of Canada recognizes that if our roads were safer, the insurance implications would be that costs are reduced. Mark Yakabuski, in that instance, has been complimentary of the work she's done on this. Of course, there's the Canadian Automobile Association; Kris Barnier has been in touch with her office and has been supportive. These are

the major stakeholders. They're consumers and independents who want to know that the right thing is being done.

I just want to focus on a couple of things. As the transportation critic, I believe that the broader issue here is gridlock. It's not that somebody is going 120, 110 or 50 kilometres an hour; we're stuck in traffic. They have no transportation plan. It's tragic. In fact, I'm on a bill right now, which I know the member from Beaches–East York and other members of his caucus—the member from Ottawa–Orléans—are participating in. Bill 104, the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority Act, is before committee as we speak. We met this morning.

This bill again demonstrates to me—and most of the delegations, which included academics, a number of experts and municipally elected people, are calling for some substance to Bill 104. It's missing the main ingredients to get rid of gridlock. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce says that gridlock, whether it's trucks or cars, is causing environmental issues as well as costing the economy. In fact, it's costing our quality of life.

1150

What have I done on this? As the transportation critic, I have been in touch with other provinces. In fact, I've met with Lawrence Cannon, who's the Minister of Transport federally. Because the trucks just don't drive around Toronto or Durham region, or Halton or the greater Toronto area, or for that matter Kingston. They're usually going inter-jurisdictionally, between provinces and, in fact, between countries. As such, an important aspect of this bill would be to coordinate this goal, this policy at a federal level. I'm convinced that the federal government is seized with this discussion, as the parliamentary assistant said.

I have written to the Minister of Transportation, formerly Minister Takhar, now Ms. Donna Cansfield. The response I got back was on May 23. It says here, "As part of the assessment of the OTA"—the Ontario Trucking Association—"proposal, the ministry is considering available road safety research as well as input from key stakeholders to determine the potential impact of mandatory speed limiters. The suggestion you have forwarded will certainly be considered as part of this assessment." The suggestion came from the hard work done in preparation by Ms. Scott.

I think what I learned this morning on Bill 104 that needs to be put on the record in the very brief time that—the member from Beaches–East York made reference to this, a presentation this morning to Bill 104. The discussion was about transportation. They gave us some very, very important data that I was quite impressed with. This data were presented by a group called SMART, which is Student Math Action Research Team. They were led by an academic person, a mathematician actually, from McMaster University. It's an Ontario public interest research group.

What did they tell us about this issue of the use of scarce resources? One of the facts these mathematicians put together says that the reason for their concerns about

the environment and the combustion engine is that a tonne of greenhouse gases is produced for every 417 litres of fuel burned. That's an interesting little nugget of knowledge: A tonne of greenhouse gases—one tonne—is produced for every 417 litres of fuel. That's pretty interesting. These mathematicians, this group of students—and I commend the work they've done—have extrapolated, have drawn this number down so that we can understand it. The data have come to the conclusion of “the accuracy that .00041 tonnes of greenhouse gas are generated in one year by the average ... vehicle for every second that vehicle idles daily in a parking lot” or in congestion.

They had extrapolated that number on all registered vehicles. “It means that for every second each day that every vehicle in Ontario sits” and idles “in traffic we not only generate 2,256 tonnes of greenhouse gas a year, we also waste over 940,000 litres of fuel.” Now we're starting to quantify this problem to our environment, indeed to our health.

What has this to do with the speed limiters? There's clear evidence of a relationship with the 105 kilometres per hour, by reducing consumption, affecting gridlock, reducing emissions, improving our quality of life.

My question remains, what's causing the minister to do nothing about this? Why doesn't she get on with it?

Respectfully, the 105 kilometres actually raises an important issue because of the two issues that I see. First of all, the legal speed on the 400-series highways is 100 kilometres, not 105. How can you validate going 105 when the law says 100? The real issue here is, what's the true speed on the 400-series highways? Should it be 100? I believe it should be 110, personally. They're designed for 110, let's make it 110, and let's enforce it at 110. That's the whole issue. How do you enforce this 105 if everybody else is going 120? I drive a fair amount. I take GO Transit whenever I can. It just shows you that this issue—we support it. Conceptually, it's the right thing to do. There are concerns about enforcement. If we were in government, we'd certainly have done the work already. They've had three years. What's the problem here? We've got the academics telling us that there are—how many tonnes? I've just given it to you. It's 2,256 tonnes of greenhouse gases a year; about 940,000 litres of fuel.

Let's get on with the job and endorse this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? There being none, the member for Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, you have two minutes to respond.

Ms. Scott: I'd like to thank the members for Davenport, Oxford, Beaches–East York, Ottawa–Orléans and Durham for speaking to this bill and in support of this bill.

I want to answer some of the questions that were asked. The fact is that over 50% of the trucks operating in Ontario and around 70% of those operating in the US are already governed by this technology. The simple fact is that those trucking companies that have governed their fleets are effectively competing with those that haven't, providing the same level of service at competitive rates.

The 50% to 60% of Ontario trucks that are already governed have provided the pilot project demonstrating that a governed fleet is just as economically efficient as an ungoverned fleet, both for the shippers they serve and for their own competitiveness and economic viability. Even though rules and regulations differ between provinces and states, and the truckers adapt to that, this bill is receiving support at the national trucking association level, so I think we have to take that into consideration.

We have to look at Bill 115 as an example of big-picture thinking required by Ontarians to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It would reduce fuel consumption on the average truck by 8,000 litres annually. Multiply that by the number of trucks on Ontario's roads and highways and you can achieve serious fuel savings. It would reduce greenhouse gases. Improving fuel efficiency results in decreased harmful emissions from commercial trucks. As much as 140 kilotonnes of greenhouse gases could be eliminated in Ontario through this legislation.

Bill 115 will improve highway safety by minimizing the severity of car-truck crashes. We have a stakeholder, the Ontario trucking industry, that has come to the table wanting to reform their industry to make it more environmentally friendly and improve highway safety across the province. This is not a partisan issue. Every single member in the Legislature has truck traffic in their riding. The issue affects us all, and I ask you for support today for this bill.

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

ONTARIO CHARACTER

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We shall first deal with ballot item number 39, standing in the name of Mr. Wong.

Mr. Wong has moved private member's notice of motion number 16. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (SPEED LIMITERS), 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (LIMITEURS DE VITESSE)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We shall now deal with ballot item number 40, standing in the name of Ms. Scott.

Ms. Scott has moved second reading of Bill 115. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1158 to 1203.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour, please stand and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Prue, Michael
Balkissoon, Bas	Leal, Jeff	Racco, Mario G.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	MacLeod, Lisa	Runciman, Robert W.
Craitor, Kim	Matthews, Deborah	Ruprecht, Tony
Delaney, Bob	Milloy, John	Scott, Laurie
Dhillon, Vic	Munro, Julia	Van Bommel, Maria
Fonseca, Peter	O'Toole, John	Wilkinson, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Klees, Frank	Patten, Richard	Wong, Tony C.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please stand.

Nays

Marsales, Judy	Mitchell, Carol	Rinaldi, Lou
McNeely, Phil	Parsons, Ernie	Smitherman, George

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 27; the nays are 6.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to refer it the finance and economic affairs committee.

The Deputy Speaker: Ms. Scott has asked consent that it be referred to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs. Agreed? Agreed.

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

The House recessed from 1207 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**KIDS' FISHING DAY**

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers, children and parents who participated in our sixth annual Kids' Fishing Day at Heber Down Conservation Area last Saturday.

What a wonderful, rewarding day it turned out to be. This year's event, which was exciting and fun-filled for both children and adults, attracted our largest crowd ever. Well over 1,200 participants came out to enjoy the sunshine and great outdoors.

With the support of many community and outdoor organizations, children were able to participate at no charge in a day filled with many events, including conservation and wetland displays, lure making, face painting, casting competition, Kim's Game and retriever demonstrations.

Ducks Unlimited; our own MPP, John O'Toole; Kids, Cops and Canadian Tire; Muskies Canada; the Ministry of Natural Resources; the Ontario Sporting Dogs Association; Oshawa Community Health; Oshawa Teen Council; Oshawa YWCA; Durham Regional Police; Pickering Rod and Gun Club; Lake Ontario Hunting Retriever Club; Port Perry BassMasters; Simcoe Hall Settlement House; South Central Ontario Big Game

Association; Westmount Kiwanis; and the Christ Centre all contributed time and effort to the success of the event.

I would like to give special thanks to the Toronto Sportsmen's Show, which once again showed its commitment to the future of fishing and conservation. Most importantly, I would like to thank all the parents and kids who showed up to make this year's event the best ever. It was a tremendous no-charge opportunity for children who usually don't get the opportunity to learn about fishing and nature and have fun discovering Ontario's great outdoors at the same time. Well over 200 rainbow trout were caught by the young anglers.

Once again, I would like to express my deep appreciation to the many people who made this memorable experience possible for the children of our community. Remember: There are still lots of fish to be caught in the pond.

ITALIAN NATIONAL DAY

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): It gives me great pleasure to announce in the House today that tomorrow a milestone event is taking place on the grounds here at Queen's Park. On June 2, 2006, the Republic of Italy is celebrating the 60th anniversary of its national day.

At noon tomorrow, together with Minister Colle and the Consul General of Italy, Mr. Emanuele Punzo, we will preside over the first flag raising, joining Italy and the other 60 million-plus Italians throughout the world to celebrate Italy's national day.

To join us, directly from Italy for the event, Mr. and Mrs. Luigi Zanon are here with us in the east gallery today.

We take pride in inviting our community—all our people—to come and join in the celebration.

We know that Ontarians have long been mindful of the contributions Italians have made to our province and so, as we honour the raising of the Italian flag, we honour its people, their courage, their entrepreneurship and their vision to better this great province of ours and themselves. Yes, we are mindful of the fact that Italians, like so many other immigrants, embraced the call to come to this land in order to not only fulfill their destiny but to join with all our citizens to help mould the destiny of this, our nation of Canada, as well.

So tomorrow we celebrate a toast to Italy on its 60th anniversary. Everyone is invited to come and join in our hospitality. Come and appreciate our famous sports cars, motorbikes, fashions and food.

To tomorrow, to Italy, I say, Salute all'Italia. Cheers.

PHARMACISTS

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I rise in the House today to demonstrate my support for Ontario community pharmacies. As we all know, the local pharmacy is the front line of health care for many Ontario families. They

are available, approachable, open long hours, and are an important part of our business community.

Unfortunately, this first draft of Bill 102 threatens the livelihood of many local community pharmacies. It is estimated that as many as 300 pharmacies in Ontario would be forced to close if Bill 102 is allowed to pass. Some of those pharmacies may be in your riding or mine, the riding of Durham.

The impact on community pharmacists is not the only cause of concern. It's indeed about access or limited access to health care. We also need clarity on the detailed regulations of Bill 102. We also consider the impact of this bill on the pharmaceutical research, manufacturing and high-technology jobs.

Now that we have had an opportunity to review this legislation in committee, on which I sit along with Elizabeth Witmer, I would urge this government to make the necessary changes to prevent and preserve quality health care in Ontario while there's still time.

Community pharmacies are good medicine for Ontario. They deserve the support and respect of this House. I'm surprised and disappointed by the Minister of Health and this lack of openness and clarity with the people of Ontario and the threat to the professional pharmacists of this province for whom I—

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

EVENTS IN CHATHAM-KENT ESSEX

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham–Kent Essex): With the tourism season underway, I invite everyone to Chatham–Kent Essex this summer. Chatham–Kent is a vibrant blend of rural and urban communities. We provide specialty shopping and wonderful dining.

The RM Classic Car Exhibit showcases one-of-a-kind classics and rare automobiles. Enjoy the natural beauty of Rondeau and Wheatley provincial parks. Visit the Buxton National Historic Site and Museum and follow the path of the underground railroad. In July, the Tartan Sertoma Highland Games are held in Chatham. In September, the Heritage Days' Faire at the Forks showcases a festival featuring War of 1812 battle re-enactments and exciting activities for the whole family.

In Essex, Leamington is known as Ontario's southernmost recreational playground and the tomato capital of Canada. Recently, a national publication, MoneySense, named Leamington as the number one place to live in the country. The magazine described Leamington as a tiny gem. Leamington has the perfect climate, beach paradise and exciting scuba retreat. Each year, naturalists from around the world come to witness the spectacular migration of birds and butterflies. ErieQuest Marine Heritage Museum houses the nautical history of the Pelee Passage. The Tomato Festival is held each August. Come to the parade, listen to the music and witness the world-famous tomato stomp.

There are numerous outdoor recreational opportunities in Chatham–Kent Essex: beaches, campgrounds, golf

courses, historical sites and festivals for everyone. Come to Chatham–Kent Essex.

CHILD CARE

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): This morning I was pleased to meet with members of the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care and listen to their views on Ontario's child care needs.

As an MPP, I believe it is important to hear what Ontarians think. In fact, it is a political responsibility. Our party is listening to Ontarians as we develop our policies. We are going to develop a plan that puts Ontarians and their children first. When we make promises to Ontarians, we will be keeping them. This is a stark contrast to what the Liberals do.

In the last election, Dalton McGuinty promised Ontario families and their children that he would spend \$300 million to create 25,000 child care spaces. Did he keep this promise? Absolutely not. This government does not keep its promises.

Now, Premier McGuinty is blaming the federal government for his failure to keep his promises. This is a failure of leadership.

Ontario is calling out for leadership. It is calling out for honest government. Ontario children deserve no less.

VOLUNTEERS

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward–Hastings): I would like to pay tribute today to a special group of individuals who make this province a better place to live.

We have two young boys who absolutely thrive on their membership in the Stirling Cub pack. Whether it be sports, camping or other activities, the gatherings are both educational and highly enjoyable.

Yet these things happen only because of the willingness of a number of teenagers and adults who are prepared to give of their time, not just one night a week, but for other times such as camping or organizing future activities.

Our family owes a special thanks to Al Gray, Colin Berry and Bob Mullin for their leadership of our sons' cub pack. At times, they must feel like they're herding a bunch of cats.

In a similar vein, I watch with admiration and appreciation other members of my community who work with groups like the Beavers, the Brownies, the Scouts and the Guides. They truly are selfless. At the same time, I have the pleasure of attending special events involving young people participating in the Navy League, Sea Cadets, Army Cadets and Air Cadets. As an aside, I say with some pride that Belleville has the best Sea Cadet band in Canada.

At all these activities, I again see so many volunteer leaders, both parents and non-parents. I have no doubt in my mind that every member in this House can think of

similar individuals in their ridings who positively influence the lives of our young people.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to the many, many volunteers who freely give of their time to help our youth develop their skills and potential, while at the same time serving as positive role models. They truly make Ontario a better place to live.

1340

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): The people of Smooth Rock Falls are still waiting. They're waiting for this government's response on what it's going to do to assist the community of Smooth Rock Falls in the announced intended idling of the plant, of the Tembec kraft mill, in Smooth Rock Falls on July 31. The community, workers, families and others have been waiting for the government to respond in some way, in trying to figure out what can be done to avert this idling of the plant, or at the very least, to figure out how we're going to deal with the aftermath should that happen.

I'm saying to this government now that the community is not going to stand idly by and watch this government do nothing when it comes to trying to assist this community in its time of need. I'm inviting members of the government, and whoever wants, to be with us as we meet in Smooth Rock Falls on June 10. We are going to be having a meeting in that community. It will be an opportunity to take a look at what can be done. I'm calling on this government to do the right thing, and that is to step forward and become part of the solution rather than being part of the problem, which you have been for the last three years.

This plant is shutting down, and it's no big surprise, due to provincial government inaction in dealing with policy issues that are in its control that could have averted this announcement by Tembec. I'm saying to this government now, you have to step off the sidelines. You have to give up your laissez-faire attitude. You've got to do what's right. You have to become activists in trying to figure out what to do to respond to the crisis in the forest industry. And no more tinkering at the edges, because there will not be much left of the industry if you don't take serious action now.

TETYANA ROGOLSKA

Mr. Tony C. Wong (Markham): I rise in the House today to recognize one of Markham's outstanding residents and students, Tetyana Rogolska.

Tetyana is one of the 20 recipients of this year's TD Canada Trust scholarship for community leadership. One of the most prestigious post-secondary awards in the country and valued at \$60,000, the TD scholarship is awarded to young people who have demonstrated exceptional and consistent leadership in striving to improve their community.

Tetyana and her family could not be here today, but she has promised to visit over the summer months.

With a passion for local and global social justice issues, Tetyana, a grade 12 student at Brother Andre Catholic High School, led a three-year campaign for a no-sweat uniform policy to be adopted by the York Catholic District School Board. Now in place, this policy ensures that uniform suppliers subscribe to full disclosure regarding their factory locations, making it possible to monitor the working conditions of their employees.

Tetyana has also worked with Street Patrol, delivering food and clothing to the homeless of Toronto, and has successfully started her own tutoring service. Tetyana plans to study medicine in Canada and one day to practice with a non-governmental organization like Doctors Without Borders.

Please join me in recognizing and congratulating one of Markham's best and brightest young people, Tetyana Rogolska. Tetyana, your compassion, initiative and perseverance are a shining example of excellence in character that is helping build a stronger Ontario.

TOBACCO INDUSTRY

Mr. Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): Last Thursday, May 25, I had the distinct privilege of meeting with students from 30 Niagara region high schools who hosted their first annual Niagara Youth Tobacco Conference in my riding of Niagara Falls at the McBain family community centre.

These students have a direct and blunt message for their peers and I thought I'd share this message with this assembly today. Their message is simply: Don't be a target—REACT now. Don't be a target of the large multinational tobacco conglomerates that target youth to be their new customers. REACT stands for resist, expose and challenge the tobacco industry now.

REACT is a group of energetic youth from across Niagara. Their goal is to raise awareness about the manipulation by the tobacco industry and the health hazards of smoking. These are exceptionally bright and talented youth from our region, reaching out not only to their peers in high schools but also to students from local public schools to prevent them from starting to smoke or, in some cases, to encourage them to quit.

These students are our best advocates for a smoke-free Ontario. They deserve support, encouragement and congratulations from all members of this House and, in fact, from the people of Ontario, for their efforts will save lives and create a healthier Ontario.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I'd like to bring to the attention of the House, and to welcome, Steve Mahoney, a member of this place in the 34th and 35th Parliaments representing Mississauga West.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
JUSTICE POLICY

Mr. Vic Dhillon (Brampton West–Mississauga): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on justice policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Todd Decker): Mr. Dhillon from the standing committee on justice policy presents the committee's report as follows and moves its adoption:

Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

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

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

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 1347 to 1352.

The Speaker: Shall the report be received and adopted on Bill 56? All those in favour will please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Dombrowsky, Leona	Phillips, Gerry
Balkissoon, Bas	Fonseca, Peter	Racco, Mario G.
Bentley, Christopher	Hoy, Pat	Rinaldi, Lou
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jeffrey, Linda	Ruprecht, Tony
Cansfield, Donna H.	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Sergio, Mario
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Matthews, Deborah	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Cordiano, Joseph	Meilleur, Madeleine	Van Bommel, Maria
Craitor, Kim	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John
Delaney, Bob	Mitchell, Carol	Wong, Tony C.
Dhillon, Vic	Oraziotti, David	
Di Cocco, Caroline	Peters, Steve	

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	MacLeod, Lisa	Runciman, Robert W.
Bisson, Gilles	Marchese, Rosario	Scott, Laurie
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norm	Tabuns, Peter
Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia	Tascona, Joseph N.
Horwath, Andrea	O'Toole, John	Witmer, Elizabeth
Klees, Frank	Ouellette, Jerry J.	
Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 34; the nays are 19.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FIRE PROTECTION STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2006LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI A TRAIT À LA PROTECTION
CONTRE L'INCENDIE

Mr. Prue moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 120, An Act to require the Building Code and the Fire Code to provide for fire detectors, interconnected fire alarms and non-combustible fire escapes / *Projet de loi 120, Loi exigeant que le code du bâtiment et le code de prévention des incendies prévoient des détecteurs d'incendie, des systèmes d'alerte d'incendie interconnectés et des sorties de secours incombustibles.*

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

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): This bill does two very short things. It ensures that every residential building with two or more dwelling units is equipped with fire detectors in all public corridors and common areas of the building, and interconnected fire alarms that are audible throughout the building; and secondly, that every fire escape is constructed of non-combustible material. This is identical to a bill I introduced prior to the last prorogation.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

DEAF-BLIND AWARENESS MONTH

MOIS DE SENSIBILISATION
À LA SURDI-CÉCITÉ

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for franco-phone affairs): I rise in the House today to recognize the start of Deaf-Blind Awareness Month in Ontario. June is also the birth month of Helen Keller, a deaf-blind woman who has been a beacon of hope for millions of people who aspire to her model of perseverance and achievement in the face of enormous challenges.

Helen Keller est une source d'inspiration pour toutes les personnes sourdes et aveugles, et une héroïne pour tous ceux qui connaissent son histoire.

Il est important de sensibiliser davantage le public à la surdité et à la cécité si nous voulons élargir l'éventail des possibilités pour les personnes qui en sont atteintes.

So it was my great pleasure this morning to join members of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, the Canadian Hearing Society, and the Canadian Deaf-blind and Rubella Association to announce that our government is increasing its investment in intervenor and

interpreter services this year. I want to recognize two individuals from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind who have joined us today: Louise Goldhar, regional manager for Toronto, and Christopher McLean, government relations manager. Thank you for joining us.

Nearly \$11 million will be invested to improve access to services for those who need them. We are providing over \$5 million for more service for individuals who are deaf-blind to live more independently in their communities. We are investing \$5 million to increase salaries and improve training for the men and women who provide these vital services to people who are deaf and deaf-blind. We are also increasing our funding to agencies by another 2%.

For someone who is deaf-blind or has a hearing impairment, communication barriers can seriously limit their access to activities most of us take for granted, such as going to the bank or visiting the doctor. By breaking down these communication barriers, we are building greater independence for people with disabilities, and greater independence means better access to their community, its services and its quality of life. That is something every Ontarian should have the opportunity to do—to participate in the life of their community as much as they are able to.

1400

Nous constatons aussi un besoin croissant d'interprètes gestuels et tactiles francophones en Ontario. Par l'entremise de la Société canadienne de l'ouïe, nous finançons actuellement des services d'interprétation en Langue des signes québécoise à Ottawa et à Sudbury. Nous sommes conscients que l'Ontario manque de services d'interprétation et d'intervention en français et de possibilités de formation d'interprètes gestuels et tactiles francophones. Nous devons encourager un plus grand nombre de personnes à devenir des interprètes gestuels et tactiles en LSQ. Nous sommes déterminés à prendre les mesures nécessaires pour combler ce manque.

Our government took a strong stand for accessibility when we made the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, the law in this province, and I am very proud of it.

Our accessibility commitment is prompting action from across the government, not just in my ministry. We are providing \$1.9 million to the Canadian Hearing Society and the Canadian Deafblind and Rubella Association through the Ministry of Finance, strengthening our partnership initiative. This will result in an intervenor and interpreter services database that will make it easier and faster for people to find services.

De plus, mon collègue le ministre des Transports a annoncé l'an dernier une série d'améliorations aux règlements sur le stationnement accessible, dont un nouveau permis de voyageur que les personnes handicapées peuvent utiliser dans les aéroports de l'Ontario. Ainsi, les titulaires peuvent amener leur permis ordinaire avec eux et garer leur véhicule dans les places désignées lorsqu'ils arrivent à destination.

Today's announcement is one more victory for people with disabilities. We must promote every step forward we make in our quest for an accessible Ontario. I encourage all honourable members to participate in the activities of Deaf-Blind Awareness Month and to join us in building a province in which people with disabilities can participate to their fullest potential.

INJURED WORKERS' DAY

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): I'm honoured to be able to speak to this Legislature on Injured Workers' Day. Today, it is important for those of us who are elected to represent to stop and focus on the concerns of injured workers in this province.

I'd ask all members in the House to welcome those injured workers who are joining us today in the gallery. I want these workers and all workers in Ontario to know we are working to create a brighter future for them.

We know that a workplace injury can be a life-altering experience. One moment you are at work, carrying out a task that you've done a thousand times before, and then the unexpected happens. What should have been another ordinary day at work becomes one that changes your life forever.

On average, the Ontario Workplace Safety and Insurance Board recognizes 275,000 workplace injuries and disease claims each year. Almost 90,000 of these are serious enough to require time off work. It is important to note that these injuries do not just affect the workers involved; they affect the workers' friends, colleagues and, most importantly, their families. A serious injury can devastate families both emotionally and financially.

Our government is on the side of working families. That's why we are working to ensure that Ontario has the safest and healthiest workplaces in the world, supported by a workplace safety and insurance system that is strong enough to support our workers and their loved ones when they need it most, today and for generations to come.

Each member in this House has met with constituents whose lives have been changed forever by a workplace accident. Today, outside this building, we had the opportunity to once again meet the real people behind these devastating statistics. Again I was able to hear some of their stories, to hear what has happened to them and their families since these tragedies first occurred.

Injured workers and their families, though, are not just statistics. For this reason, our government is committed to renewing the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. Only with a strong and healthy WSIB can we ensure that injured workers and their families can be treated with dignity, fairness and the respect that they deserve.

Early in our mandate our government called for an independent audit of the WSIB to assess the administration and financial stability of the organization. Many excellent recommendations emerged from this audit. We are pleased with the strides that the board and the management of the WSIB have made in implementing them.

One of the key recommendations was for greater accountability through the separation of responsibilities between the chair and the president. Through an extensive, thorough and transparent process, we have now filled both positions with strong, experienced and capable individuals.

Jill Hutcheon has been confirmed as our president. She had previously filled that role while acting as the interim chair. Today, I was pleased to introduce the newly confirmed chair of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, Mr. Steve Mahoney, who joined me on the steps to address the injured workers. He's also here with us in the House today.

Mr. Mahoney comes to the WSIB at a time when it's once again finding its feet with renewed financial stability and an optimistic outlook towards a strong future supporting Ontario workplaces, workers and their families. Mr. Mahoney has a long history in public service and brings both critical experience and genuine enthusiasm to this challenging role.

The workers of Ontario, particularly those who have suffered workplace injuries, and their families need a strong leader in that position, someone who truly understands what is needed to protect their interests, someone who will ensure that they are treated with respect. Mr. Mahoney has demonstrated these abilities over a long history of public service. His selection has been supported by a wide range of stakeholders with a clear interest in the WSIB and the prevention of workplace injuries.

I'm proud to address my colleagues here today on Injured Workers' Day and to welcome Mr. Mahoney to join Ontario's mission to combat workplace injuries and illnesses. He'll be a strong leader for the WSIB. He'll be an asset as we continue to move forward to help Ontario families by ensuring the safest and healthiest workplaces.

Thankfully, our efforts to reduce workplace injuries across Ontario by 20% by 2008 are showing dramatic results. Through our high-risk strategy alone, there have been 14,500 fewer lost-time injuries than would otherwise have occurred. That means 14,500 fewer examples of human suffering. That means 14,500 instances of continued, rather than lost, productivity.

The very best that we can do for workers is to work to prevent injuries in the first place, but when workers are injured, they need to know that they will be treated with fairness, dignity and respect. They need to know that their injury is not the end of the road and that supports exist to protect them and their families.

Today we look forward with renewed optimism to a strong future at the WSIB and a safer and healthier future for Ontario workers.

DEAF-BLIND AWARENESS MONTH

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I'm going to briefly respond to both of the statements that have been made by the Liberal cabinet ministers.

The first statement, recognizing that this is the start of Deaf-Blind Awareness Month in Ontario and the fact that the government is planning to improve access to services, is a very important announcement, and we would certainly support that. I would agree: It is extremely important that we break down the communication barriers and ensure that we can build greater independence for people with disabilities.

1410

The minister made reference to June being the birth month of Helen Keller. I have to tell you, as a teenager, I read Helen Keller's book, her autobiography, and probably she is one of the most inspirational individuals I have ever met. Certainly she is somebody who had an impact on my life and obviously the lives of thousands of other people. With the perseverance she exhibited and the achievements she made in the face of enormous challenges, I think she is a tremendous role model for all people in this world. So it is appropriate that this announcement would be made today in order that we can break down those communication barriers and encourage the building of greater independence for people with disabilities.

INJURED WORKERS' DAY

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I want to move on now to the fact that we are today recognizing Injured Workers' Day. I think successive governments have recognized that this continues to be a very serious problem in the province of Ontario, and today is an opportunity for us to stop and focus on that fact. Despite the best efforts of successive governments, I know that injured workers still have many concerns that they believe need to be addressed.

In fact, I was taking a look at the statistics, and in 2005, there were 357,555 total reported claims for injuries and occupational disease. We know that this is just the tip of the iceberg, because researchers have pointed out to us that there is extensive underreporting of occupational injuries, diseases and death. So it's obvious that we still have a big, big job to do in making our workplaces as safe as we possibly can. Again, it's something that I know all governments have worked very hard to do. Then, I guess we also need to remember that when people do suffer injury on the job, they face many challenges. We need to continue to support those individuals and address their concerns.

But I want to take this opportunity today to congratulate my very good friend and former critic for labour. When I was first elected to this House in 1990 and was asked to become the critic for labour, I had the good fortune to work with the critic for labour from the Liberal Party, and that person's name was Steve Mahoney. I have to tell you, I'm very pleased with the announcement of Steve Mahoney as the new leader of the WSIB. In having had the opportunity to work with him, I know he will do an outstanding job and so I just want to

congratulate Steve. I want to thank the government for making that decision.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It's my pleasure to speak on behalf of New Democrats on Injured Workers' Day and to say how sad I am with the pitiful and perfunctory remarks by the Minister of Labour on this very important day. Instead of using this day to make some real announcements to help injured workers, you talk about shuffling the deck. Well, shame on you, Mr. Minister.

You know what? If you're talking about shuffling the deck, you could have at least renamed the deck to talk about workers, to talk about workplace injuries and to talk about insurance for workers who are injured on the job, but no, you didn't do any of that.

Did you talk about the fact that we need to change the system so that workers who are injured on the job don't continue to see their pay eroded, their benefits eroded year after year with the lack of indexation? I didn't hear that from the Minister of Labour. If there's one thing injured workers need, it's to have their benefits indexed so they don't continue to fall deeper and deeper into poverty every single year.

I have some other ideas for you, Mr. Minister. If we're lucky, maybe next year on Injured Workers' Day you might find it in your bag of ideas to come up with some of these reforms that they're asking for, that they have asked for year after year. For example, the number of workers who are covered currently—that's a problem here in Ontario. I'll give you one example: Agricultural workers still have difficulty having coverage with the WSIB. Why is that? Because there need to be some reforms as to who is covered by WSIB. The types of injuries that people get on the job, things like repetitive strain injuries, things like exposures in the workplace to carcinogens and other toxins: Workers have to fight tooth and nail just to have those injuries acknowledged as workplace-related. That, in this day and age, is a crying shame for workers in the province of Ontario.

I recently tabled a bill asking the government to consider presumptive legislation for firefighters who are injured on the job who have carcinogenic exposures on the job, who end up sick and dying. What do the families have to deal with? Not only firefighters but other families of injured workers who are exposed to carcinogens and toxins on the job, face a fight with the WSIB. They fight just to have their claims acknowledged. So if you really want to help injured workers on Injured Workers' Day, you can clean up the bureaucratic nightmare they have to go through just to have their claims acknowledged by the WSIB.

What else is happening in regard to this? The minister could turn his eye to the fact that the workers gave up the right to sue back in 1911 with the Workers' Compensation Board being implemented. In the meantime, you talk often about the fact that you're doing all kinds of things to deal with safety in the workplace. You know as well as I do, Minister, that there are people who are injured on the job—I brought one to your attention not

too long ago in this House, where the worker was in a confined space and the employer did not undertake his obligations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. There was an explosion, 90% of his body was burned, and your inspectors and your ministry did not prosecute that employer. If you want to get employers to clean up the workplace, you've got to take them to task when they injure workers on the job. That is your responsibility.

So when you talk about injured workers on Injured Workers' Day, Minister, we want to see more than just a shuffling of your bureaucratic deck. We want to see some real commitments to changes that are going to help injured workers, changes that are going to make sure that they don't have the indignity and the insult of fighting to have a claim recognized, that they don't have to go into the workplace not knowing whether or not, if they are injured on the job, their families are going to be able to survive. Why? Because, as you know and as you even acknowledged in your remarks, the bottom line is that injured workers and their families go through the depths of hell when they're injured. Why do they do that? Because they lose their income, because they lose their dignity, because oftentimes they have to deal with all kinds of emotional difficulties because their lives have been torn apart. Families break up. People lose their homes.

It's not just a matter of standing up here on Injured Workers' Day and talking nice about some shuffling of the deck in terms of the people you're putting in place at the WSIB. Injured Workers' Day is a day to remember that workers in Ontario are still getting short shrift when it comes to the WSIB, when it comes to their ability to get appropriate compensation, when it comes to their ability to have their injuries and their exposures acknowledged as workplace-related.

There's a heck of a lot of work to do on this file, Minister, and it's not good enough to use this day to announce your appointments. It's important that you actually start moving on some of the outstanding issues that injured workers are bringing to you, year after year, as you've been the Minister of Labour. The McGuinty Liberals have failed injured workers and continue to break promises that were made during the campaign.

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. I would like to remind our visitors that demonstrations are not permitted. This is a place where only the members have the ability to speak.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): We have with us in the Speaker's gallery a delegation from the Republic of Yemen, led by His Excellency Dr. Abdul Aziz Abdul Ghani, Speaker of the Shoura Council of Yemen. The delegation is accompanied by His Excellency Dr. Abdulla Nasher, Ambassador of Yemen to Canada.

Please join me in welcoming all the delegation to the Legislature of Ontario.

1420

ORAL QUESTIONS

AIR QUALITY

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Energy. Could you please explain to us all today why you are deliberately ignoring the truth when it comes to your broken election promise of closing the coal plants in Ontario by, first, 2007 and now changed to 2009? Why did you and the Premier tell Ontarians you were going to close down these two plants on unachievable deadlines, and why is Dalton McGuinty not on the side of telling Ontarians the truth?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): This government remains on the side of cleaning up our airshed. Let me assure the member opposite that unlike you and your leader, our Premier and this government remain committed to reducing the serious emissions that are going into our airshed day in and day out.

We cannot ignore the CO₂. We will not turn our back on Kyoto, the way Conservatives have in this province and in this country. We will not turn our back on those thousands of people who die prematurely because of our air quality problems. We remain committed to the goal of cleaner air, and we will use all of our resources to bring those emissions down as quickly and as safely as we can.

That is the challenge. It is formidable. It is formidable because members like the member opposite and people like Mr. Tory would prefer to stand up for dirty air. We will stand up for cleaner air and responsible electricity generation—

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

Mr. O'Toole: Minister, once again you're ignoring what the question really is here. In fact, you seem to be very smartly pulling another scheme similar to your election performance when you promised something that you were simply incapable of achieving.

Minister, the reality is that your plan is false and ridiculous, and that you are going to try to use the next IESO report as a scapegoat on the citizens of Ontario. You're going to use that report to once again, dare I say, mislead the people of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I need you to withdraw that last remark.

Mr. O'Toole: I withdraw that expression, but it is a pressing issue. I simply want you to tell the people of Ontario the truth.

Why did you and the Premier set these knowingly unachievable dates during the election and now, when you are asked the question directly, you're refusing to be straightforward with the people of Ontario? Stand today and tell us the plan for coal and clean air in the province of Ontario.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: The plan was and remains the plan to phase out coal generation and therefore clean up

our environment. It is wholly wrong to suggest for a moment that we have not reduced greenhouse gases. We have. We have reduced the NO_x that are going into the environment, the SO_x, the mercury, the particulate, and we will continue to work towards that goal.

This is a difficult challenge, one that that member and his party turned their back on. They said no to cleaner air and yes to more coal. We say yes to cleaner air and no to more coal. I acknowledge that it is a difficult challenge. I acknowledge that it is difficult in every sense to achieve. I acknowledge that there have been setbacks. But do not mistake that for this government's willpower and its determination to clean up this province's airshed, to provide a better quality of life for the people of this province, to stop people like you who want to keep polluting our—

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. O'Toole: Once again, Minister, I'm quite concerned that you are not being straightforward with the people of Ontario. In fact, the truth is that our minister, Minister Witmer, was the one who announced the closure of the coal plant at Lakeview. It was our government that made the commitment—a realistic commitment—of closing coal by 2015. It's your government that responded to the polls and said you would close coal by 2007.

What we're simply asking you today is to tell the people of Ontario the truth about your plan to close the coal plants, or are you going to hide behind the obfuscation of the IESO report, telling them that you cannot close the coal plants? We've been telling you that for 10 years. Why aren't you on the side of the people of Ontario by telling them the truth of your plans for the coal plants in Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: This government is clearly on the side of the people of Ontario. We respect the Independent Electricity System Operator's reports, and I'll remind the member opposite that they suggested just the day before yesterday that because of this government's efforts and initiatives, not only do we have less to worry about this summer in terms of supply, but we also have a cleaner supply. Let me give that member opposite this government's assurance: We will not pursue your policy. We won't set up 100 diesel-fired generators throughout Ontario. We will not stop the production of new electricity. We will not shut down electricity while this province is sweltering.

It is a difficult challenge. It is difficult in the face of a number of factors to achieve the goals we set out, but this government remains committed to cleaner air, to less CO₂ going into the environment, to protecting the health and livelihood of all the people of this Ontario in as timely a fashion as one possibly can.

STREET RACING

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): To the Acting Premier: Rob and Lisa Manchester of Oak Ridges lost their lives this last Saturday when their car was shredded by a Honda Civic that was racing at some 140 kilometres

per hour through streets in Richmond Hill. The Ministry of Transportation has been aware that street racing is an increasing threat to people's lives and to road safety in this province, and that specific legislation is required to back up front-line police officers in dealing with this incredible problem. Given that knowledge, why is it that it has been almost three years now that you have been in government and you have yet to bring in legislation to deal with this important issue?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation): First of all, on behalf of everyone in the Legislature, I'd like to extend to the Manchester family and especially to their little girl our deepest regrets over this incident. It took the lives of her parents.

There's no question street racing is illegal, and there are some very rigorous processes in place both from the criminal justice side and also from the Highway Traffic Act. But what I believe the member is referring to is the issue around after-market products, which was part of a bill you had introduced—I'm presuming that's what it is, and I made a decision and an undertaking to follow through and to investigate that file, to see what the issues are in dealing with street racing.

Mr. Klees: Acting Premier, I'm sending over a copy of Bill 20, which is a bill that was introduced in May 2003. It deals specifically with issues relating—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Klees: The reason it wasn't passed was because the House leader at the time refused to give us unanimous consent.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. Minister. I can wait.

The member for Oak Ridges.

1430

Mr. Klees: That bill was introduced on May 5, 2003. It contained very specific provisions to enforce the message that street racing is illegal, that it is dangerous and that it will not be condoned in this province. It empowers police officers to impound vehicles and suspend licences on the spot. It prohibits nitrous oxide fuel systems that are connected in any vehicle driven on any road in this province, and it provides for fines up to \$1,000 and up to six months in jail for contraventions.

My question is this, and I appreciate the new minister's willingness to look at this: Why has it been almost three years without this government being willing to bring forward this legislation that saves lives? Why has it taken three years for this government to act on this important issue—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I thank the honourable member for his question. Ontario, in the Highway Traffic Act, has one of the most rigorous sets of controls across Canada dealing with street racing.

Aside from that, I did indicate that I would be quite prepared to go through the file to look at the issue of

after-market products and the impact, and to review this. I'm quite prepared to do that. I understand that the issue is very serious, and we take this very seriously, because we are looking at human life.

Mr. Klees: I welcome the new Minister of Transportation's response to this question. What concerns me are the quips from some of her colleagues that obviously disregard the fact that lives have been lost recently and over the last number of years.

What I'm concerned about is that, in the interest of defending their inaction on this important file, they lose sight of the fact that it is their responsibility that this legislation has been on their books and that they have failed to take action on this important issue.

I want to ask the new minister, when can we expect, then, to see a tabling of that legislation in this House? When can we expect to see the legislation?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: Again, there's nobody on this side of the House, and presumably on any side of the House, who would not take this very seriously, because we are dealing with human life. A child has lost both her parents. This is serious.

We currently do have the ability to impound and suspend, to do some very rigorous things. Should there be more? I'm quite prepared to look at that. I indicated that I will look at that as soon as possible. I actually have been doing some homework on those after-market products myself—nitrous oxide—to find out and to understand exactly how this works within the system. So I'm quite prepared to do this. We all take this very seriously.

As I indicated, everybody in this House sends to that family their deepest condolences, and to that little girl, who will not have her parents for the rest of her life.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, this week you went to Ottawa to meet with your federal and provincial counterparts to discuss child care, and you came back empty-handed. My question: What is the McGuinty government's strategy now to create the child care spaces that you promised and that are so desperately needed by working families across Ontario?

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): The leader of the third party just sort of—I can't tell where he's really coming from, because for the past several months I've been calling upon the NDP here in Ontario to join the federal NDP in support of what we are trying to do for families and kids in Ontario in encouraging the government of Canada to honour the well-thought-out and thorough, well-considered, five-year, \$1.9-billion agreement, which would have resulted in 25,000 new child care spaces in Ontario. Maybe I just missed it, but I cannot recall seeing any request from the leader of the third party to the federal government to honour that commitment.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, it may come as some surprise to you, but those issues will be addressed in the federal House of Commons.

I'm more concerned about the promise that was made by the McGuinty Liberals in 2003 to invest \$300 million of new provincial money to fund child care spaces in Ontario. It's clear that the McGuinty government has broken that promise. You haven't invested any new provincial money in child care.

Quebec has a very strong child care system because successive Quebec governments have funded child care as a priority.

My question is this: What is the McGuinty government's problem? Why hasn't the McGuinty government honoured your promise to invest \$300 million of new provincial money to create new child care spaces in Ontario?

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: The leader of the third party said something quite meaningful and profound just now. He said that successive governments in Quebec have supported child care. It's a pity we can't say that here in Ontario. If that were the case in Ontario, then the NDP, when they had the opportunity to support child care in this province, would have done the same. We have provided them with other, more recent opportunities to support the child care plan, and they have not agreed; they have not come forward. So what's happening here is something of a sham. He has not convinced me that he is truly committed to child care because he has done nothing for families in Ontario.

When you make reference to Quebec, maybe you would like to also support our Premier as he stands up for Ontarians in trying to ensure—

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

Mr. Hampton: I just want Dalton McGuinty to stand up and keep his own promise. That's all I want.

Minister, the NDP government invested over half a billion dollars in new child care spaces under difficult economic circumstances. The McGuinty government, this past financial year, had \$3 billion in additional unexpected revenue. You had the opportunity to make substantial new investments in child care, but you chose not to. In fact, your budget shows that you're actually going to be reducing the funding of child care. So instead of trying to blame governments that may have been here 15 years ago, instead of trying to blame someone else in another province for your own broken promise, how about taking some of that money that you've salted away and using it for the expansion of child care, like Dalton McGuinty promised?

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: I'm really happy to have the opportunity to comment on this so-called salting away of money, according to the leader of the third party, because we wouldn't want the people of Ontario to be misled by what they're hearing here. Let me tell you what is in fact accurate.

The Speaker: I really don't like that word. Are you going to withdraw that?

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: I withdraw "misled."

Let me say that we want to have an accurate representation of what's actually happening here, because through the agreement that we struck with the federal government last year, \$1.9 billion would have gone toward the creation of 25,000 spaces. Since we are coming from so far behind, because of the tradition of neglect of this file by previous governments, we have a lot of catching up to do. But let me tell you, I'm very, very pleased that our government is sustaining the creation of almost 15,000 new spaces this year, and I—

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. New question?

Mr. Hampton: Minister, we wouldn't want the people of Ontario to not see Dalton McGuinty keep his promise either, would we?

ONTARIO IMMIGRANT INVESTOR CORP.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My next question is to the Acting Premier. The Ontario Immigrant Investor Corp. is a provincial crown agency responsible for investing immigration dollars received from Ottawa "to create or continue employment in Ontario in order to foster development of a strong and viable economy."

Since 1999, the Ontario Immigrant Investor Corp. has received \$328 million and accrued \$10 million in interest—money that was supposed to be earmarked to create jobs in Ontario. Can you tell us, to date, how many jobs has the Ontario Immigrant Investor Corp. created?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): The Minister of Economic Development.
1440

Hon. Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): I want to say that the Ontario Immigrant Investor Corp. exists for the very purpose of ensuring that there's economic development occurring.

Let me say something about the money that has accrued. This money is not the province of Ontario's to spend. The government of Ontario cannot spend this money because this money has to be repaid to immigrant investors. If we did spend this money, the deficit this year would have increased by that amount of expenditure. Instead of doing that, this government has done the fiscally responsible thing. We invested that money, as did the previous government. The interest accruing on that amount of money is going to be a revenue stream, and those monies will be expended to create new programs for economic development purposes. That's what is being done with the immigrant investor money.

Mr. Hampton: What we heard, through all that mumbo-jumbo, was that zero jobs were created and zero jobs were sustained.

I want to take the minister to the actual act, where it says:

"The objects of the Ontario Immigrant Investor Corporation are,

“(a) to create or continue employment in Ontario in order to foster development of a strong and viable economy.” All right? It doesn’t say anything about the McGuinty government taking immigrants’ money and using the interest therefrom to make its own budget look better.

Let me put it to you this way, Minister: Did you know there are all these new Canadians who have degrees in engineering, who have degrees in science, and yet they’re forced to drive taxicabs because there isn’t a policy and a program in place to have their credentials recognized? Don’t you think—

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

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: I get it: The leader of the third party, a party that increased the debt of this province by some \$40 billion, would have us spend money that this province does not have.

I will repeat what I said earlier for the leader of the third party: That money must be repaid to the immigrant investors; that money would therefore increase the deficit. This is not money the province has. If we spent it, it would mean an increase in our deficit.

I know that the third party, the NDP, was famous for spending money it didn’t have. It increased deficits year after year. This government will not act fiscally irresponsibly; this government is doing the right thing. The revenue that is being accumulated will be invested. We’re working on plans and initiatives to create new programming for economic development purposes. Unlike that party, that—

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, here is the law. The law says that this money is to be used “to create ... employment” or to sustain employment. We know that we’ve got literally hundreds of thousands of new Canadians who are either unemployed or underemployed, in many cases because they can’t get their professional and academic credentials recognized in Ontario. Other provinces, like Manitoba, use the interest from this fund to in fact help immigrants find employment.

You are swindling these people. You’re taking this money and—

The Speaker: I need you to withdraw.

Mr. Hampton: I withdraw, Speaker.

The McGuinty government is not using this money properly. This money should be used to create and help sustain jobs; it should be used to help these new Canadians, new immigrants, find jobs. What’s your excuse for taking money and using it to try to make yourself look good?

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: What is this member talking about? This is capital that must be repaid to the immigrant investors. We have revenue by way of interest that has been accrued. The interest is going to be used for economic development initiatives. Those initiatives are being worked on.

This money has been accruing since 1999. This is a government that’s going to bring forward economic initiatives around that for economic development purposes.

But we will not use the capital, because that capital must be returned—

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: Yes, you did, in the first question. You were wrong about that, as you’ve always been wrong.

We have plans in the works, and, in addition to that, soon we will be tabling reports for the first time. The previous government failed to do that.

What is it that the member doesn’t understand about this program? We have capital that must be returned to the immigrant investors. We have revenue by way of interest that has been accumulating. That interest revenue will be used to develop economic programs—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

NATIVE LAND DISPUTE

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): To the Acting Premier: Yesterday, native protesters set up an information picket at the Brantford casino claiming the site as theirs, that they own the property the casino sits on. As you may know, the first step towards the Caledonia land occupation, now in its 94th day, was a similar information picket. Minister, can you advise us if you’re taking action to deal with the Brantford challenge, or are you once again going to sit on the sidelines until the situation deteriorates and becomes Caledonia II?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): As in Caledonia, we will look at the situation. I gather it’s happened within the last 24 hours. We will, as we did before, make sure we’ve got an appropriate response. We’ll make certain that we take steps to deal with this as peacefully and as cautiously and as calmly as we possibly can. I use the experience in Caledonia, where I think we have had the appropriate people in there. We now have the experience of dealing with that.

I just want to assure the people of Ontario that we take the matter seriously. We’ll make certain that we deal as quickly as we can with the situation and work as hard as we can to make sure that we can end up with a peaceful solution that’s fair to all who are involved in it. I give the people of Ontario that assurance. We are looking very carefully at the matter right now.

Mr. Runciman: I suspect a lot of the residents of Caledonia would disagree with that assessment.

There’s a story in today’s Hamilton Spectator quoting a Six Nations representative, indicating that former Liberal Premier David Peterson is reneging on a Caledonia settlement deal that apparently includes the Burtch correctional properties as a bargaining chip. Mr. Peterson has denied the claim. I would ask you to clarify the situation. Is Mr. Peterson reneging on the deal, and just what is the appraised value of the Burtch property you have offered to the occupiers?

Hon. Mr. Phillips: I would say that the quick answer, of course, is no. But when you’re involved in a complex situation like this, where we have our First Nations, we have the community, we have Mr. Peterson, we have a

variety of complex issues, surely you're not asking here in the Legislature to comment on a particular news item. This is a matter that will be resolved with Mr. Peterson, with our First Nations people.

I would say in response to the first issue you raised, I gather that that issue was part of the Haldimand trust land arrangement. I will just say I believe that Barbara McDougall is involved in that particular case, as well as Jane Stewart. I think the provincial government has appointed Jane Stewart; the federal government, Barbara McDougall. They are working on that particular issue. So on the one you raised first, Barbara McDougall and Jane Stewart, I gather, are working on that. On the second one, Mr. Peterson is working on the—

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

INJURED WORKERS

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): To the Minister of Labour: Minister, during the last election campaign, Dalton McGuinty promised Ontario workers, and I quote, "to introduce a fair inflation factor to protect worker benefits from inflation." Today we're joined by injured workers from across the province, and they want to know, why haven't you kept your promise?

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): It's interesting that the honourable member has asked that question, that it was she who asked it, because obviously her colleagues do not have the guts to stand up and ask that question.

Perhaps her colleagues who sit around her will tell the injured workers up there who created the Friedland formula. Who started to erode benefit protection for injured workers in this province? Who introduced Bill 165? Who stood up on December 6, 1994, and voted in favour of Bill 165 that created the Friedland formula? Bisson, Kormos, Hampton, Martel, Marchese. It's no wonder that these individuals didn't ask that question.

We undertook a comprehensive audit at the WSIB to get the financial house in order. We've got a new chairman in place. On behalf of this government—

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

1450

Ms. Horwath: Minister, this is about what you can do today, not what Bob Rae did 12 years ago. People who get injured on the job shouldn't have to spend the rest of their lives living in poverty, and we all agree with that, but that's what's happening to injured workers across this province today. Inflation has eroded nearly 20% of the compensation that they receive. As one injured worker told us today, people are not only losing their jobs, they're losing their cars, their homes, their savings, their families and, ultimately, they're losing their dignity and their self-respect.

Minister, you made a promise to fix the problem and bring in a fair inflation factor. You made that promise. When are you going to do it?

Hon. Mr. Peters: It's interesting who they have up as the individual to ask this question, because the labour minister in 1994, when the Friedland formula was introduced, the Honourable Shirley Coppen said that "the WCB's financial woes, problems it has had, also need to be addressed, and adopting the Friedland formula for most benefits is the best thing to do at the present time."

Again, I say to the individuals who are here, remember who started this. It was the NDP. Those benefits were further eroded with Bill 99 by the Conservatives. But we improved benefits through the CPP in June 2005. We've improved benefits for clothing allowances, for travel allowances. We're working on getting the financial affairs in order. We realize there is more to be done in assisting injured workers in this province.

CHILD CARE

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Our government worked diligently to secure the five-year, \$1.9-billion early learning and child care agreement with the government of Canada. In my rural communities of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, the agreement has meant that more families would receive the high-quality child care they need for their children.

The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care has joined us at Queen's Park today. They fully support our efforts to save the five-year ELCC agreement that we signed with the government of Canada on behalf of families in this province.

Minister, I know that earlier this week you were in Ottawa, advocating on behalf of those families in Ontario who require high-quality child care and want to see the ELCC agreement honoured. The current government has claimed that this agreement doesn't meet the needs of rural areas, but I can tell you that it does in my community, and it certainly is needed in the farm communities. Minister, what progress have you made—

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

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): I'd like to thank the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, not just for her question today but for her total commitment to her constituents on this file, and I'm going to give you some examples just to illustrate where she has been.

In Lambton, 709 new spaces will be up and running by September of this year. Their three-year target was 675, so they're exceeding their three-year target. In Chatham-Kent, 677 of their three-year target of 690 will be up and running in September of this year. I am very proud and very pleased that our government has committed to sustaining every single one of those new spaces.

In Ottawa, on Monday, some of my provincial and territorial counterparts wanted to talk to me about how we have been able to make as much progress as we have made, so—

The Speaker: Thank you. There may be a supplementary.

Mrs. Van Bommel: I'm very proud of the tremendous work that my communities have done in such a short time to address the needs of the families in my riding. But I also know that Lambton and Chatham-Kent are unique in that they are one of three demonstration sites that will offer a full Best Start vision at an accelerated pace. This includes screening programs to identify the needs and supports, an 18-month well baby check-up and a half-day early learning program for two-and-a-half- to four-year-olds. But there is concern in my riding that the demonstration communities might be lost as a result of the cancellation of the ELCC agreement. Minister, will the demonstration communities become a reality?

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: The demonstration communities for the Best Start model are alive and well, and on track and will continue their progress. This speaks to a very broad range of services for parents and their young children: early identification and intervention programs, an 18-month well baby check-up, public health programs, parenting programs, nutrition programs at preschool, an early learning program. Hearing impairment is now being assessed at the average age of four months, down from two and a half years old. That's amazing progress.

As far as the demonstration sites are concerned, yes, Lambton-Kent is one of the areas where we have a demonstration community. I'm very pleased that 10 new hubs will be up and running in that community by September of this year, including a new francophone hub—wonderful progress.

WASTE DIVERSION

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. It's an embarrassment and a disgrace that the current government turns a blind eye while we ship our garbage across the border to Michigan. A little over a year ago, January 2005, Gartner Lee consultants reported that the four Ontario municipalities of Durham, Peel, Toronto and York are expected to export 1.25 million tonnes of waste in 2005. Should the Michigan border close, and it's a very possible occurrence, our available capacity for waste disposal was estimated at the most to be 1.7 million tonnes—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Stop the clock. Minister of Education, you've been warned.

Ms. Scott: Minister, this capacity would be used up within 28.5 weeks. It has been reported that the city of Toronto estimates they can only manage up to two days of storage capacity at their existing transfer stations.

Interjection.

Ms. Scott: To your cottage.

All this government has come forward with so far is a promise that they have an amazing plan. Ontarians deserve a solid answer, and they need one now. We need to know what is happening with our waste before the US

House of Representatives passes federal legislation allowing the state of Michigan to ban Canadian garbage.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): It certainly is a bit rich coming from colleagues on the other side of the House who were in government for more than 10 years and chose not to site any landfills in this province.

Let me tell you a little bit about what we have done in the past period of time since we've been government. We're the first government to fund the blue box program. We've set the standards for organics. I've mandated the WDO to work on household hazardous waste and electronics to build on the success of that blue box program. We're working to reform the EA process, and we'll have some more information with respect to that very soon.

We've also approved proposed expansions of Ottawa's Trail landfill and the municipal landfill in McDougall township. We've had an expansion of the private Lafleche landfill just south of Ottawa. Terms of reference for EAs of more than 10 more landfill projects, including municipal sites in Hamilton, Niagara, Sault Ste. Marie, Algonquin highlands and a private landfill near Niagara Falls have all been approved, and I'll have more to answer my—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Scott: Minister, now we've found that 160,000 tonnes of sludge will no longer be able to be shipped to Michigan. It's just a taste of the problem we will face when the border closes. Where's the sludge going to go, and what will happen if Toronto does not find a willing host? You've said there have been approvals. Can you say today that the EA process is going to be speeded up? Are the communities going to be forced to take this sludge with just days' notice? What will happen on August 1, when Toronto cannot find a place for their sludge? Will you commit that this sludge will not be sent to an unwilling host community?

Hon. Ms. Broten: I have said for a very long period of time that Toronto has a responsibility to find, site and manage its own waste. Toronto itself is resolved to stop sending its waste to Michigan by 2010. Miss Shelley Carroll, who has responsibility for this in the city, is negotiating at present for the capacity for the city's sludge not to be sent to Michigan. It's Toronto's responsibility to find a location and negotiate a private sector contract to deal with that sludge. I have every confidence, with the close work that they're doing with my ministry as we assist them and provide them with the tools they need to properly manage this waste, that they will meet their responsibilities and that they will locate a private sector location for that sludge.

1500

CHILD PROTECTION

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Today at Queen's Park, advocates spoke out for J., an 11-

year-old boy who was misdiagnosed and overmedicated while in the care of the Durham CAS. J.'s grandparents depleted their life savings trying to gain custody. Thankfully, they finally succeeded in getting J. home. They are now looking for accountability. They want to ensure that no other family has to go through the same ordeal.

Minister, why are you denying children and their families an independent avenue of appeal of CAS decisions?

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): I actually saw a press release that the member from Hamilton East issued today. She spoke about the fact that, yes, we are creating an independent process in the form of the Child and Family Services Review Board, which is under the jurisdiction of the Ontario Ombudsman, incidentally. But she was concerned that we have not yet established this process.

As we all know in this Legislature, it takes a little time, and the proclamation of this act is effective November of this year. It would have been earlier if the opposition parties had not held that bill up in the spring of this year. So it's interesting that she should be speaking to the fact that that has not yet been proclaimed, when in fact she could have contributed to much earlier proclamation of that bill had she been committed to this file.

Ms. Horwath: My question wasn't about your ineptitude to get a bill passed and to get it proclaimed; my question was about the fact that there is no minimal oversight even, at this point, for these families who are having problems with the CAS.

You have not given the Ombudsman oversight, which is what you should do, over the Child and Family Services Review Board. When you finally do proclaim Bill 210, the Ombudsman will only be allowed to determine—and you know this very well—whether or not the board followed its own rules. You can't dig into the substantive issues that families bring forward. You cannot dig into the complaints and the systemic issues that are happening within the CAS. Minister, why are you blocking families from an independent avenue of appeal by refusing to pass my bill, which would allow the Ombudsman review over CAS decisions?

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: If there is anyone who is inept here, it's not our government, because our government would have had that bill passed one month earlier had it not been for the games that were being played in this Legislature.

Let me speak to the particular situation that I think gave rise to the member's question. To give you an example of how sincere we are and how much we are committed to the protection of children in this province, I can tell you that I am working with that particular case—and I want to thank the member from Durham for bringing that to my attention; he was the first person to do that—and I have actually met with people involved, including that grandparent. I have launched an investigation into that situation, and we're going to make sure

that other kids don't suffer the same kinds of tragic circumstances that that young man suffered.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Marijuana remains the most widely used illicit drug in Canada, and the growing and production of marijuana in Ontario is more common than we would like.

These operations are often run out of private residences and buildings in family communities, putting residents, especially children, at serious risk. Children live in grow houses, where they are exposed to the fire and health risks associated with drug operations, and indoor marijuana grow operations are posing a rising threat to community safety by bringing organized crime outfits into residential areas where these operations take place. Grow operations have cost the province approximately \$263 million over the last three years.

Minister, what is the government of Ontario doing to fight marijuana grow-ops and to ensure that Ontario communities stay safe?

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I thank the member from Thornhill for the question. Illegal grow-ops are prosecuted under the Criminal Code, which is a federal statute. Having said that, there is an aspect of community safety that we in Ontario have the responsibility to address.

On December 15, 2005, we actually got royal assent for the Law Enforcement and Forfeited Property Management Statute Law Amendment Act, 2004. That particular statute amends the Building Code and the Municipal Act and provides that if a grow-op has been identified by the police, building officials in the departments must go in and ascertain whether or not it is fit for human habitation. They can actually order remedial action, and it cannot be occupied until building officials approve that situation.

There are other amendments that allow for assets of crime to be forfeited to the government under the Attorney General's act, and that is—

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

Mr. Racco: I'm glad that the prevention of marijuana grow-ops is a priority of the McGuinty government and that we are actively working to ensure the well-being of Ontarians. It is also comforting to know that the government is getting tough on crime by hiring 1,000 new officers in partnership with the municipalities.

Minister, in my riding of Thornhill and in Concord, community safety is extremely important. Could you elaborate on what specifically the government is doing in my riding of Thornhill and in Concord to combat crime in general and marijuana grow-ops in particular?

Hon. Mr. Kwinter: All of the benefits that accrue under Bill 128 are of course available to the residents of York region, and to Thornhill in particular. We have a situation where of 1,000 police officers, 149 of them

have been allocated to deal with this type of crime, and of that number, 45 are in York region. So to the member who is wanting to know what is happening in his region, there are 45 police officers who will be available to address the problem of marijuana grow-ops.

We've also provided \$230,000 to the police college, where we have erected a mock illegal drug lab, not only for marijuana grow-ops but for crystal meth. That allows new recruits who are coming through the police college to know how to dismantle them, how to identify them and how to make sure the community is safe. It's also available to seasoned officers, who can do the same thing. This is a great initiative that will help us deal with what is a scourge across Ontario.

ONTARIO IMMIGRANT INVESTOR CORP.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: During previous questioning on the issue of the \$328-million scam through which your government is collecting money from immigrants—and you have certain responsibilities for that money—you didn't deny at all that you've done nothing with it. My question to you would be this: In light of the fact that you admit that the money is there and you admit that you haven't done anything with it, when did you become aware of the fact that this money was actually under your responsibility and that nothing was happening with that money, that no one was benefiting from that money? When did you become aware of that?

Hon. Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): This is indeed a little rich coming from that party. This program existed from 1999. They were the government from 1999 to 2003. You sat there and you did nothing. Furthermore, you didn't even report to the Legislature any documents regarding the accounts for the Ontario Immigrant Investor Corp.

We will table those reports to make everyone fully aware of where all these monies are going. But let me reassure the member and the members of this House that this government is going to take action with respect to introducing programs and initiatives for economic development purposes. Those plans will be coming forward shortly.

1510

Mr. Klees: At the same time as your Premier is running around the country crying poor and claiming that Ontario isn't getting its fair share, here was almost half a billion dollars that was transferred to this province. You've been the government, I might remind you now, for almost three years—three years. It's rather rich on your part to continue to blame your inaction on anything the previous government may or may not have done. People elected you; you're the government. So my question to you is very, very simple: You haven't done anything with this money. You've collected it. You have responsibility for this money. If you aren't going to do

anything with it, will you transfer responsibility for that fund to the minister responsible for citizenship and immigration so that he can at least do what they do in Manitoba, and use those funds for settlement purposes for immigrants to this province?

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: It is indeed a little rich to hear from a party who sat on a fund for four years and did nothing. I remind you, from 1999 to 2003 you were the government. You had this fund in place; you did absolutely nothing. We are taking action. We are going to introduce programs that will see economic development initiatives move forward. That's what these funds were intended for. Let me remind the member, the capital has been invested. There is interest that has accumulated. The capital has now created a revenue stream.

Mr. Klees: How much is that?

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: I will table these reports very shortly in the House so everyone knows what those monies look like. This money has been set aside. It is capital that's been allocated. It's been invested. There is an interest revenue stream. We will invest that interest revenue stream to further enhance economic development opportunities in the province of Ontario. That's exactly what these funds were intended for and that's what—

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

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): A question to the Minister of Education: Across Toronto, parents and students are worried about the impending cuts to education that could see 700 educational assistants fired and 62 schools closed. You have admitted that a funding gap exists. You have admitted that school boards don't have enough money to provide Ontario students with the programs they're mandated to provide.

Recognizing the problem is a good first step, but parents across Toronto want to know this: Are you going to act to fix the funding shortfall or are you going to close schools and fire desperately needed educational assistants?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Education, minister responsible for women's issues): I so much appreciate this question because it gives me another opportunity, as I've had a few times today, to speak about the finances of the Toronto District School Board.

Let me start by saying that I hope even this opposition critic would acknowledge an 11% increase in funding for the Toronto school board, and over the course of that same time the Toronto school board has seen a decline of over 6.5% in their student body. So with about 10,000 fewer students, this same board has seen a massive increase in funding. The issues at the Toronto school board have nothing to do with funding, because this Ontario government has come to the table in droves when it comes to the funding of our students in our school system, in what I believe is a very sincere and required

partnership between this school board and this government to finally settle and put to rest some significant issues that are facing the Toronto school board.

Mr. Marchese: Toronto schools have one source of revenue, and that's your government. It's the only source. You give them a fraction of what they need to pay teachers, a fraction of what they need to heat the schools, a fraction of what they need to provide busing, and then you express amazement when they make the cuts. When Mike Harris and Ernie Eves tried to do this, you and Kennedy and others denounced them, as I did. Now you're doing the same.

Are you going to act to fix the funding shortfall or are you going to close schools and fire desperately needed educational assistants? What are you going to do?

Hon. Ms. Papatello: I find it quite interesting that at about this time of year, year after year, we see the same old story here in the city of Toronto with our school board. What I have said directly in two separate meetings with the chair of this board—and as well, at a meeting upcoming this Monday with the audit committee of this Toronto school board, I will say—actually, one of the trustees says this government has dumped buckets of money into the Toronto District School Board. That's what John Campbell says, as a trustee. Now, it's not buckets, but it is about \$240 million at the same time as we have 10,000 fewer students.

What I think is important is that it's about time we had a real partnership, and that is what I'm embarking on. We will solve the challenges with this board, and the students in the city of Toronto are going to benefit.

ARTS EDUCATION

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): My question is for the Minister of Culture. Minister, we are coming up to the end of the school year, and you know, being a parent, that this is the time of year when end-of-year plays and recitals can be enjoyed in schools across the province. It is at this time, when many students are preparing to graduate, that we are reminded that students' artistic and creative talents need to be nurtured. We need to provide the students of Ontario with the kind of education that engages them, inspires them and teaches them to think for themselves. With this in mind, what is the government doing to encourage and support arts in our schools so that these activities and opportunities continue to be offered to the students of Ontario?

Hon. Caroline Di Cocco (Minister of Culture): Thank you so much for your question. After many years of erosion in arts and music in education, this government, under Premier Dalton McGuinty's leadership, has been rebuilding. Empirical evidence shows that young people who participate in arts and music not only have higher math and science scores but are also better problem solvers. Arts and music education develops creative and innovative thinking, which is exactly what is needed to succeed in this complex and rapidly changing world. That's why Premier McGuinty, the Minister of Education

and I launched a \$4-million program to promote arts education in our communities and schools with the arts education partnership initiative. We understand there is much more to do after so many years of neglect, but I know we're on the right track, and I'm proud of how much we are doing to bring arts and music education to schools in our communities.

Mrs. Mitchell: Minister, we know that arts education is best delivered in a hands-on fashion and students who have the opportunity to use paint brushes and musical instruments and put on performances are served very well by their experiences. Of the programs that the Minister of Culture mentioned, how do they excite the imaginations of our Ontario students?

Hon. Ms. Di Cocco: I'll refer that to the Minister of Education.

Hon. Sandra Papatello (Minister of Education, minister responsible for women's issues): I think one of the most important things that we have done in this whole area of adding arts to education is our four-year commitment for a \$146-million investment that will, over these four years, provide 2,000 specialist teachers in our elementary schools for arts, music, phys. ed., for those supports that our children need.

In speaking at some of our elementary schools, to see this wonderful impact of arts in the curriculum—actually using arts to deliver a science curriculum, for example, affords our children a tremendous benefit.

But that's not all. We are making some significant investments in our arts programs. One of those is Learning Through the Arts, which is a \$6-million investment over five years. That program is administered by the Royal Conservatory of Music, which trains teachers to deliver core curriculum using this interactive arts-based approach. I look forward to seeing the results when we develop young people with such a background in the arts.

1520

FISH AND WILDLIFE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a question for the Acting Premier. Yesterday, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters advised that your government is slashing by 50% the funding for the community fisheries and wildlife involvement program. For 20 years, this program has been a partner with local community groups in improving fish and wildlife habitat, conducting surveys and education programs. Some of the programs, to give you an example: Severn Sound "Take a Little Lead Out!" education and exchange program, Barrie Bassmasters creating fish habitat, Centreville Creek environmental stewardship program, Rice Lake walleye recruitment study.

Acting Premier, this program involves 600 projects and 35,000 volunteers, and you're going to save \$500,000 by slashing half of their budget. It seems to me it's penny-wise and pound foolish—another very short-

sighted decision. Remember back to the Frost Centre just two years ago. What I'm asking is that you ensure that funding continues for the community fisheries and wild-life involvement programs.

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): To answer on behalf of the Minister of Natural Resources, I'd just say to the member that I think the minister has established a very solid working relationship between ourselves and our anglers and hunters. The minister, I believe, is meeting with this group tomorrow. I think the appropriate thing is to allow him, as he meets with them—which is an example, I might say, of the relationship. As we speak, he is now preparing to meet with them. He's heading toward that meeting, and this is just the sort of thing that he would like to sit down and talk with them on.

I just want to compliment our minister. I think he has done a fabulous job of establishing, as I say, a very terrific working relationship with our fine anglers and hunters. Tomorrow, I know they will have a productive meeting as, once again, he keeps up that dialogue with our partners.

PETITIONS

PASSPORT OFFICE

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford): I have a petition which I want to present to the Legislature, which reads as follows:

“Whereas, at present, residents of Barrie and surrounding area must travel to Toronto to receive a passport; and

“Whereas the only service available to obtain information or make application for a passport in the city of Barrie is through the post office or through the local MP office; and

“Whereas a passport to travel is now becoming a way of life for Canadians and there is a great need for a full-service passport office in the city of Barrie; and

“Whereas, due to the growth in population and demand and necessity for a passport to travel, a full-service passport office in the city of Barrie is essential; and

“Whereas, due to the current security enforcement in place, a full-service passport office in the city of Barrie is essential; and

“Whereas a full-service passport office would be beneficial not only to residents of Simcoe county but also Parry Sound–Muskoka region;

“We, the undersigned, petition the federal government to give consideration for a full-service passport office in the city of Barrie.”

I support the petition and affix my signature.

TRADE DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition today from some hard-working men and women who are involved in Ontario's auto industry regarding fair auto trade with South Korea.

“Whereas more than 260,000 Ontarians make their living and support their families through their careers in the auto industry in Ontario, which has become the pre-eminent manufacturer of motor vehicles in North America; and

“Whereas Canada imports more than 130,000 vehicles annually from the Republic of Korea, which imports virtually no vehicles or parts from Canada and does none of its manufacturing or assembly in Ontario or in any other Canadian jurisdiction, even though Canadian auto workers make the best-quality, most cost-effective vehicles in the world; and

“Whereas the government of Canada aims for a free trade agreement that would include the Republic of Korea in 2006, does not address the structural trade imbalance in the auto sector, and includes no measures to require Korea to reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers to Canadian-made vehicles, auto parts and other value-added services or components;

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

“That the government of Ontario insist that the government of Canada either cease free trade discussions with the Republic of Korea or make any proposed agreement contingent on fair and equal access by each country to the other's domestic markets in manufactured products, such as motor vehicles, and in value-added services, and ensure that Korea commits to manufacturing vehicles in Canada, if Korea proposes to continue to sell vehicles in Canada.”

I agree with this petition and will affix my name to it.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): I have here more petitions from Columbia Forest Long-Term Care Centre and Pinehaven Nursing Home.

“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 agree with this petition and I will be affixing my signature.

TRADE DEVELOPMENT

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

"Whereas more than 260,000 Ontarians make their living and support their families through their careers in the auto industry in Ontario, which has become the pre-eminent manufacturer of motor vehicles in North America; and

"Whereas Canada imports more than 130,000 vehicles annually from the Republic of Korea, which imports virtually no vehicles or parts from Canada and does none of its manufacturing or assembly in Ontario or in any other Canadian jurisdiction, even though Canadian auto workers make the best-quality, most cost-effective vehicles in the world; and

"Whereas the government of Canada aims for a free trade agreement that would include the Republic of Korea in 2006, does not address the structural trade imbalance in the auto sector, and includes no measures to require Korea to reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers to Canadian-made vehicles, auto parts and other value-added services or components;

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

"That the government of Ontario insist that the government of Canada either cease free trade discussions with the Republic of Korea or make any proposed agreement contingent on fair and equal access by each country to the other's domestic markets in manufactured products such as motor vehicles and in value-added services, and ensure that Korea commits to manufacturing vehicles in Canada if Korea proposes to continue to sell vehicles in Canada."

I agree with the petition. I also put my signature on it and ask Nolan to take it.

TEACHERS' LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a petition from students and parents in the Parry Sound area.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas negotiations between the occasional elementary school teachers and the Near North District School Board are resulting in job action (strike) by the said teachers; and

"Whereas we believe it has become necessary for the McGuinty government to intervene to ensure our children's return to school;

"We, the undersigned, are requesting the McGuinty government to introduce and pass legislation requiring all teachers province-wide to become an essential service so that our children will no longer be used as pawns in negotiations."

I'm pleased to say the strike's over, but I have hundreds of petitions here that I would like get on the record.

VISITORS

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest):

On a brief point of order, Mr. Speaker: I want to introduce city of Toronto Councillor Howard Moscoe, who is the chairman of the Toronto Transit Commission. He is in the Legislature today, so I want to welcome him here on behalf of the Legislative Assembly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's not a point of order, but we do welcome him. You do have a petition?

Mr. Berardinetti: It's not related to Mr. Moscoe.

1530

CHILD CARE

Mr. Berardinetti: This petition is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government in the last budget committed itself to providing the best possible benefits to single-parent families in Ontario by increasing single-parent family benefits by 15.7% over the 2003-04 levels;

"Whereas the expenditure on at-risk youth and families will be increased to a total of \$10.3 billion;

"Whereas there still remains no coherent universal child care system in Ontario for working families;

"Whereas Ontario needs to move toward a system that is better planned, coordinated and accountable for all;

"We, the undersigned, therefore applaud the McGuinty government for its initiatives at making the lives of Ontario's families better and ask they continue to make it the best possible for all families in Ontario."

I agree with this petition and affix my signature to it, and give to page Evan, who is here with me today.

GASOLINE PRICES

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

"Whereas the price of gas is reaching historic price levels; and

"Whereas provincial and federal governments have done nothing to protect consumers from high gas prices; and

"Whereas provincial tax on gas is 14 cents per litre and the federal tax is 10 cents per litre, plus 8% GST; and

“Whereas these taxes have a detrimental impact on the economy and are unfair to commuters who rely on vehicles to travel to work; and

“Whereas the province has the power to set the price of gas and has taken responsibility for energy prices in other areas, such as hydro and natural gas; and

“Whereas we call on the province to remove the 14.7-cents-per-litre gas tax and the federal government to eliminate the 10-cent gas tax, plus 8% GST, which amounts to 30% or more;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and urge the Premier to take action and to also persuade the federal government to remove its gas taxes.”

I support the petition and affix my signature.

RENT REGULATION

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition which has been prepared by a constituent of mine named Sonny Sansone. He has asked me to present it to the Legislature. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the McGuinty government is concerned about tenants in Ontario and wants to have a fair relationship between landlords and tenants; and

“Whereas the cost of living continues to rise, and income of many people, especially pensioners and low-income workers, remains comparatively low; and

“Whereas landlords currently have more rights than tenants, giving them the ability to raise rent fees as they wish, causing tenants to fear rent increases they can't afford;

“We, therefore, the undersigned, petition to cap rents in Ontario, giving more rights to tenants; and

“Further, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to pass into law the Residential Tenancies Act, Bill 109, as soon as possible.”

I agree with this petition, affix my signature to it, and give it to page Madeleine, who's with me here today.

SPRING BEAR HUNT

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I have a petition that was sent to me by members of the Greenwood Rod and Gun Club, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources' own data shows a clear and undeniable connection between the termination of the spring bear hunt and the increase in nuisance bears; and

“Whereas there has been an increase of almost 500% in the number of calls to the Ministry of Natural Resources about nuisance bears but no change in calls in Manitoba, where the spring hunt continues; and

“Whereas at least five people have been attacked by bears in 2005, and since 1978, bears have killed seven people in Ontario, six in provincial parks where hunting is not allowed, and all fatalities have occurred where there is little or no hunting pressure; and

“Whereas adult male bears are cannibals and highly aggressive; there are thousands more adult male bears in the population since the hunt was terminated and thousands more bear cubs are being orphaned or killed; unprecedented numbers of nuisance bears are being trapped, relocated or killed, but the problems persist; and

“Whereas the increase of nuisance bears since the spring bear hunt was cancelled has become a serious threat to public safety, and increasing interaction with humans from higher bear densities is likely to result in more bear attacks on humans; and

“Whereas, during a debate in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on November 17, 2005, members of all three official parties supported a return of the spring bear hunt;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we petition the government of Ontario and the Ministry of Natural Resources:

“In the interests of public safety and scientific wildlife management, the government should immediately return a spring bear hunt to Ontario.”

I have affixed my signature as well.

NON-PROFIT HOUSING

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I have a petition from a group of senior citizens in my riding that I'm presenting today.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas every citizen of Ontario should have a decent home; and

“Whereas thousands of families and individuals are denied this basic right because Toronto Community Housing buildings were downgraded to the city of Toronto without the money necessary to bring them to a state of good repair; and

“Whereas poor living conditions have a damaging impact on the health and sense of security of residents and neighbourhoods; and

“Whereas Toronto Community Housing has some of the oldest publicly funded housing in the country; and

“Whereas investment in housing pays off—in better buildings and in stronger, safer communities;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to accept its responsibility and invest \$224 million to ensure that all residents of Toronto Community Housing have a decent home.”

I present that to the table. Page Amanda will take it.

SPEECH AND LANGUAGE SERVICES

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition here from a great number of constituents from my riding and surrounding ridings, north, south, east and west.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas over one million Ontarians of all ages suffer from communication disorders relating to speech, language and/or hearing; and

“Whereas there is a growing need for awareness of the profound developmental, economic and social conse-

quences that communication disorders have on people and their families; and

“Whereas persons with communication problems require access to the professional services of audiologists and speech-language pathologists who provide treatments to improve and enhance quality of life; and

“Whereas effective treatment of communication disorders benefits all of society by allowing otherwise disadvantaged persons to achieve their academic and vocational potentials; and

“Whereas investments in treatments for communication disorders pay economic dividends in reduced reliance on other social services,

“We, the undersigned, in conjunction with the Ontario Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to proclaim the month of May as Better Speech, Language and Hearing Month.”

I affix my signature, as I agree with the petition.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have another petition here, again presented by Mr. Sonny Sansone. It’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and reads as follows:

“Whereas the McGuinty government in the last budget committed itself to providing the best possible benefits to single-parent families in Ontario by increasing single-parent family benefits by 15.7% over the 2003-04 levels;

“Whereas the expenditure on at-risk youth and families will be increased to a total of \$10.3 billion;

“Whereas there still remains no coherent universal child care system in Ontario for working families;

“Whereas Ontario needs to move toward a system that is better planned, coordinated and accountable for all;

“We, the undersigned, therefore applaud the McGuinty government for its initiatives at making the lives of Ontario’s families better and ask that they continue to make it the best possible for all families in Ontario.”

I agree with this petition, affix my signature to it and give a copy to Tyler, the page who’s with me today.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I rise on a point of order pursuant to standing order 55. I don’t wish to tax you in the chair, so please allow me to read it because I’d like to rise to give the Legislature the business of the House for next week.

On Monday, June 5, in the afternoon, we’ll have an opposition day standing in the name of Mr. Tory; in the evening we’ll have second reading of Bill 107, the Human Rights Code Amendment Act, 2006.

On Tuesday, June 6, in the afternoon, third reading of Bill 53, the Stronger City of Toronto for a Stronger Ontario Act; in the evening, second reading of Bill 117, the Ontario home electricity relief act.

On Wednesday, June 7, in the afternoon, third reading of Bill 53, the Stronger City of Toronto for a Stronger Ontario Act.

On Thursday, June 8, in the afternoon, third reading of Bill 56, the Emergency Management Statute Law Amendment Act.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EDUCATION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT (STUDENT PERFORMANCE), 2006 LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE L’ÉDUCATION (RENDEMENT DES ÉLÈVES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 29, 2006, on the motion for third reading of Bill 78, An Act to amend the Education Act, the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 and certain other statutes relating to education / Projet de loi 78, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l’éducation, la Loi de 1996 sur l’Ordre des enseignantes et des enseignants de l’Ontario et certaines autres lois se rapportant à l’éducation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I’m pleased to rise in discussion of Bill 78. At the outset, I want to make it very clear that we are not in support of this bill. I believe that notwithstanding the very title of the bill, Student Performance, and a great deal of rhetoric that has come with this bill that supposedly deals with improving education quality and standards and creating a better environment for education within this province, essentially what Bill 78 does is to undermine the very core of public education in this province.

1540

I think Bill 78 can probably best be compared to a Trojan horse, because while externally it seems quite harmless—in fact, again, based on the rhetoric that we may listen to, the framing of some of these provisions of this bill, to those who haven’t had the opportunity to look deeper into the implications of the various statutes, looks very harmless and, in some respects, perhaps even positive. But overall, I believe that as we investigate, as we take very careful consideration of the provisions of this bill—and I want to, over the next few minutes, take us through that discussion in the interest of ensuring that the public understand, not only members of the Legislature here.

I know that there’s probably not very much that I can do to change the minds of members of the government. I suggest that probably very few have even had the opportunity to look at this legislation and consider for themselves the implications of the various aspects of this bill before us. As is typical in this place, they will, no

doubt, each and every one of them stand in their place when it comes to the final vote, and this will become law.

We have had this bill now before us for second reading, and we raised a number of concerns during second reading debate of this bill. The minister then, Mr. Gerard Kennedy, would not hear from us with regard to those concerns, nor would he listen to stakeholders who expressed serious concern. The bill was then moved on to committee. The purpose of the committee hearings is that we have an opportunity for the public, for stakeholders to come forward and present, in a very reasoned way, their concerns, and also to make proposed amendments to the bill. It was disappointing, as I participated in those committee hearings and heard from various representatives of the public and stakeholders in the field of education, how one after the other would make what I consider to be very strong cases for the government to reconsider some of the initiatives proposed in this bill yet when it came to accepting amendments that would make substantive changes to the bill, once again the government said, "No, we're not interested. Our minds are made up."

I had hopes that with the appointment of a new Minister of Education, we may well have had a different attitude towards this issue, realizing that the former minister had boxed himself in to some of the stakeholders with whom he has had dialogue over the last number of months and years. Perhaps the new minister could have brought a new perspective and truly demonstrated that she would listen and do what is right for public education. But sadly enough, that didn't happen either. The new Minister of Education has folded as well on this issue.

There are a number of points that I want to address over the hour of debate that I have. I want to start off with what I consider to be the most important issue that's being addressed by this bill and where I believe the biggest damage will be done to public education in this province: the changes proposed by this legislation to the college of teachers.

The general public probably does not have a great deal of understanding of what the purpose of the college of teachers is. I also don't think that there are, quite frankly, a lot of teachers who fully understand the function and responsibilities of the college of teachers. The reason I say that is because I have had many calls from teachers who say that they really don't fully comprehend this debate about the college of teachers. The chair of the college of teachers told us during committee hearings that she believes that many teachers don't fully understand the role of the college of teachers, which is one of the reasons she feels it is important to have a full-time chair of the college. During questioning of the chair as to why she and members of the council feel she should be full-time, she effectively said, "To give me more opportunity to travel and get out to see teachers and to explain to them more fulsomely what the college does." I'm not sure that should be the role of the chair of the college of teachers, to begin with. It shows that that is, I believe, a movement in the wrong direction.

Many people watching these proceedings will say, "The member for Oak Ridges is a member of the official opposition and so we're going to discount some of the things he says because clearly his role is to oppose government legislation." I want to make it very clear that there have been many times in this House when I have supported initiatives coming forward from the government. I happen to believe that in order for us to be taken seriously and to do our role, to carry it out responsibly, we have a responsibility to look at each piece of legislation, applaud the government, encourage the government for their positive steps, for their initiative in taking the appropriate measures in legislation, and I don't hesitate to do that. But I also believe that it's our responsibility to challenge the government and to provide information to the public to ensure that they understand why we are opposing certain elements of legislation before this House.

That's why I want to start this discussion about the college of teachers not based on what I, as a member of the official opposition or as the education critic for the official opposition, believe, but I want to share with members of the public and with those members of the Legislature who have not had an opportunity to pursue this discussion in great detail the views of three former Ministers of Education. These are ministers, not all from the Conservative Party; in fact, one of them is Dave Cooke, a former NDP Minister of Education. Another is Bette Stephenson, who was a Minister of Education during the Bill Davis years in this province. The third is Janet Ecker, who also was a Minister of Education. They have submitted, in writing, their concerns relating to the proposed changes. I think it's appropriate—in fact, I think it's my responsibility—to read this into the record so that we have a very comprehensive understanding of what these former Ministers of Education are saying about this proposed legislation. For the benefit of Hansard, I will start my quote now.

"Every Minister of Education in Ontario has one overriding responsibility: to act in the best interest of the students at the heart of the education system. That concern unites all who have served in the post, no matter what their political stripe.

"Ontario's new Minister of Education, Sandra Pupatello, is no different.

"However, she has inherited a piece of legislation from her predecessor, Gerard Kennedy, who resigned last month to run for the Liberal leadership, which represents a dangerous departure from the long tradition of ministers acting in the public interest.

1550

"Bill 78 contains changes to the Ontario College of Teachers, the regulatory body for the teaching profession, that will see control of the college handed over to Ontario's teachers' unions—against the advice of the Royal Commission on Learning, former registrars of the college and former education ministers from all three parties.

“The Royal Commission on Learning, created by the NDP government, recommended the college. It was the third time such a recommendation had been made, dating back to the 1950s, and it was supported by all three parties in the Legislature.

“The college was established by the Conservative government as the body that decides who can teach in the province.

“It is responsible for the certification and discipline of teachers, as well as for setting standards for the profession. The college also accredits the faculties of education at Ontario’s universities.

“The college was modelled on the same principles as other professional regulatory bodies.

“Just as doctors, nurses and lawyers are subject to independent regulation, the public has a right to expect the college to be free to do its job. It ensures that teachers are prepared to teach, that they preserve the trust we place in them and that they act to keep students safe.

“If Bill 78 passes as currently drafted, the college will not be able to fulfill the crucial role of protecting the public interest because the unions will have control of its governing body.

“When the college was created in 1996, representatives of the broad profession—teachers, principals, superintendents, etc.—formed the majority on the college council, as it was intended to be a self-regulating body.

“But Bill 78 proposes to give the majority of positions on the council to the teachers’ unions, calling into question the very concept of self-regulation.

“The royal commission was clear about the importance of not giving any one group, such as the teachers’ unions, control over the college. The report said, ‘(I)t must be clear that the college of teachers will be completely separate from and independent of the teachers’ federations, whose functions, although occasionally overlapping, are in fact quite distinct.’

“Bill 78’s changes will have several damaging practical implications.

“For example, the college is responsible for disciplinary hearings for teachers accused by students or parents of abuse or wrongdoing.

“Under this legislation, a majority of the judges in a disciplinary hearing will be from teachers’ unions. But the union’s job is to defend teachers. They can’t, at the same time, sit in judgment of one of their members. It’s a basic conflict of interest and it’s wrong.

“Bill 78 proposes an oversight ‘public interest’ committee to compensate for this conflict of interest. But the fact the government has included it is a recognition that there is a significant risk in its approach.

“We are united in our belief that the risk to our children’s education is real, and is not worth taking.”

I’m going to close the quotes there for just a minute. I want to point out to members of this Legislature, members of the government and members of the public that these are three former education ministers, crossing political lines, who are saying, “We are united in our belief

that the risk to our children’s education is real, and is not worth taking.”

It has been our hope that the new minister and the Premier, who takes unto himself the cloak of education Premier, would listen to this warning. We were hoping as well that the teachers’ unions would listen very carefully to this warning, because notwithstanding the very good work that teachers’ unions do in this province, this is an unnecessary step for them to take. It begs the question, why would the teachers’ unions risk this kind of criticism? Why would they risk interfering with the independence of an important body such as the college of teachers and cast a pall over that body that has the responsibility to preside over their profession? Would it not have made more sense, if we wanted to strengthen the profession, if there was an interest on the part of the teachers’ unions in this province to strengthen the professionalism of their profession, that they would do everything possible to ensure that this regulatory body, this college of teachers, would in fact be beyond reproach, so that no one could accuse this important regulatory body of being in a conflict of interest?

So as we debate, I’m still hopeful that perhaps somehow the message will get through to this minister and to this government that this is not about teacher-union-bashing; this is not about a polarization. This is about doing what is right for the profession. Perhaps in the hours we have left, there will be some recognition that a last-minute change should be made that will draw us back from the brink on this.

I’m going to continue to read this, as I said, for the benefit of having the thoughts of these former Ministers of Education on the record:

“Last week, two former registrars of the college made a presentation to the legislative committee holding hearings on Bill 78.

“They said of the proposed changes, ‘The cost to the government and to the people of Ontario is an abandonment of the public interest ... to change the law to give the teacher unions control of the professional body is flat out wrong.’

“This is not an issue of being pro- or anti-union. The issue is that the college exists to protect students, while the Ontario Teachers’ Federation is, by law, the teachers’ advocates.

“The government’s claim that the college is independent of union control through their ‘conflict of interest’ prohibition on council members is clearly undermined by the OTF’s own statement of their view of the job.

“On the OTF website, the federation states it will be the ‘co-ordinating agent’ for teachers and that it will meet regularly with its representatives on the council to ‘discuss directions’ for the college.

“The Ontario government still has a chance to fix what is wrong with this bill, while preserving some of the ongoing education reforms in other areas.

“In an era in which transparency, openness and integrity are the universal demands by voters of their governments, a crippling of the independence of the body that

helps guarantee the safety and quality of schooling for our children is simply unacceptable.”

That is the submission, as I indicated earlier, from Bette Stephenson, Dave Cooke, and Janet Ecker, all former Ministers of Education.

1600

I want to point out that during a TVO presentation, a former Liberal Minister of Education expressed his very strong concerns as well over this direction. I appeal to the Minister of Education, in her role as having responsibility for preserving and strengthening the public education system, that she would give a sober second thought to the direction she's taking with regard to this issue.

I want to refer as well to a presentation made to the standing committee by Mr. Joe Atkinson. The reason I want to draw this into this discussion is that, again, the general public usually don't have the time or the inclination to either listen in or watch the committee hearings, and many times don't have the access to actually read the verbatim report from those standing committees.

I want again to address this issue of the teachers' unions from the perspective of an individual who was a former registrar of the college and, in his own words, was a member of the teachers' federation, was himself a teacher. He has a very interesting perspective on this issue as well. I'm going to refer now to his comments during that committee hearing.

“Put simply, Bill 78 will pass control of the Ontario College of Teachers to the teacher unions. The bill threatens the college's mandate to protect Ontario's students, and it makes a mockery of the concept of self-regulation. In case you get the wrong idea, neither I nor Margaret Wilson,” who is also a former registrar, “are anti-union; quite the contrary. Together, we spent more than 40 years in combined service to teachers' unions in elected and staff positions. We realize that unions advocate on behalf of their members. It's their job and they do it very well. However, the issue at hand is not one of teacher advocacy but of public interest. To change the law to give the teacher unions control of the professional body is flat-out wrong.”

I close quotes there and simply make the point again that we have this recurring theme, and we heard the recurring theme throughout the committee hearings, that this step by the government to compromise the college of teachers is fundamentally wrong. It is not in the public interest. It does not serve the teaching profession. It does not serve the public. It does not serve public education. So we appeal to the government to reconsider taking what we believe and what many are convinced is a detrimental step in public education.

I'm going to close off my remarks on the issue of the college of teachers with one final reference. This was brought to my attention by my colleague from Muskoka, Mr. Norm Miller, who asked me to read into the record comments by Mr. Ken Black, who is a former Liberal MPP in Muskoka. He is a former teacher. He is a former principal. I quote his remarks as taken from the local newspaper:

“Any time three former Ontario Ministers of Education representing two different political parties join forces to offer comment on a piece of pending legislation, the rest of us would do well to pay attention.

“An opinion piece in the Toronto Star last week authored by Bette Stephenson (who served in that portfolio from 1978 to 1985 in the governments of Bill Davis and Frank Miller), David Cooke (who was Minister of Education in the Bob Rae NDP government in 1993 to 1995) and Janet Ecker (who held the same portfolio in the Mike Harris Conservative government in 1999 to 2002) deserves thoughtful consideration from anyone who cares about young people and their schooling.”

He goes on to make the point that was made in the letter from the three former cabinet ministers. He says this:

“That change, while it might seem relatively harmless at first glance, will have the effect of turning over control of teachers' disciplinary hearings to the same unions that have a clear mandate to defend teachers. It is tantamount to having a lawyer serve as defence counsel for the accused, and then take a seat on the jury that decides on guilt or innocence.

“The potential danger of that approach was clearly recognized by the royal commission which warned against giving any one group control of the college.”

He goes on to say:

“I couldn't agree more and I say that as someone who has worked as a teacher and benefited from membership in the federation, and as someone who also worked on the management side as a principal and a superintendent.

“The teacher unions have been a powerful force for good in Ontario education. Over many years, they have not only afforded support and negotiated fair salaries for their members, but have at the same time sponsored and provided a wide range of quality professional development and training programs.

“That said, I am a firm believer in the importance of maintaining a professional college of teachers that is independent and autonomous. The primary purpose of Ontario's college of teachers is to protect the public interest. The primary purpose of the teacher unions is to protect and serve its members. There will be times when those two mandates will be in conflict. That is why giving teacher unions undue influence over the college is bad public policy.”

Those are comments from a former Liberal MPP, someone whom I'm certain every member of this House respects. Because of the distance now between where he is today and where he was, he has perhaps a more objective view of this issue. We should listen to him and his advice. The government should listen to him and his advice when he states that Bill 78, in its current drafting relating to the college of teachers, is, as he states, bad public policy.

I want to spend a couple of minutes talking about the disciplinary responsibilities of the college of teachers. I'm sure that many members of this Legislature from time to time hear from parents about concerns they have

about what's taking place in the classroom, that they have concerns with a teacher who they feel is not doing their job adequately. There may be an issue of abuse, perceived abuse. There may be some issues that the parent feels needs to be brought to the attention of someone in higher authority. I often hear from parents who have gone the distance, have contacted perhaps the principal and don't feel that they're being heard.

1610

What is it that parents can do to file a complaint, to lodge concern and be assured that their issue is going to be dealt with in a serious and forthright manner? Well, that is one of the roles of the college of teachers.

I'm not one to say that the current structure of the college of teachers is perfect either. In fact, I have some concerns, particularly when it comes to the disciplinary panels and the disciplinary hearings that have taken place. I question some of those decisions. Even in its current form, I'm not convinced there is the objectivity that should be there when it comes to disciplinary panel hearings.

How can it be that teachers who have been accused and convicted, found to be guilty of child pornography or viewing child pornography, can still have their certification to teach in Ontario? How can that be? How can it be that while, on the one hand, we try to do everything we can through our justice system to shut down child abuse, yet through our professional body that oversees the disciplinary aspects of the teaching profession, we would ever allow anyone, once found guilty of something as offensive as that, to be reinstated into a classroom in this province? I think it's fundamentally wrong, and I don't believe that in that regard we are being well served even under the current structure.

People will say, "Well, you can't hold someone responsible forever and there must be a time for forgiveness." I'm the first to agree with that. Forgive, but in these instances, in the interest of the safety of our children, we should never forget, and we should ensure that those individuals never come into contact with a classroom setting where there could be a potential abuse.

So we have a great distance to go. I'm spending a great deal of time on this issue because I believe it is so fundamentally important. I'm convinced that this government, selling out on this issue, is making a major mistake. It's one that will have potentially long-term repercussions not only to public education as a whole, but I believe there can be significant repercussions to students within our education system.

Surely it's the responsibility of legislators to protect our children, to ensure not just that they've got textbooks in the classrooms, but that they have the best-qualified teachers teaching them in a safe environment, and the last people who should be present in those classrooms are people who are a potential danger to those students.

I have someone who agrees with me on this disciplinary issue who happens to be a current member of the Liberal government, and happens to be a current cabinet minister of this Liberal government. The reason she

agrees with me is because she has some experience in the education system, and she, perhaps at great risk to herself, went out of the way to write a letter to Gerard Kennedy, who at the time was the Minister of Education.

For the benefit of my colleagues in the Liberal caucus and the NDP caucus, and for the benefit of the public, I want to read this letter into the record because it should be taken seriously. It is dated December 2, 2004, and it's addressed to the Honourable Gerard Kennedy:

"Dear Minister Kennedy,

"I am writing to you to express my support for the issues raised concerning the governance of the Ontario College of Teachers. As you know, I have had a long affiliation with the Ontario Principals' Council and have a good knowledge of its background and its *raison d'être*. I met with representatives of the OPC on December 1, 2004 and agreed to write to you in support of the concerns which they expressed.

"No professional college can act in the public interest when its governing council is controlled by a union, whose own mandate it is to defend its members against public charges. This issue must be addressed, as a council controlled by the Ontario Teachers' Federation will further increase the widespread perception that the college is controlled by the teachers' unions and does not adequately protect or represent the public interest.

"A further concern expressed by the OPC surrounds the issue of peer review. I share the belief that there must be a mechanism put in place to ensure peer review for principals and vice-principals. Allowing teachers with limited understanding of these roles to judge school leaders is neither self-regulation nor peer review.

"I also support the OPC's concerns about those conflict-of-interest guidelines which presently allow union leaders to be members of the OPC. They may have to defend the interests of their respective bargaining unit members, while, at the same time, investigating, disciplining or judging the fitness to practise of these same individuals. One person cannot be a defender and a judge at the same time.

"I urge you to give serious consideration to finding a resolution to concerns affecting the 5,000 principals and vice-principals who are represented by the Ontario Principals' Council.

"Yours very truly,

"Donna Cansfield

"MPP Etobicoke Centre."

I read the entire letter into the record. I didn't want to be accused by any member of this House of being selective in terms of what I refer to as a quote. I want to commend Ms. Cansfield for her forthrightness and for her courage in taking this issue to the Minister of Education. I'm disappointed that the Minister of Education has not heard his colleague. I would say to the new Minister of Education, if you don't want to listen to the official opposition education critic or other members of the opposition, if you don't want to listen to three former Ministers of Education, would you listen to a fellow cabinet colleague who sits with you at the same cabinet

table and argues the same principles in the interests, no doubt, of public education?

I'd like to move on to some of the other aspects of this bill. I mentioned at the outset of my remarks that, in many ways, this bill is like a Trojan horse: Once it's there, who knows what's going to come out? Well, one other aspect of this bill that concerns us greatly and should concern the government, and it certainly does concern many stakeholders—I know that many parents, when they hear about this provision in the bill, are shocked—is that this bill removes the teacher qualifying test for teachers in this province.

1620

Up until now, teachers have had to pass a qualifying test when they graduate from their teachers' colleges, from their teacher training. Before they could enter a classroom, get certified as teachers in this province, they would have to pass a qualifying test. It's interesting that Dalton McGuinty, not too long ago, made the statement that he believes in qualifying tests. In fact, he made the statement that just like other professionals, be they accountants, lawyers, engineers or whoever they might be, there should be a qualifying test and teachers should be treated no differently. The principle is that we want to be assured that teachers who are teaching our young people in our classrooms are fully and properly equipped. We in the Progressive Conservative Party are still having a hard time figuring out why this government feels they're doing something good for public education by saying, "Okay, teachers, from this point on you need not pass a qualifying test anymore. We're going to take that hurdle away from you. Don't worry about it."

In fairness, the bill talks about putting in place a mentoring program for new teachers. That's good. That should be in every school today. There should be on the ground, in the classroom, ongoing training and guidance of teachers as they come into the classroom. This is good. What the government has done here is taken the good, which is the mentoring process—and they've committed to putting substantial financial support; we'll have to wait to see whether they really will—but in addition to saying they're going to help teachers become better teachers through a mentoring program, they're saying, "By the way, you don't have to pass a test. You don't have to qualify to be a teacher anymore. Take your training, do what you have to do there, but we're going to take this hurdle away."

Interesting how that is contrary to most other jurisdictions. In New York, there's not only one qualifying test; they have three. That's how much they care about their students. That's how much they care about the standards of education in the state of New York.

I am one who believes our standards of education should be higher than any other jurisdiction anywhere in the world. Why wouldn't Ontario have as its vision to educate the brightest and the best anywhere in the world? And how do you do that? You do that by having the brightest and the best and the highest-qualified teachers anywhere in the world. And how do you get that? You

get that by ensuring that teachers have the best possible training and the highest standards. That's how you do that, so that teachers around the world would say, "You know what? I want to go and teach in Ontario because it's a place for educational excellence. When people find out that I've graduated and I've qualified to be a teacher in Ontario, I can get a job as a teacher anywhere in the world, because the word has gone out that they have the best teachers anywhere, the highest standards, the highest qualifications." Instead, this government is turning that all upside down. They're saying, "No, no. You know what? We don't need those tests anymore."

I think it's fundamentally wrong, I think it is undermining our public education system, and I believe this education Premier will rue the day he allowed Bill 78 to be brought forward by the former Minister of Education, and the current Minister of Education will rue the day that she didn't seize the opportunity when she was given that new mantle to represent public education in this province to have a sober second look at what this bill was doing to public education in this province.

I want to take this opportunity to also let the public know that this is really a finale to the government's attack on teacher training and education. In a previous bill, this government took away the mandatory teacher training and professional development program that the previous government had put in place. You see, that too was a recommendation by the Royal Commission on Learning, in the interest of ensuring that we had the best-qualified teachers. So professional development for teachers was mandated; it was made a requirement for every teacher. This government, in the short time that it has been the government, dismantled that as well.

You may recall that the rationale for justifying eliminating the professional development program was that most teachers pass it anyway; most teachers do it anyway. Most teachers take the initiative and get involved in professional development programs, so there's no need to have it be mandatory. The objection by the teachers' unions was not that there's professional development; it was that it was mandatory. That was the rub: that it's mandatory.

Here's the reason it was mandatory. In every school, the vast majority of teachers do in fact take the initiative and do the self-development and engage in professional development programs, and the vast majority of those teachers are excellent teachers. But I don't think anyone in this place will deny that every once in a while, you hear about a teacher who isn't quite up to snuff, who isn't there. Maybe for one reason or another, the thrill of teaching has worn off. Maybe some incompetence has set in along the way, maybe they're not igniting students the way some other teachers could, and maybe they're lacking some skill and need some additional impetus, guidance and direction. So why do we make it mandatory? Why should it be mandatory? To ensure that those teachers who don't have the initiative to do it themselves and actually get engaged are, yes, forced to become better than they are. That's why it's there. This government

dismantled that, and we believe that that too is fundamentally wrong. We believe that we will, down the road, reap the whirlwind of that decision.

We would look at this bill overall and say that it shouldn't be passed by this Legislature. I don't think there is sufficient space here in this bill to endorse it.

There are a number of other aspects of this bill that we believe are, and should be, of serious concern. I remember well, when the current Minister of Education was in official opposition, that every so often there would be a ranting and a raving about the fact that so much had been left to regulation within the framework of the legislation; so many decisions were left to orders in council; so many decisions were left to the minister to make, and it just left far too much wiggle room for the government to control. If there was one sound bite that I remember very well from the provincial election, it was that a Liberal government under Dalton McGuinty would respect local autonomy, would respect local school boards to make decisions relating to their jurisdiction, that they would respect local autonomy by municipalities, by municipal government. Isn't it interesting? Here they are, the government, and they're doing everything but.

1630

Bill 78 essentially strips school board trustees of their ability to function. It essentially guts the authority of the local school board. It gives the Minister of Education virtually total control of the education system and it creates puppets at the local level that they continue to call trustees. And by the way, the sop for that was that they're going to pay trustees more now, you see? The typical Liberal formula: Pay more for less. You limit the scope of trustees' responsibilities, giving them a little more money to make them feel better about the fact that they are trustees even though they have virtually no authority now, and this, all in the interest of what they refer to in this bill as better student performance? Who are we kidding?

I think the issue of creating for the Minister of Education absolute control in the education system is again contrary to what we in this province know as public education. You see, there is a reason it's called public education: It should mean that the public controls it—that it's parents, who are the taxpayers, who pay for the buildings, for the operations, who pay the salaries of the teachers, who want what is best for their children as they go through the public education system. That is the "public" in the public education system.

This government doesn't see it that way. This government sees public education as controlled by the Minister of Education and controlled by the teachers' federations. That's how they've redefined public education. Well, it's not, and parents shouldn't stand for that. We will stand with parents, we will be on the side of parents, we will be on the side of taxpayers on the issue of public education, and we will do whatever we can to raise the alarm about what is happening in public education.

The rhetoric that we continue to hear about peace and stability is so far from the truth—it's not peace and

stability at all. What it means right now is that there is a sleeping dog that's lying there, and there's an awakening that's coming. There are serious problems on the horizon. People in this province will realize that this government is better than any government before them—ever; of any political stripe—in making announcements, in having press conferences, in giving people a feel-good attitude, but there's no substance behind the announcements.

Here's the awakening: We're going to hit the brick wall this coming fiscal year. All of these announcements made by the former Minister of Education and now the current minister are just picking up on that media line—announcement after announcement that sound so good. If I didn't know what wasn't there behind those announcements I'd be applauding her as well. But they are announcements that are shallow, and they're creating more and more targets for school boards to achieve without the resources to achieve them. That is why we had the Toronto school board telling the minister that they are facing a \$100-million deficit in the coming fiscal year—\$100 million. That's just one school board.

We have been saying this to the government: For the last two and a half years we have been adding up the numbers, and the last number we were at was \$1.5 billion, which is the shortfall between the announcements of the programs and the funding that the government has given to support them.

Where's the money coming from? The money isn't there. It's not there. On the one hand they're creating an incredibly impossible circumstance for our local school boards right across the province. On the other hand they are selling out public education. They're undermining the very foundation of what has been built over decades to ensure that Ontario's education system is the envy of the world. They're undermining that, but they're very good at creating the perception that all is well in Ontario education. It's not; far from it.

There are a number of other aspects of this bill that I would have liked to bring to the attention of the public, but they grow faint against what I believe is a major flaw and against what I believe is going to create for public education in Ontario significant problems for years to come, and that is the interference with the independence of the Ontario College of Teachers, mandated to serve the public interest and stripped of the ability to do so by this government through Bill 78.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): It's time for questions and comments.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I'm looking forward to taking an opportunity in just a very short time to make some comments myself on this third reading debate of Bill 78. It's interesting, because the member from Oak Ridges spent a great deal of his remarks on the issue of the college of teachers, and I see that as a bit of a tempest-in-a-teapot issue. It is something that I think they spent a lot of time on and then got some results, really, from the government in terms of how they've addressed that through their public interest committee, the watchdog that they've basically put in place to sic on the

college of teachers if they get out of line. From my perspective, it's an issue that I'll spend more time on a little later on but one that's really much ado about nothing. See, I'm trying to bring in some of my education from my school days. I think that was a Shakespearian play, if I'm not mistaken, *Much Ado About Nothing*.

Nonetheless, the member from Oak Ridges is certainly very well read, as the critic in this area, and brought forward a number of issues that they're concerned about. Some of them we don't disagree with, and while they're seeing this bill as a Trojan Horse, we're seeing it as more of an Orwellian experience or an Orwellian proposal in that in the title of the bill it talks about being about student performance, when in fact it is anything but. In bringing it forward, both the previous minister and the current minister have used words like "relationships of respect" with the teachers and "flexibility for local school boards," but as I will be discussing a little later in my remarks, the bill does nothing of the sort, and New Democrats have some serious concerns with it.

1640

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I listened intently to the comments of the member from Oak Ridges. Just a couple of observations: My wife is a grade 8 teacher in Peterborough, so I do spend a fair amount of time talking to her colleagues in the teaching profession. I think it's interesting to note that Annie Kidder released her report not too long ago, and I think in the opening paragraph she indicated in a very public way that the crisis in education in Ontario was over. Now, to be fair, she did go on and list some other things that need to be looked at, and I think it's appropriate that you put that in context. But I do spend a lot of time in classrooms in schools in the riding of Peterborough, both the schools that are in the urban setting of Peterborough and those that are in the rural setting of Peterborough.

When you talk to teachers and you talk to vice-principals and you talk to principals, indeed there seems to be a better, more positive feeling in the classroom today. I just want to note that many young teachers I've talked to are pleased that the Ontario teacher qualifying test will be eliminated and that the new teacher induction program in class, the second professional step for new teachers, will be introduced. I think that process and the mentoring program are a better process for new teachers moving into the profession. Ontario is blessed. I think we have one of the best groups of teaching professionals in all of North America. The level of excellence is second to none.

The other thing that I think is a positive step—

The Acting Speaker: Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): I want to congratulate the member from Oak Ridges for what I believe was an outstanding presentation on the concerns around the bill as currently introduced by the government. It's interesting to note that the concerns he has expressed are not just shared by our party, but he read into the record the letter that had been signed by

Bette Stephenson, Janet Ecker and David Cooke. I think that the concerns these three former Ministers of Education have raised need to be seriously considered.

It's interesting that Donna Cansfield, the current Minister of Transportation, who knows the education field extremely well—in fact, I had the privilege of working with her when I was chair of a school board—also has concerns about this legislation. But I'll tell you, it is extremely important that when you have a college, in this instance the Ontario College of Teachers, you need to ensure that it remains independent. It is there to protect the public interest. This happens in every other college in Ontario. So this college, which was modelled on the same principles as the other professional regulatory bodies, is now losing that independence. It is no longer going to be in that critical role of protecting the public interest, because of the way in which people will be appointed to that college and because the control will be in the hands of unions, as opposed to individual members. So I hope the government listens to these very, very legitimate concerns.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I too wanted to add a few comments. I think the member from Oak Ridges did have quite a detailed critique of the bill, and I commend him for that. I think it was quite thorough, and he's gone through it quite carefully.

I think what the government is trying to do in bringing forward this bill, Bill 78, An Act to amend the Education Act, the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 and certain other statutes relating to education, is to bring in a new education system, a new education era for the province of Ontario. I think that one of the key things this government ran on in its platform back in 2003 was to improve the education system. A lot of those improvements are contained in this bill, including trying to improve on teaching excellence, making sure that teachers have an environment where they can work with each other and have the proper number of PA days to work and discuss issues that are important to them; to not be subject to the testing requirements that the former government was trying to impose; and also to give local boards greater say in how local schools will be run. I think that's quite important because throughout Ontario school boards from one jurisdiction to another will differ. We have to work co-operatively with the boards to make sure the targets that we set at the ministry level are met, and I think the boards are best capable of doing that. The ministry will continue to consult with boards and stakeholders to determine which circumstances would trigger intervention by the government and which areas of increased flexibility should be opened up.

I think this is a win-win situation. It's good for the teachers, it's good for the students and it's good for the people of Ontario. So I stand today supporting this bill.

The Acting Speaker: It's time for a response.

Mr. Klees: I want to thank my colleagues for their observations and their responses. It's very clear to me that I haven't made a dent in the thinking of any of the Liberal members this afternoon. While I was not too

hopeful, miracles always possibly could happen, but not in this place, it seems. I rest my case; I've made my points. Time will certainly tell.

It's interesting: The member from Peterborough states that all young teachers that he's spoken to welcome the fact that the qualifying test is being eliminated. Isn't that an awakening? If you were to go to any student in the province of Ontario and say, "Look, if we were to eliminate all of your tests and all of your assignments, would you be happy with that?", I don't think there would be too many who would say no.

Of course, if you lower standards and make it easier for people, without a great deal of thought, most people will welcome it. But that isn't the role of government, that isn't the role of the Minister of Education, and surely that isn't the role of a Premier who calls himself the education Premier. Our responsibility is to ensure that we have a public education system beyond reproach that serves the public, that serves the public interest, that raises standards, and that ensures that when our students graduate, they will be competitive with students from any jurisdiction in the world today.

This bill undermines that. This bill will lower standards rather than increase them. It reduces expectations rather than raise them. It's bad public policy.

The Acting Speaker: It's time for further debate.

Ms. Horwath: It's my pleasure to make a few comments on Bill 78 here at third reading stage of the bill.

I want to start by referencing some of the comments I was raising in my questions and comments a little bit earlier on, and that is the issue of having part of the title in brackets: the words "student performance." The bill itself is entitled the Education Statute Law Amendment Act (Student Performance), which would lead one to believe that the entire bill is about student performance, or that at least the vast majority of the bill is about student performance. In fact, the bill itself is an omnibus bill that has a number of different pieces in it. A number of different issues are dealt with, a number of different changes are being brought forward in this bill, but I would submit that very little of it has to do with bona fide student performance issues.

1650

I said earlier that from my perspective it's a bit of an Orwellian concept, a bit of an Orwellian title. I decided that maybe there are people here watching who are not sure what "Orwellian" means. We use that word a lot in modern language, but some people might say, "What is Orwell? What does 'Orwellian' mean?"

"Orwellian" refers to George Orwell, a writer who published a work in 1949 called *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and there were many interesting concepts that were raised in that piece. But one of the concepts was the concept of what he referred to as "doublethink." I thought it was maybe the appropriate time to quote back exactly what doublethink was in the context of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. "Doublethink means the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them."

What this bill does and what makes it Orwellian from my perspective is that the minister says one thing, the government says one thing, and they bring Bill 78—Bill 1984, I almost said; that would have been a coincidence—forward and claim it to be what they are trying to articulate in terms of their vision. But if you read the bill, it is contradictory to that vision in very many ways. So I'm going to spend some time talking about that, somewhat in the context of whether or not it is actually to do with student performance, but also concepts that the government continues to bring forward around how this bill somehow, in their minds anyway, relates to flexibility and relates to respectful relationships with the teachers, etc.

Let me start by talking about an issue that was raised by our critic, the member for Trinity–Spadina. It's at the very beginning of the bill. The issue is one that I really wasn't very well aware of until I sat with him very recently, in fact earlier this week, through his third reading discussion as the lead critic in this area for the New Democratic Party caucus. I have to tell you, I was quite surprised to be informed at that time by the member for Trinity–Spadina that there's a section in this bill, one of the very first sections, that speaks to the collection of personal information. He raised some really interesting questions about that section during the committee process and was chagrined to discover that nobody on the committee, when he asked questions about that collection-of-information piece, could answer his questions. Nobody could respond to the concerns he was raising, very legitimate concerns: What kind of information is the ministry centrally, provincially, going to be collecting? Information on who is going to be collected? Information on teachers? Information on students? What kind of information is all of a sudden necessary to be collected by this centrally located ministry, by the minister, which is the way it is presented in the bill?

We already know that school boards have the ability and the obligation to collect certain bits of information, certain pieces of information about the students who are being taught through the system, but this particular piece of the bill, one of the very initial pieces of the bill, enables or expands the collection of information and centralizes it to the provincial ministry. Although nobody could answer any questions about that, we're expected to just accept that as something that is fairly benign, not very harmful and really nothing to talk about at all. In fact, we don't even have anybody to answer any questions as to what exactly this is meant to achieve, why it is being put in there, what is the purpose of it, and even just basically what kind of information and on whom it is going to be collected by virtue of having this clause in the bill.

So it was a bit of a concern and it remains a bit of a concern that the Minister of Education will now be in a position to collect information, the details of which, of course, are not in this bill and won't be debated in this House because they'll take place at some point after the bill has passed third reading and been implemented, pro-

claimed into law, as the regulations and details are developed by the government. So, unfortunately, we're going to leave this debate in a very short time not knowing exactly what the intent of that clause is. That's somewhat disturbing. In fact, it's extremely disturbing, because the other piece of that is that we all know, in this day and age, that the ability of people to get hold of, or of organizations, agencies or authorities to get hold of, and share personal information of the citizens of this province is something that has been raised many times by many people. We are also concerned that we have no details as to why this information is being collected centrally by the ministry and who will be able to obtain copies of that information, regardless of what it might or might not say. That is all very much a concern to us. It's unfortunate that the debate likely is going to end today and that this will go forward without answers to those questions.

In regard to the issue of the stated goal of the current minister and the previous minister, and the rhetoric, the assertions they were making about this being a bill that provides for local flexibility, that it respects the relationship with teachers and with boards, that this is one of those things where it's getting away from the micro-managing the previous government was accused of by them, and that this is the bill that's going to fix all of those problems, when you really get down to it and look at Bill 78 and ask the question, "Is that what this bill does? Is that what it says?", of course it doesn't say it overtly, but when you read between the lines and when you look at what this bill does in terms of putting in place various bodies and rules for those bodies, you'll find that in fact it does none of those things.

They say it's going to improve—they're going back to the title—student performance. Exactly how does that get achieved in this bill? How is it purported that this will be achieved in this bill? They basically indicate it's going to be achieved by a number of different measures that are put together through a regulation.

They describe in the bill something called the provincial interest, and then a number of clauses further define what the provincial interest is. Of course, school boards and teachers are going to be operating in their local communities with the provincial interest in mind.

They go on to describe what these provincial interest details entail. It says, "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations prescribing, respecting and governing the duties of boards, so as to further and promote the provincial interest in education."

On the one hand, they're saying boards are going to have more flexibility, and on the other hand, in the bill they very specifically outline what the expectations are going to be and how they in fact are going to reduce flexibility of the boards by implementing these specific regulations:

"A regulation made under subsection (1) may require a board to,

"(a) adopt and implement measures specified in the regulation to ensure that the board's funds and other resources are applied,

"(i) effectively, and

"(ii) in compliance with this act ...

"(b) adopt and implement measures specified in the regulation to ensure that the board achieves student outcomes specified in the regulation."

This is one that was of quite a bit of concern, not because there's anything inherently wrong with the concept, but because we've already seen what this government is prepared to do to artificially make sure that the student outcomes are reaching the expectations set by the government.

I raise this because we already know that this government wanted to bump up the number of students who were achieving certain levels of the EQAO tests that were put in place by the previous government. The previous government set a benchmark, and this government came in and said, "We want to improve on that benchmark." Okay, well, of course. The whole goal is to constantly improve. If we want to improve student performance—back to that concept at the beginning—then certainly we would want to bump up the number of students, the percentage of students who are achieving a certain benchmark, the provincial average on the EQAO test.

1700

The problem is, the way the achievement is undertaken or realized is by manipulating the test itself. It's not about getting the students to a place where they are able to perform better on the test and then, the test having been the same, students have better results; it's about lowering the bar, if you will—pulling a little bit of limbo with the EQAO tests. That is problematic. That is a little bit Orwellian, if you ask me.

What has happened is, the test that used to be a 12-hour test is now a six-hour test. The test that used to have a certain number of multiple-choice questions—which, of course, are a little bit easier than the long math questions, for example, that you have to work out in your mind. There's a different standard, and it's a little bit easier for the students to achieve better results on the test. In fact, the ability of students to use calculators has also been adjusted with the new test.

I've got to tell you, I'm a mom. My son's 13 years old and he has had to go through the testing process. There is no doubt that the testing was difficult. I have no problem if you're identifying that your measurement needs to be fixed, that the measurement is not working; the methodology for this measurement is causing too much stress on children. I know it was very stressful for my son when he was taking the tests in grade 3 and grade 6. But I've got to tell you, be up front about what it is you're trying to achieve. If you're trying to reduce the stress on kids because the testing instrument is too difficult for them or it causes them very significant stressors that just aren't appropriate for children, then say so. Don't fiddle with the test and then turn around and say, "Oh, look: Our kids are doing so much better," and pretend you haven't adjusted, changed or reduced the difficulty of the test. That's inappropriate.

That's a concern we have in regard to the extent to which this language in Bill 78 isn't about student performance, but it's about the government being able to set new measurements, manipulate the measurement tool, and then turn around and call it a student performance achievement. That is something that is completely inappropriate and will do nothing to make a real difference in student performance. Simply, it will make surface improvements, because it will only be a numbers game, a statistical game, and it won't be a real achievement for students, at least not if Bill 78 goes forward as it's written, allowing the government to intervene and manipulate these things so that they can get the results they want, not for kids but for them to be able to put into election materials. What a shame that will be for the children of the province of Ontario.

The other issue I thought was really important to talk about—and I know we've had excellent remarks in this regard by our lead critic, but it bears repeating—is the whole issue of the college of teachers. New Democrats don't have a problem with that. In fact, it was part of our platform to have even more teachers on the college. We actually believe the teachers go on to that college with the right frame of mind, with the right goals, with the right intentions, as teachers wanting to do the right thing, wanting to make sure that they're appropriately certifying teachers and that they're appropriately taking away certification of teachers. But it's interesting that others don't feel that way. They feel that somehow this is going to be a huge problem, an absolute conflict of interest, and that there's no way we should be able to trust teachers to undertake this very important work.

There are two very odd things about this bill. One is that, in reaction to the criticism, largely coming from the Conservative side, the Liberals decided, "Okay. If you don't like the way we've got this simple majority of teachers on the college, then we're going to put this committee together that's going to be the watchdog for the college." So when they say that they're respecting teachers and they're supporting teachers and giving them the majority on the college because they trust them and they have a respectful relationship, what they don't say, which is the Orwellian part, is, "But on the other hand, we're going to put a little watchdog committee on there so that you'll have to watch your p's and q's. We're going to just make sure that you don't do anything wrong, because although we say we trust you and we're giving you the majority on the college of teachers, we don't really trust you. We're going to put a watchdog committee on you."

They're going to put a committee together, three to five people, with offices and bureaucrats supporting them, the whole ball of wax, the whole little infrastructure for a committee that's called—I just can't remember the name of the committee. It's called the public interest committee. This is the watchdog committee that's going to make sure that the college of teachers, which is now controlled by teachers—I don't know how many colleges we have in Ontario. We have a lot, and I

would beg to imagine that most of them are controlled by the very professions that belong to them.

That's the whole point. It's called a self-regulating body. It's not a new concept and it's not one that isn't undertaken in many other fields in Ontario, but for some reason, it's a problem for the teachers. Instead, we're going to have a committee that's going to watchdog the teachers. It's going to have a number of high-paid bureaucrats staffing these public interest appointees who are going to watchdog the teachers, because they have all of these very difficult and serious decisions to make, which they do. Certification of teachers and decertification of teachers, I do believe, are important issues to be dealt with.

But do I think that teachers have an interest in making sure that they're doing that appropriately? Of course they do. Of course teachers have an interest in making sure that the work they're doing is appropriate, that the certificates they're handing out and the ones they're pulling back are done for justifiable reasons and with absolute, upfront honesty and upfront appropriate analysis, because you know what? If they don't do it that way, then it reflects poorly on the profession of teachers, and that's certainly not something the teachers would want to have done.

I'm already running out of time, and I have so many other things to say.

If the government really respected teachers and respected their right to control their college, like most other professions do, then frankly they wouldn't need to be putting in a little watchdog committee and they would spend those dollars instead on fixing the system, which they haven't yet had the opportunity to do for some reason. I'm going to end on that very issue.

Unfortunately, this government, instead of dealing with the real problems facing the education system, has brought forward Bill 78, calling it a student performance package. If they really wanted to improve students' experience in the education system, then they should look at some of the fundamental problems that exist currently. I'm talking about the basics. I'm talking about fixing the funding formula so that we can make sure that boards are not having to steal from Peter to pay Paul, that they're not having to take money from ESL, from special ed, from French immersion, from transportation; that they're not having to play a shell game and cobble together their budgets at the end of every year so that they're ready for September.

What do we know for sure? It came out today. Last night, the Toronto school board—unless this government is prepared to fix the funding formula problems, to acknowledge that there's a serious systemic issue that they still have to address, we're going to see more and more school boards following the lead of the Toronto school board. What are they saying? Sixty-four schools on the list for closure and—that's not all—numerous and deep cuts to programs. That certainly is not anything that this government should be proud of.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Berardinetti: I appreciate hearing the comments from the member from Hamilton East, again another good critique on the bill.

This is quite a far-reaching bill which covers quite a large number of areas involving education, from the teachers themselves to school boards, school trustees and of course the public. Just to touch briefly on some of the points here, I think one of the keys is that in preparing this bill the government has consulted and spoken to several stakeholder groups out there, ensuring that their concerns are addressed in this bill.

One of the key things is that we want to make sure that the ministry is able to require school boards to publish reports respecting their compliance with specific operational requirements, and I think this allows for greater public accountability and openness in education. There's been some concern expressed by some groups that the public school boards were not being open enough to some of the concerns regarding the way they operate or some of the information they collected.

1710

The other important thing we're doing is we're allowing student trustees to operate in this new legislation. Student trustees would have a variety of rights, including a scholarship at the completion of their term, equal access to all board resources, and the right to attend trustee training programs the same as board members. This supports the minister's commitment to address the Ontario Student Trustees' Association. They had a recommendation to empower student representatives on school boards, and we're doing that. I think it's very important to have some students in there.

Of course, by having more professional development days for the teachers, it allows them a chance to work with each other and to try to foster a co-operative environment, which is something we did not see previously, and which we will see presently.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I am pleased to rise today and comment on Bill 78 and the comments made by the member from Hamilton East, who did a good analysis of Bill 78, and the member of our party, the member from Oak Ridges, before. It's important for this government to hear the messages that they brought forward. I know we're in the third reading, but the bill has gone to committee and there was a lot of input from them.

Certainly, what I hear most often from the riding is about the college of teachers and the composition that it's going to have, that it's going to be too one-sided; the teachers are going to have too much control in that professional body. It was brought up earlier about the knowledge the teachers actually have themselves about the college of teachers and why the college of teachers is there. It's to protect the students and the parents and to look at the quality of education. I have many teachers in my family and there are great teachers out there, but this college of teachers was set out as a watchdog body. There is concern—and this is what I hear the most in the

riding of Haliburton–Victoria–Brock—about its composition and that the control is going to go to the unions.

I notice that even in the Toronto Star there was an article written on this, and it says that the problem is you're throwing out a lot of good stuff with the bad with this bill, in giving working teachers a majority on the governing council of the college of teachers, the regulatory body of the profession. This was fulfilling an election promise but it doesn't do what the college was set up to do, and that is to oversee that we get good teachers in the system. We have to provide our children with the best education that we can provide to let them be competitive in our global economy.

So this is a big omnibus bill. Those were just a couple of the issues that are contained within it, and I am pleased to have had the opportunity to speak to this today.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I listened, as always, to my friend from Hamilton East. She speaks passionately but she also speaks from the heart and from what she knows. She always is able to bring in aspects of her son and what her son has gone through in the schools and how she sees this being played out in the parameters of this bill.

The last government was famous—the newspapers said it a lot; people in this House said it a lot—in that they developed Orwellian bills. They would have things like the Tenant Protection Act that did not protect tenants, and there were a whole bunch of bills like that, that pretended to do something they did not do.

I have to tell you—and my friend used the word “Orwellian” again here today—that this bill falls along that same line. This is an act which many members of the Liberal Party have stood up to speak about, and the member from Hamilton East has pointed out quite clearly that what it has been said that this act is going to do is clearly not what is contained within the four sides of the legislation. She has pointed out quite clearly that this is a centralization of power. It is not to give greater power to teachers or to unions or to parents or to students. It is in fact—and I'm going to be dealing with this myself—an act to centralize further the power of the education authority here at Queen's Park, and most specifically with the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

That is the true purport of this act, that is precisely what she tried to bring out in her comments, and that is precisely, I would think—notwithstanding the many machinations, the many statements made by members of the government and the governing party—what the intent is. I commend her for having said what she said and for the very sort of folksy, down-home, how-this-is-going-to-affect-my-son approach. But her message was very clear: This bill does not purport what you say it is going to do.

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): I guess we have to wait till 1984 to see if this is truly Orwellian or not. I would just suggest here that I don't think there's anything Orwellian about 54% of the nurses' college being working nurses, or 61%

of the pharmacists' body being working pharmacists, or 67% of the social workers' body being social workers, or 83% of the lawyers' body being lawyers. In fact, of the some 54 groups that we looked at in the committee, the very lowest majority of working fill-in-the-blank was, in fact, the teachers' college. So there's nothing Orwellian about creating a truly self-regulating body, the college of teachers, in addition to the fact that there was a campaign commitment that we made, and we all know in this House how hard we're working at maintaining campaign promises.

I want to say too that no one has ever referred to the public interest group as a watchdog group. It's not intended to be a watchdog group. It's intended to be of a particular assist to the college, to help provide some independent guidance perhaps on a broader role as definitions of public interest change. So we're anxious to see an independent and autonomous group. We feel first and foremost that teachers do understand the difference between teacher advocacy and public interest and that it's in their interest to ensure the public interest. I suppose you could argue that the oath, the precluding of union officials from being members, and some of the other things would provide some additional protection. But that's certainly not our intent.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Hamilton East.

Ms. Horwath: I thank the members for Scarborough Southwest, Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, Beaches–East York, and Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot for their comments on my remarks.

In the last minute and 30 seconds that I have to speak to this bill before I must leave it to my good friend, I wanted to quote from our own Hamilton school board chair, because I think she's the one who most appropriately encapsulates what the problems are now, and I firmly believe that this bill will not address those problems.

“The major problem for all boards of education is salaries and benefits. The gap between the amount funded and the actual amount paid in teachers' salaries in 2002 was approximately \$4,500 per teacher. In 2003-04, the gap in funding had grown to approximately \$6,000 per teacher—going in the wrong direction. ‘Staff cannot be reduced because of collective agreements and class regulations,’” which is appropriate.

Following, she says, “In Hamilton, the gap is closed by using most of the local priority grants and taking \$1.3 million from French as a second language (this includes French immersion), \$1.8 million from English as a second language ... and \$2.8 million from a grant intended for disadvantaged students and those at risk.” Those would be special education. “Left unresolved, the gap is expected to increase by an average of at least 10% per year over the next three years.”

That was a quote—and I could go on—from Judith Bishop, the chair of the Hamilton school board, the public board, and I have to say that that is the crux of the matter. If you're really going to get at student perform-

ance, if you're really going to bump up those numbers, then you have to resource the system. That's the solution: Resource the system.

1720

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Prue: I understand from my friends on all sides of the House that this debate may in fact collapse, and I may in fact be the last speaker here tonight. We hope so. So I promise you, because there are so many faces of anticipation hoping to get out of here, that I will not take my entire time. I can see smiles all around. But I did want to speak to this bill, because to me, the most important part of the bill, the crux of the bill, the reason I find it difficult to support the bill in spite of some of the laudatory measures that are contained therein—and there are some in terms of the school trustees, the student trustees and in terms of how the bill will loosen up some of the process. But to me it all comes down to one phrase in this bill that the government has not seen fit to change, and that is found on the second page. I'll go right to it. It's section 4, and this is what it says and what causes me difficulty:

“11.1(1)The Lieutenant Governor in Council”—for all of you who don't know or those watching television, that means the cabinet, the inner sanctum of the government—“may make regulations prescribing, respecting and governing the duties of boards, so as to further and promote the provincial interest in education.”

What that means in a nutshell, and the reason this concerns me, and I'm sure many people who value the system of education and the boards and trustees who have laboured so hard in this province, is that this will allow the Lieutenant Governor in Council to centralize the authorities, to make the rules and regulations, to have the cabinet do a one-size-fits-all and tell the boards how and in what ways they must operate.

This is a further centralization of power that I had hoped this government would try to back away from. We saw what happened when the centralization happened in the previous government. We saw boards taken under authority, we saw trustees' salaries capped at \$5,000 and we saw the turmoil that ensued. But what we saw most of all was the loss of local control, where ordinary parents were able to contact their trustees, were able to have their points of view known and were able to, in some cases, mitigate the harshness of the law.

What we're seeing here is that this government wants to take authority in a way that has never been held before in this province, at least for the last 100 years, and to centralize that process within a small group of men and women numbering about 20 in the cabinet of Ontario. I have some considerable difficulties with that, because it is going to weaken a system of educational government that has been in place ever since the time of Egerton Ryerson, and it's been in place in small-town Ontario, where the money was raised locally to build a school, to find some schoolteachers, to educate the kids, to keep them at home, to give them a future, and where the parents were able to very clearly and articulately say

what they hoped their children would learn. That seems to me to be coming to an end, and I believe this is the beginning of the end of school boards and, if this is passed, the beginning of the end of the power of trustees to regulate what is in the public good in their local communities.

You know, there is a change in here and the government, I'm sure, if they are going to comment, would say, "How can that possibly be true? We are going to allow the school boards to raise the salaries of local trustees." That's in here, and I wouldn't necessarily think it was a bad thing, except when you look into the rules you will see quite clearly that there is a new cap that is placed by the minister on any remuneration that can be given to school trustees. Right now the Lieutenant Governor in Council capped that at \$5,000, and in this bill it will be allowed to the minister, and the minister alone, to cap it at whatever amount of money he or she deems fit at the time.

The minister will also have the authority to issue new regulations around how these remunerations can be made and can make that different across the province, so that a school trustee in one location can earn much more than a school trustee in another. It will set off one region and one group of trustees against another, I'm sure, over time and there will be a whole feeling between trustees in urban and rural Ontario that they're not being the same for potentially doing the same kinds of services in their community. Last but not least, the minister preserves the right to make any changes retroactive for some nine months before today's date. That's the last date on which any of these changes can take place.

I want to tell you about this subsection 11.1(1) under section 4, where "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations prescribing, respecting and governing the duty of boards, so as to further and promote the provincial interest." If we go down through those, there are about six or seven of them, where the Lieutenant Governor in Council can now tell the boards what to do. I'm not going to read all of these because they are kind of in government legalese, but one of the first ones will be to regulate "to ensure the board's funds and other resources" are spent wisely or "are applied." This is questioning the whole competency of the board system in Ontario. The government will be able to step in whenever they think the boards are not spending their money wisely and well.

We all decried that activity when it took place under the previous government. We decried it in Toronto, when a supervisor was brought in, we decried it in Ottawa and we decried it in Hamilton. I would think that should this government use this particular section to do the same, there will be a hue and cry again. I wonder why the government put it in.

There is another section here that allows the Lieutenant Governor in Council to "adopt and implement measures specified in the regulation to ensure that the board achieves student outcomes specified in the regulation." I can't think of anything else this could possibly

be used for but to tighten further the noose of standardized education. I don't know what else it could possibly mean and I don't know why it's in there. It will take away the authority of boards to make this decision and further standardize the type of education that is made centrally and is decided here in Toronto. Having lived my whole life in this city, I like to think of it as the centre of the universe, but I think I'm mature enough to know that it is not, and that there are parts of Ontario where the education we provide here is simply not what they need to learn.

I can think of nothing more different than my experience in talking to a group of students in Peawanuck last week. We were talking about this government and this Legislature, Bisson and I, and they weren't too interested. But when we started talking about hunting, and we started talking about their families and what they were learning about putting up blinds to shoot goose, and talking about fishing and talking about a whole other thing which was a world apart from me, that too is what they were learning in their school. That was more important to them, and probably rightly so, than our trying to tell them how 103 people sit around this Legislature and talk about stuff. So I am very reluctant to have those kinds of decisions made in this Legislature. I think the local community should make them, and the local school boards.

The next one that sort of bothered me a little was, "adopt and implement measures specified in the regulation to encourage involvement by parents of pupils of the board in education matters specified in the regulation." We already have those. We call them parent councils. I don't know what this is doing in here, but it allows the Lieutenant Governor in Council to regulate those parent councils and to tell those parent councils what they can look at and what they can in fact, in reality, say and comment upon. It's free speech. They can probably say anything they want. But to actually have an impact—this seeks to circumscribe that somehow, and I have no idea. My learned friend opposite is showing that that can make them say and do more, but I doubt that; I really doubt that. You don't need to put it in regulation. People will naturally say whatever they want to say, and where it is put into legislation it almost always shrinks those rights, because without putting it in legislation, people are free to say and do virtually anything they want.

We have here "adopt and implement measures specified in the regulation with respect to the provision of special education services by the board." The one that comes readily to mind is that of English as a second language. I know there are many services, but ESL—we know that the funds for ESL have been shrinking in places like Toronto. We certainly have complaints about ESL shrinking, especially for people who are not of school age, for new immigrants who are coming forward, trying to learn English. It is my belief that they have every bit as much right to the school system as children do. We have seen that. I don't know what this is there

for, I have to tell you, because I have no choice once this bill is passed. The Lieutenant Governor in Council will have entire choice on this section, and I fear it's going to further circumscribe the board's role to be able to adequately look after programs like ESL, particularly ESL for adults.

1730

The next one is a beauty: "adopt and implement measures specified in the regulation to promote the health of the board's pupils." Is this to deal with the obesity problem of our children?

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: It could be. I'm hearing that. Okay, that's to deal with the obesity problem. So the cabinet is going to make regulations telling the school boards, "You're no longer involved. We're going to decide whether or not the children are obese. School A over here has too many fat kids. School B over here has fewer fat kids. We are going to regulate this board because you have too many fat kids." That's what I'm hearing—my learned friend opposite is shaking his head in the affirmative—and this troubles me. We all have to be worried about the problem of obesity, we all have to worry that kids aren't getting enough exercise, but here it is left to the Lieutenant Governor in Council, 20 people sitting in this room, to determine whether or not it is appropriate or whether or not one school board has an obesity problem.

Then I look down at the next one: "adopt and implement measures specified in the regulation to promote the safety of the board's pupils and staff." The first thing that came to my mind was the no-tolerance policies of many of the boards. Is this to tell the boards that they have to get out of the no-tolerance policy or is this to tell them they have to make it even tougher? The fact is that we don't know, and we'll never know. The day I'll know about it is when the regulation is published in the Gazette and the minister and/or the cabinet makes the decision and tells us, "This is the way it's going to be." This Legislature will have no say whatsoever in that, because once this bill is passed and once the majority has their way—when I'm finished speaking—that's precisely the power you're giving to one individual or to 20 individuals, and I have some very real problems with that. I have some very real problems because I think the local school boards, in conjunction with the parents and the communities, are in a far better way to know whether or not there is a zero tolerance policy, whether kids ought to be allowed back into the school, whether there should be an opportunity or alternative places for them to go if there is a violent nature. All of that needs to be looked at.

We know what happened with the last government. The zero tolerance policy has had a huge detrimental effect on people in the inner city. It's had a huge detrimental effect on children of colour. It's had a huge detrimental effect on poorer communities. We have seen in some school boards where 30%, 40% and 50% of the kids have been subject to discipline under this policy.

Mr. McMeekin: We need zero tolerance for poverty.

Mr. Prue: He said, "We need zero tolerance for poverty," and I agree with the honourable member. Perhaps he should be over here more often fighting for it instead of defending it there.

Last but not least in the things that troubled me was in the next clause, 11.1(3)(a), which is to "specify outcomes for elementary school pupils relating to improved literacy and numeracy." The only thing I can think about here is EQAO. That's what it has to be, but again I have no idea. Once this regulation is passed, the minister and the cabinet can do whatever they want. It isn't that they're going to get rid of it, because it would be very simple to have put that in the legislation. It is that they can define it, they can change it, they can alter it, they can make it worse, they can make it better, and I have no way of controlling that, nor does anyone else in this Legislature. We are fundamentally giving up the right to a group of either one or 20 individuals to do, right now, what this Legislature has done or, right now, what an entire school board system across this province has taken upon itself. I think this is a detrimental step. In spite of what is contained in the rest of the legislation, in spite of what I have said are some good provisions of this legislation, what is contained in this particular section causes me considerable grief.

Just to close, again—I promise that I'm going to get people out of here. Subsection 11.1(1) says, "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations prescribing, respecting and governing the duties of boards, so as to further and promote the provincial interest in education."

That's what this is all about; that's what this bill is all about. It is about centralizing and taking away the rights of our duly elected people across this province to do what is in the best interests of their local community and the children who live there. Whether or not a better job is going to be done here around the cabinet table than is being done in all the local communities, only time will tell. I am afraid that it will not be, because no one sitting here in Toronto can know what it's like in Oxford or in Haliburton or in Peawanuk. They can't know what it's like in Ancaster; they can't know what it's like in Markham. The people I'm seeing here cannot know every single neighbourhood and every single community, the wants and desires of the people who live there. We are giving up something that has been very precious and has worked very well for over 100 years in Ontario.

I cannot support the bill because I don't know in the long term who the minister is going to be. I don't know whether you're even going to be in government a year from now. But this bill will be here. Remember that. Anyone who becomes the minister can use this bill, and any cabinet can use this bill to shape education in a way that—people over there think they know what's going to happen, but anyone who takes power in this province will have the full authority that is being granted here today. This is extremely nebulous and in the long term can do a great deal of harm to the children of this province.

The Acting Speaker: Question and comments?

Mr. Berardinetti: I want to commend the member from Beaches–East York for a thorough criticism of the bill. I think there are some questions that only time will tell, whether or not these sections of the bill and these changes that are being proposed will work. But the government is bringing forward a vision. It wants to look at four main themes: teaching excellence, new responsibilities for the boards and the ministry, partnerships in education based on respect, and openness to the public.

I just want to mention that I recently had a conversation with a restaurant owner in my riding who has been there for a long time. I know my colleague Bas Balkissoon knows him as well. His name is Jack Mandos. Jack was saying to me the other day, “Lorenzo, what are you doing about students? What are you doing about the young people of Ontario? What are you doing to help and promote education as an MPP?” I know he’s watching right now because we watch these debates and takes a lot of interest in what’s happening in Ontario. Jack Mandos would want to know, what are we doing?

We’re bringing forward a bill that is doing a lot to try to reach targets and goals that this government agreed it wanted to do before it got elected. The government wants to reach a target of 75% of 12-year-olds achieving the provincial standard by the year 2008, which is not that far down the road. It wants 85% of high school students graduating by 2010. Those are key goals and this bill helps to achieve that.

Also, more than two million students across the province are benefiting from an unprecedented four-year period of peace and stability and enhanced teaching excellence. We don’t have the fights we used to have and used to see on TV all the time between the province and the teachers. There’s peace and hopefully growth that will come from this bill.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I’m pleased to have a couple of minutes to comment on the speech from the member from Beaches–East York. I note that our education critic spoke earlier in the day, and he had an opportunity to get on the record that the former member from Muskoka, Ken Black, just in the recent week wrote an article on this very bill, on the issue of giving control of the college of teachers over to the teachers’ federation. He writes from a very unique perspective. First of all, he’s a former Liberal MPP from Muskoka, back in the Peterson government. Before that, though, he was my principal at Bracebridge and Muskoka Lakes Secondary School. Before that, I believe he also taught.

He has written a very good article. He’s basically saying that the government should not pass this bill and that it’s very important that the college of teachers remain independent. I think that from that unique perspective it really points out why we, in the opposition, feel we cannot support this bill. It’s going to be a bad thing for the kids of this province and is not going to help anyone, except perhaps the union.

I note that at the end of his article he says, “There will be those who will criticize the McGuinty government for

breaking another election promise if they fail to pass Bill 78 as written. I believe that far worse than breaking an election promise is keeping a promise that is not in the best interests of the people the government is elected to serve. As written, Bill 78 is in that category....”

We will be voting against this bill. I note that three past education ministers from all three parties feel the same way.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions and comments? Response?

Mr. Prue: I had hoped it might have elicited a little more response than that, but I will thank the member from Scarborough Southwest and the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka for their comments.

The member from Scarborough Southwest talked about the bill, and that only time will tell, and I’m sure it’s true of any bill as to how it’s going to unfold, but he did not deny, and I thank him for that, the possibility that, once encumbered, once taken over by the cabinet, once the Lieutenant Governor in Council has control of it, it could head literally in any direction.

That’s the point I was trying to make and what I was trying to reiterate, that it could literally take any direction. It will be outside the bounds of this Legislature to try to give effect, or to try to say, “All we can do in the opposition is criticize when something goes wrong.” But it is the making of the bill itself that gives the greatest opportunity for all members of the House to have input into how and the ways in which we are governed.

What we are doing by virtue of this bill is ceding that responsibility to a small group of men and women who are within a cabinet at any given time. We know that cabinets change, we know that governments change, but this bill will not, and how it is used by those small groups of people will no longer be within our realm to negotiate, and it will certainly be outside of the realm to negotiate of the ordinary parents and students and school boards in this province, because what is being taken over is fundamental to the school boards and the way they have operated for a long time.

I am very, very sad that we do not have faith in our school boards, in the people who run them and in the process that has served us so well for all these years. All I can do is tell you that I don’t think I can vote for this when it comes to a vote in a couple of minutes, but I’m sure that with the majority it will pass.

The Acting Speaker: Any further debate? Reply by the minister?

Mr. Peters has moved third reading of Bill 78, An Act to amend the Education Act, the Ontario College of Teachers’ Act, 1996 and certain other statutes relating to education. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1743 to 1813.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Pupatello, Sandra
Balkissoon, Bas	Gerretsen, John	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bentley, Christopher	Jeffrey, Linda	Rinaldi, Lou
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Kular, Kuldip	Ruprecht, Tony
Bradley, James J.	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Leal, Jeff	Smitherman, George
Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	McMeekin, Ted	Van Bommel, Maria
Dhillon, Vic	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wong, Tony C.
Duguid, Brad	Oraziotti, David	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Peterson, Tim	Zimmer, David

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please rise.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Marchese, Rosario	Scott, Laurie
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Klees, Frank	Prue, Michael	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 36; the nays are 8.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

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

It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday, June 5, 2006, at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 1816.

Continued from overleaf

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Jeudi 1^{er} juin 2006

AFFAIRES D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC ÉMANANT DES DÉPUTÉS

Loi de 2006 modifiant le Code de la route (limites de vitesse), projet de loi 115, <i>M^{me} Scott</i> Adoptée.....	4251
--	-------------

PREMIÈRE LECTURE

Loi de 2006 modifiant des lois en ce qui a trait à la protection contre l'incendie, projet de loi 120, <i>M. Prue</i> Adoptée	4254
--	-------------

DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Mois de sensibilisation à la surdi-cécité	
<i>M^{me} Meilleur</i>	4254
<i>M^{me} Witmer</i>	4256

TROISIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 2006 modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne l'éducation (rendement des élèves), projet de loi 78, <i>M^{me} Papatello</i> Adoptée.....	4286
---	-------------

CONTENTS

Thursday 1 June 2006

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Ontario character

Mr. Wong.....	4235, 4242
Mr. Klees	4236
Mr. Kormos	4238
Mr. Ruprecht.....	4238
Ms. Scott.....	4239
Mr. Prue.....	4239
Mr. Leal	4241
Mr. Brownell	4241
Agreed to	4250

Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Speed Limiters), 2006, Bill 115,

<i>Ms. Scott</i>	
Ms. Scott.....	4242, 4250
Mr. Ruprecht.....	4244
Mr. Hardeman.....	4245
Mr. Prue.....	4246
Mr. McNeely	4248
Mr. O'Toole.....	4249
Agreed to	4251

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Kids' Fishing Day

Mr. Ouellette.....	4251
--------------------	------

Italian National Day

Mr. Sergio.....	4251
-----------------	------

Pharmacists

Mr. O'Toole.....	4251
------------------	------

Events in Chatham-Kent Essex

Mr. Hoy	4252
---------------	------

Child care

Mrs. Munro.....	4252
-----------------	------

Volunteers

Mr. Parsons.....	4252
------------------	------

Forest industry

Mr. Bisson	4253
------------------	------

Tetyana Rogolska

Mr. Wong.....	4253
---------------	------

Tobacco industry

Mr. Craitor.....	4253
------------------	------

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

Standing committee on justice policy

Mr. Dhillon	4254
Report adopted.....	4254

FIRST READINGS

Fire Protection Statute Law

Amendment Act, 2006, Bill 120,

Mr. Prue

Agreed to	4254
Mr. Prue	4254

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

Deaf-Blind Awareness Month

Mrs. Meilleur.....	4254
Mrs. Witmer.....	4256

Injured Workers' Day

Mr. Peters	4255
Mrs. Witmer	4256
Ms. Horwath.....	4257

ORAL QUESTIONS

Air quality

Mr. O'Toole	4258
Mr. Duncan	4258

Street racing

Mr. Klees.....	4258
Mrs. Cansfield.....	4259

Child care

Mr. Hampton.....	4259
Mrs. Chambers.....	4259, 4262
Mrs. Van Bommel.....	4262

Ontario Immigrant Investor Corp.

Mr. Hampton.....	4260
Mr. Cordiano.....	4260, 4265
Mr. Klees.....	4265

Native land dispute

Mr. Runciman	4261
Mr. Phillips.....	4261

Injured workers

Ms. Horwath.....	4262
Mr. Peters	4262

Waste diversion

Ms. Scott	4263
Ms. Broten.....	4263

Child protection

Ms. Horwath.....	4263
Mrs. Chambers.....	4264

Community safety

Mr. Racco.....	4264
Mr. Kwinter.....	4264

Education funding

Mr. Marchese	4265
Ms. Pupatello.....	4265

Arts education

Mrs. Mitchell.....	4266
Ms. Di Cocco	4266
Ms. Pupatello.....	4266

Fish and wildlife program funding

Mr. Miller.....	4266
Mr. Phillips.....	4267

PETITIONS

Passport office

Mr. Tascona.....	4267
------------------	------

Trade development

Mr. Leal	4267
Mr. Kular	4268

Long-term care

Mrs. Witmer.....	4267
------------------	------

Teachers' labour dispute

Mr. Miller	4268
------------------	------

Child care

Mr. Berardinetti	4268, 4270
------------------------	------------

Gasoline prices

Mr. Tascona	4268
-------------------	------

Rent regulation

Mr. Berardinetti	4269
------------------------	------

Spring bear hunt

Mr. Arnott.....	4269
-----------------	------

Non-profit housing

Ms. Wynne.....	4269
----------------	------

Speech and language services

Mr. Hardeman.....	4269
-------------------	------

THIRD READINGS

Education Statute Law Amendment Act (Student Performance), 2006,

Bill 78, *Ms. Pupatello*

Mr. Klees	4270, 4277
Ms. Horwath	4276, 4278, 4282
Mr. Leal	4277
Mrs. Witmer.....	4277
Mr. Berardinetti	4277, 4281, 4285
Ms. Scott.....	4281
Mr. Prue.....	4281, 4282, 4285
Mr. McMeekin.....	4281
Mr. Miller	4285
Agreed to	4286

OTHER BUSINESS

Visitors

The Speaker	4253, 4257
Mr. Berardinetti	4268

Business of the House

Mr. Caplan	4270
------------------	------

Continued overleaf