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of Ontario
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de l'Ontario
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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 3 October 2006

Mardi 3 octobre 2006

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 3 October 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 3 octobre 2006

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Three years of broken promises are hurting Ontario's economy. It seems that not a month goes by in this province without there being a slew of layoff and plant closure announcements. September was no different when it was announced that scores of workers in the auto sector will be laid off in the coming months: Sterling Truck in St. Thomas laid off 600 people; International Truck in Chatham laid off 500 people; Wallaceburg Preferred Partners laid off 250 people; Accuride in London laid off 40 people; Dura Automotive Systems in Stratford laid off 280 people; Dana Corp., St. Marys, laid off 100; Tower Automotive in Toronto closed, 180 people out of work; Dana Corp., Barrie, closed, 90 people out of work; and of course, Ford's Essex engine plant in Windsor has announced its closure, with 700 people losing their jobs. That's 2,700 jobs in the month of September alone.

Ontario has lost close to 90,000 manufacturing jobs since the beginning of 2005. Ontario is rapidly becoming a non-competitive jurisdiction with jobs flowing out of the province to the US, to other provinces and even to China.

It is quite clear that the situation in the manufacturing sector is getting worse under the McGuinty Liberals. They have no plan other than to announce, reannounce and reannounce again the small successes they have stumbled across, hoping that Ontarians won't notice.

Not that we are surprised: After three years of broken promises, Dalton McGuinty will say anything—anything at all—to get re-elected.

THORNHILL JOB FAIR

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): Job creation has been a priority of the McGuinty government since day one. I am proud of the fact that 268,000 net new jobs have been created in Ontario since October 2003.

In my riding of Thornhill, where job opportunities are plentiful, local businesses are in need of workers. This is why I decided to organize a Thornhill job fair. After several months of planning and organization, the first Future-Focused Thornhill Job Fair took place on September 21 at the Promenade Mall. In total, we had 20

vendors participate in the job fair, representing a variety of companies and employment sectors, including Tim Hortons, York Regional Police and the YMCA, among others.

Hundreds of people either participated in the job fair or acknowledged the service we were providing to the community. The response was even greater than expected, and many businesses had to be turned away. In order to accommodate everyone, we intend to hold another job fair in the future.

I would like to thank the Promenade Mall for kindly hosting the event. I would also like to thank the businesses that participated in the job fair, as well as all the volunteers and community members who helped make this event possible.

The McGuinty government has increased net new jobs in the last three years by 268,000. That's quite an achievement. We are pleased, and I'm certainly pleased, to see so many jobs available in Thornhill.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): With a year and a day until the next provincial election, people throughout Ontario are getting ready to cast their verdict on the Liberal government. Radio station CFRA in Ottawa, a station the Premier avoided visiting or talking to for the first three years, asked its listeners to rate the first three years in office of the McGuinty government. The Premier will be happy to know that of the 2,362 people who responded to the poll, only 36% think he is doing an unsatisfactory job. Unfortunately for the Premier, another 38% of people in Ottawa think he is doing a terrible job.

Maybe people in Ottawa think the Liberal government is doing a bad job because Premier McGuinty will not help with Ottawa's gridlock. Maybe it's because of the increasing wait times at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario. Maybe it's because of the children over six waiting for autism treatment. Maybe it's because of the failure to meet the goal of a 60% diversion rate of municipal garbage.

CFRA's poll is a local report card on the McGuinty government from the Premier's own hometown. It's a failing report card because of the government's record—

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

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. David Oraziotti (Sault Ste. Marie): I'm pleased to rise in the House today to take this opportunity to com-

ment on the continued effort of our government to improve and repair transportation infrastructure in Ontario and in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie, after many years of neglect. This past Friday, I had the opportunity to welcome the Minister of Transportation, Donna Cansfield, back to Sault Ste. Marie for the opening of Carmen's Way, a needed truck traffic route linking our International Bridge to the TransCanada highway. After more than 40 years of transports traveling in our downtown core, damaging our city streets, compromising public safety and creating local congestion, our government provided \$5.6 million towards this necessary infrastructure project.

The new truck traffic route will also have positive economic impacts in my riding because it furthers Sault Ste. Marie's position as an attractive alternative border crossing; 130,000 commercial trucks carrying about \$3.5 billion worth of goods now cross our International Bridge every year. That's up 227% in the last 20 years.

Sault Ste. Marie has also been the beneficiary of a number of other investments: \$9 million toward our connecting link road improvement project, \$4.7 million through the Move Ontario program for roads and bridges, \$1.4 million in new provincial gas tax funding and \$1.4 million in COMRIF funding for local road improvements.

The McGuinty government is delivering better, safer highways, roads, bridges and public transportation across Ontario. These investments continue to demonstrate our unwavering commitment to our municipalities.

1340

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): In many ways, it seems like yesterday that Dalton McGuinty was handed the keys to the Premier's limousine, then subsequently immediately tossed his campaign promises right out the window. But unfortunately for Ontario working families and seniors, it's been a long three years of broken promises and weak leadership.

In fact, Dalton McGuinty did his tour yesterday as part of his "Sorry I broke my promises" tour across the province of Ontario, but every time he tried to break with his reputation of broken promises, he was haunted by ghosts of those very same broken promises stop after stop: first at CFRA Radio, where, as my colleague indicated, a poll said that some 74.5% of listeners described the three years of the McGuinty Liberal government as unsatisfactory or terrible.

Second stop: Dunlop Public School, where Dalton was trying to boast about his cap on class sizes. But he has neglected to talk about the hard cap he had promised during the campaign or the important side effect that class sizes for grade 4 and up are heading upwards and not downwards.

Down the 401, school boards are protesting the government's lack of funding for key programs and taking on the new Minister of Education.

Then, importantly, the Ajax hospital: When Dalton was trying to boast about his fictitious new nurses, a real, live flesh-and-blood nurse called the Premier on his broken promise and said that she certainly has not seen any front-line nurses. She said in fact that they're all working in upper management, if anywhere. She basically said his pants were on fire.

Three years of broken promises and weak leadership.

DAVID BREECH

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I rise to salute the Beach Citizen of the Year. Every year, the citizens of our community get together and decide who is the best recipient of the Beach Citizen of the Year award for his or her contribution to the people of the Beach.

This year, the recipient of our own very prestigious award is David Breech. He is best known in the community for the 20 years he has devoted to the East Toronto Baseball Association, but he is also a leader at the local Scout troop. He's active in St. John's Roman Catholic church and the Beach Interfaith Outreach Committee. He does work for St. John's Catholic parents' council. He's on the Kimberly school council. He does the yearly Spring Sprint, the race along the Beach and the boardwalk. He is active in Centre 55's Share A Christmas and helps with the jazz festival. That's what one guy does in the Beach.

The devotion to the people of the Beach—the devotion to the children especially and the future citizens—is unparalleled. I ask all citizens to join with us at the Millennium Gardens at Coxwell and Eastern Avenues on Saturday, October 14, at 1 p.m. We salute the newest recipient of the Beach Citizen of the Year award and we induct our newest citizen at the same time. Congratulations to David Breech.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I rise in the House today to speak about the progress this government has achieved in just three short years in health care.

That progress is even more impressive if you remember where we started. The previous government cut \$557 million from hospitals, closed 28 public hospitals and eliminated 5,000 hospital beds in their first two years alone. That was after the government before them cut \$268 million from hospitals and closed 8,000 hospital beds.

On the other hand, the McGuinty government has demonstrated its commitment to the health care of Ontarians by increasing funding for hospitals by over \$2.2 billion. We've also funded over 5,000 full-time nursing positions, increased the number of first-year medical school spaces by 23% and more than doubled the number of training spots for international medical graduates. We're also on track to open over 150 family health teams and we have doubled the number of community health

centres so that Ontarians can receive the health care they need closer to home.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): How's it working?

Mr. Duguid: A member asks, "How's it working?" Let me tell you, in my own riding, the Minister of Health has been there two times in the last two weeks: once to break ground on a \$57-million new emergency and critical care wing, another to create a brand new community health centre. On top of that, we're also funding a community health team in my own riding, as we're doing right across the province.

I'm proud to remind all members of this House of this great record that our—

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

KOREAN NATIONAL FOUNDATION DAY

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): Today, Korean nationals and Korean Canadians are celebrating a special day: Korea's National Foundation Day. As we raised this very special flag today, we were reminded by the Consul General of Korea of the very deep religious significance of their flag—the yin and the yang, fire, Earth, heaven and water. The very positive and negative influences of humanity are all reflected in this flag. We were delighted to raise it today.

I want to remind members that, unlike Canadians who experienced a fairly easy progression towards independence, Koreans had a tremendous experience in terms of their own pain, and the destructive ability of the North Korean forces. I want to remind all members today that there were 20,000 Canadian soldiers who stood arm-in-arm next to Koreans to fight for democracy and independence. What did these Koreans really want? They wanted to ensure that they had their own independence, they wanted to structure their own future, and they wanted to determine their own destiny.

That's why today, while we are reminded of this flag, we want to ensure we are with Koreans as they pass on the torch of freedom from one generation to the next. We are also reminded of the great and very important contributions Koreans made in this country. That's why we are proud today to maintain independence and freedom. Thank you.

CLASS SIZE

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): "Smaller Class Sizes Will Eventually Pay Off: Provincial initiative makes sense." That is the editorial in the Mitchell Advocate, a daily paper in my riding, and I quote—

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): It's your column.

Mr. Wilkinson: I'll tell that to Andy Bader.

This is the editorial: "It makes perfect sense that smaller class sizes for elementary school students, in the primary age group at least, will be a benefit to their future learning.

"The lesser the number of pupils for a teacher to look after, the greater the chance of pinpointing students' strengths and weaknesses at an age where specialized help, or before problems linger, can be found.

"Seems reasonable, doesn't it?"

"And this is what the Dalton McGuinty provincial government is trying to do."

I go on further. "Locally, the Avon Maitland District School Board reported that 19 schools have directly benefited and 20.8 teachers have been added to reduce class size, while the Huron–Perth Catholic District School Board reported that five schools have directly benefited....

"Educators are noticing the improvement.

"It is working very well for our young students," said Janet Jamison, principal of St. Marys Central Public School, where Wilkinson—I think they're referring to me—"paid a visit last week. 'We know they will benefit from smaller class sizes and additional teaching staff and we're confident that we will see improved student achievement.'

"Time will tell, of course," says the editorial, "but it looks as if things are on the right path."

The choices you make as a government send a quick and important message. We are not the NDP who ripped up contracts, and we are not the—

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

RESIGNATION OF MEMBER

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I beg to inform the House that a vacancy has occurred in the membership of the House by reason of the resignation of Cam Jackson as member of the electoral district of Burlington, effective September 29, 2006.

ANNUAL REPORT, ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER OF ONTARIO

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table the 2005-06 annual report of the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LONG-TERM CARE HOMES ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR LES FOYERS DE SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

Mr. Smitherman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 140, An Act respecting long-term care homes /
Projet de loi 140, Loi concernant les foyers de soins de
longue durée.

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

Does the minister wish to make a brief statement?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I will defer to ministerial statements.

1350

PATIENT-TO-DOCTOR RATIO ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR LE RAPPORT ENTRE
PATIENTS ET MÉDECINS

Mr. Martiniuk moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 141, An Act to establish a yearly target for the patient-to-doctor ratio / Projet de loi 141, Loi établissant un rapport cible annuel entre patients et médecins.

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

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): Today, there are 1.2 million men, women and children in Ontario without a family doctor, and unfortunately, it's going to get worse. As the most famous catcher in baseball, Yogi Berra, once said, "You've got to be very careful if you don't know where you're going, because you might not get there." Well, that aptly describes the McGuinty government's lack of plan and vision to solve the doctor shortage. They truly don't know where they're going.

This bill forces the government to address this crisis by establishing an absolute minimum number of doctors required to service Ontario patients. The patient-to-doctor ratio bill forces governments to meet the target, for if they do not, all cabinet ministers would take a reduction in pay for that year.

Every person in Ontario is entitled to the services of a family doctor.

TRANSPARENCY IN
PUBLIC MATTERS ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE
DES QUESTIONS D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC

Mr. Craitor moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 142, An Act to require that meetings of provincial and municipal boards, commissions and other public bodies be open to the public / Projet de loi 142, Loi exigeant que les réunions des commissions et conseils provinciaux et municipaux et d'autres organismes publics soient ouvertes au public.

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. Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): Today, I'm pleased to introduce a bill entitled Transparency in Public Matters Act, 2006. My bill designates and requires these designated public bodies to give reasonable notice of their meetings and ensure that the meetings are open to the public, and public distribution of the minutes in a timely fashion. In addition, my bill establishes a procedure to make a complaint to the Information and

Privacy Commissioner and authorizes the commissioner to make certain orders of review, including an order that voids a decision made at a meeting that did not conform with the requirements of the bill. My bill will include, as well, the parks commission, municipally owned hydro utility companies, CCACs and other bodies designated under the act.

Finally, this proposed bill will make public bodies more transparent and reinforces the concept that the public have a right to know how and why their money is being spent.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the membership of a certain committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Bradley is asking for unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the membership of a certain committee. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that the following substitution be made to the membership of a committee: on the standing committee on government agencies, Ms. DiNovo replaces Mr. Bisson.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Bradley seeks unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following change be made to the ballot list of private members' public business: Ms. DiNovo and Mr. Bisson exchange places in order of precedence in order that Ms. DiNovo assumes ballot item 57 and Mr. Bisson assumes ballot item 77.

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

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Now the motion that the House leader of the

third party is waiting for: I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Tuesday, October 3, 2006, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion number 186. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say “aye.”

All those opposed will say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1358 to 1403.

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

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Pupatello, Sandra
Arthurs, Wayne	Hoy, Pat	Racco, Mario G.
Balkissoon, Bas	Hudak, Tim	Ramal, Khalil
Bartolucci, Rick	Jeffrey, Linda	Rinaldi, Lou
Bradley, James J.	Kwinter, Monte	Runciman, Robert W.
Bryant, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Ruprecht, Tony
Cansfield, Donna H.	Levac, Dave	Sandals, Liz
Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Scott, Laurie
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Martiniuk, Gerry	Sergio, Mario
Chudleigh, Ted	Matthews, Deborah	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Mauro, Bill	Smitherman, George
Craitor, Kim	McNeely, Phil	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Delaney, Bob	Miller, Norm	Takhar, Harinder S.
Di Cocco, Caroline	Mitchell, Carol	Tory, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Van Bommel, Maria
Duguid, Brad	O'Toole, John	Watson, Jim
Dunlop, Garfield	Oraziotti, David	Wilkinson, John
Elliott, Christine	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Fonseca, Peter	Patten, Richard	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Gerretsen, John	Peters, Steve	Yakabuski, John
Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry	

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

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Murdoch, Bill
DiNovo, Cheri	Marchese, Rosario	Prue, Michael
Horwath, Andrea	Martel, Shelley	Tabuns, Peter

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 62; the nays are 9.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

LONG-TERM CARE

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Today I would like to start by welcoming a lot of people in the various galleries who have worked hard on the issue of long-term care: staff from the ministry and, in our other galleries, Maureen Hutchinson, who is the new president of the Ontario Association of Residents' Councils; Pat Prentice from the residents' councils; Lois Dent of

Concerned Friends of Ontario Citizens in Care Facilities; Judith Wahl of the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly; Barbara Leja from Family Councils; Kathy Dingwell and JoAnn Stephan of the Activity Professionals of Ontario; Donna Rubin from OANHSS; Karen Sullivan from OLTCA; Sandra Pitters from the city of Toronto Homes for the Aged. They all share a dedication to providing care for our loved ones in long-term care, and we welcome them all. Thank you for being here.

It is with very great pride that I rise in my place to tell my colleagues about the latest step our government is taking to ensure that the residents of long-term-care homes in Ontario are treated with the dignity and compassion they deserve.

The Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2006, will, if passed, replace the three different statutes that currently govern the system, but it will do oh so much more than that. The act is the cornerstone of our strategy to ensure the best possible level of care for residents of this province's 618 long-term-care homes, and if passed, it will make Ontario a leader in protecting the rights of long-term-care residents. Our proposed resident bill of rights would be the most extensive and comprehensive, providing greater protection than any other jurisdiction in Canada.

It will ensure, once and for all—and the name of the legislation was chosen very deliberately to reflect this—that our parents and grandparents can enter long-term care knowing they are going into homes, not facilities. That distinction was born in my mind three years ago, very soon after we came to office, and there was a flurry of media reports chronicling the absolutely unacceptable conditions at certain long-term-care facilities. And make no mistake, these were facilities, not homes.

We determined at that time that we had a mission: that there was going to have to be a revolution in long-term care to ensure that the word “facilities” in association with our grandparents', our parents' and other loved ones' living was going to be history. The word was going to be history, the mindset was going to be history and the conditions associated with the word and the mindset would be history as well.

My colleagues might wonder, are we there yet? Have we replaced facilities with homes? No, not completely. The revolution we began in long-term care isn't done yet, but together with our partners in long-term care, we have accomplished a great deal and today we take another step forward.

We launched our long-term-care consultation/action plan back in January 2004. Monique Smith, my parliamentary assistant, travelled far and wide in this province to learn more about long-term care: what was working and what wasn't, what was urgent and what needed to be done but could wait, perhaps, a little while longer.

I want to take this opportunity to bring to my colleagues' attention the extraordinary work that Monique has done on this province's behalf. She has been unfailing in her commitment and unwavering in her determination to make things better for long-term-care residents.

The bill I am talking about today is very much a tribute to her great work, and we thank her for it

During the course of her consultations, Monique heard from administrators and residents, from countless different members of Ontario's long-term-care community about their views on how to improve the system. Out of all that came her May 2004 report, *Commitment to Care: A Plan for Long-Term Care in Ontario*. That plan was to be a blueprint for our long-term-care revolution. In response:

—We hired 3,140 new staff in our long-term-care homes, including 682 new nurses.

—We launched a public website to allow Ontario seniors, their families and anyone else with an interest in long-term care to access information about homes and their record of care. Every day this website gets 160 visitors who are looking for information about our initiatives on long-term care and, more to the point, about the quality of care in various homes.

1410

—We introduced a toll-free action line for people to get information or register a concern or a complaint. That line has received 9,476 calls and, of those, almost 2,500 have been sent to the regions for follow-up or investigation.

—Ministry inspectors have begun surprise annual inspections because you know that if people know you're coming, they tend to sweep whatever they can under the rug.

—We mandated residents' councils and strongly encourage family councils so folks who live in these homes and their families can have a say in how they're operated. Speaker, you and I have a say in how things are done where we live; we have for almost our whole lives. Is there some reason that we should stop when we reach a certain age and move into a long-term-care home?

—Finally, we introduced a regulation to allow couples to live together in the same home even if they require different levels of care. I've always thought that one a bit of a no-brainer, but apparently we were the first to think of it.

All of which brings us to today, Speaker, and the introduction of this extremely important bill. Let me give you, and through you my colleagues, a few highlights.

If the Long-Term Care Homes Act is passed, there will be zero tolerance—and I do mean zero tolerance—of abuse and neglect of residents. Any—and I do mean any—abuse or neglect that occurs must be reported, and there will be whistle-blower protection in place to ensure that the people doing the reporting don't have to worry about any retaliation.

It will be entrenched in law that a registered nurse must be on duty in the home 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

There will be detailed and comprehensive provisions to minimize the use of restraints on residents, so they are only used when absolutely necessary and only with proper safeguards in place.

There will be tighter and more consistent reporting requirements for long-term-care home operators. Clear

requirements for the proper training and orientation of long-term-care staff and volunteers will be put into place.

We will introduce a system of licensing that gives us better control of where beds are located and ensures that the issuing of a licence would be dependent upon the competency of the proposed operator. Licences could be revoked at any time for non-compliance, because quality of care is what this is all about.

In drafting the legislation, we took into account the opinions expressed by more than 700 Ontarians in response to *Future Directions for Legislation Governing Long-Term Care Homes*, which was a discussion paper we released in November 2004. Those opinions and suggestions were as varied as they were helpful, but they absolutely had one thing in common: They reflected a deep and abiding commitment to see the residents of long-term-care homes in Ontario live with dignity, in the comfort and safety that all of us would want for our parents, for our friends, for our children and for ourselves. That only makes sense because that stage of life comes to all of us.

Surely we have an obligation to ensure that we all, regardless of our wealth, our situation or our station in life, are able to live our declining years without feeling that society no longer cares or has passed us by, without feeling that somehow at a certain age the notion of society no longer applies to us. That's the culture of long-term care that we are determined to build in this province.

The Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2006, is a critical part of our plan for doing that. I'm sure that when all members of this House study the act and think about what it accomplishes, they will pass this into law. It's the right thing to do for our seniors and other residents of our long-term-care homes. I thank everyone for the work they've done to date, and for the opportunity to bring this forward for debate.

SMALL BUSINESS

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship): I am pleased to inform the Legislature about the important steps our government is taking to support small businesses in Ontario.

The McGuinty government places a high value on the outstanding contributions made by small business and its hard-working entrepreneurs. Ninety-nine per cent of businesses in Ontario are small and medium-sized. We define SMEs as having less than 500 employees in their organization. Half of Ontarians work for these firms, and many of these firms succeed bolstered by a highly skilled workforce. So it's easy to understand why innovation, investment and job creation are thriving across the province.

This government champions the entrepreneurial spirit that drives economic prosperity. We have taken key steps to ensure this continues. The McGuinty government established for the first time a ministry devoted solely to the needs of small business. I am proud to lead the Ontario Ministry of Small Business and Entrepreneurship

and set a direction on how we can accelerate small business growth and success.

One of the first things I announced as minister was an additional investment of \$10 million over three years to support the long-term growth of Ontario's VQA wine industry. This should help make wine producers and grape growers become more competitive.

We have also provided \$673,000 through youth entrepreneurship partnerships to create a culture of entrepreneurship among Ontario youth.

In July, we launched our ministry's new website for small business owners and entrepreneurs. I encourage everyone to visit www.sbe.gov.on.ca to learn about the many exciting opportunities that lie ahead for entrepreneurs to grow their business and succeed. It provides a wealth of information and connections to people and resources that can help them be successful, such as Service Ontario, which provides small businesses with one-stop access to government information and services online, in person and by phone; 44 small business enterprise centres in 53 locations across the province which assist small entrepreneurs to start and grow businesses; and the Small Business Agency of Ontario, which works hard to reduce the paperwork burden faced by small business entrepreneurs. The goal of our government is to save entrepreneurs time and money so they can concentrate on being successful, productive and innovative. That means more jobs and prosperity for Ontario.

This summer I toured the province and met with small and medium-sized business owners, executives and organizations. I also met many of our students participating in our summer company program, where they get their first crack at establishing and running their own businesses. In fact, we accepted 370 students into this year's summer company program, and that is a record in itself. I can assure the people of this province that youth entrepreneurship is alive and well here in Ontario. Our young people have the talent, energy and ideas to make the province grow and prosper. They are our future, and the future is now.

Our government plans to build on our efforts with new initiatives that are being planned as I speak. We are developing a comprehensive one-stop-shop website to give small business owners and entrepreneurs valuable information to help them start and grow successful businesses. Our paper burden reduction initiative will move ahead. The goal is to eliminate obsolete government paper forms and convert streamlined and relevant forms for easy access online. We want to extend value-added experience for student entrepreneurs through a pilot program known as future global entrepreneurs. We want to send post-secondary students to experience how international business operates through international placements and to understand why Ontario's role in the global marketplace is critical to our prosperity.

We also want to give and improve opportunities for small businesses to sell their products to government, and start a women's entrepreneurship conference and mentoring program, given the increasingly important role women are taking in contributing to Ontario's economy.

We have lots to celebrate in Ontario, and during October we are celebrating Salute to Small Business Month. We want to recognize the outstanding contributions small business owners and entrepreneurs make every day. It is also an opportunity to inform entrepreneurs about the programs our government has designed to help them succeed.

Our government is celebrating the spirit of Ontario's 340,000 small and medium entrepreneurs and their success. We want all small business owners and operators to feel proud of what they do. I urge everyone to support small businesses in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Statements by the ministry? Responses?

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LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): Today we have the introduction of this new Long-Term Care Homes Act, and it's certainly a disappointment. It's indicative of yet another Liberal broken promise, and it also demonstrates once again that the Liberals are prepared to say anything to get elected, and then of course break their promise afterwards.

Regrettably, we have here today a bill which the minister says will allow residents to live with the dignity, comfort and safety that obviously he intends to say they deserve. I would say to you that this bill does anything but. This bill simply consolidates three acts. It makes different statements about mechanisms that are already in place. There's very little new in the legislation.

For example, it makes reference to the fact that patients are going to have two baths a week—nothing new here. It also makes reference to the fact that there's going to be 24/7 nursing care. Well, there's nothing new here; that was already put in place in January 2005. The reality is that there aren't enough nurses to be hired for the long-term-care facilities. They are only in compliance to the tune of about 92%. So that's something the minister is going to have to fix, and he's also going to have to provide appropriate funding in order that the nurses can provide the care they need.

This does not, however, address a problem that was brought to our attention this past summer. There is no limit on how hot it can be in patients' bedrooms, and this summer, when the heat was up over 30 degrees, we all heard from families whose mothers, fathers and other family members were uncomfortable. There was no responsibility that there be air conditioning. These people were cooking in their beds, and there's nothing that's going to change that fact.

Also, currently, nursing homes spend only \$5.46 on food, while the people in our prisons are allotted about \$11. However—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. There is way too much, as I call it, ambient noise. I need to be able to hear the member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

Mrs. Witmer: However, the broken promise is that the resident councils and family councils that have been set up have been approaching MPPs because this government broke its promise to seniors. They promised in the election that they were going to provide \$6,000 in care for every resident, and they were going to provide an additional 20 minutes. This government has not done so.

This government also is not following through on its commitment to provide new facilities for the residents. They're not continuing with our plan of making sure that residents are accommodated in new facilities. There's no plan here for capital renewal whatsoever. There's not going to be any construction of new homes. There are 36,000 people in this province who are going to continue to live in beds in wards with four people, without a wash-room, without hallways that are wide enough to accommodate them. This is not going to give them dignity. It's not going to do at all what the minister says. There is no plan for the renewal of older homes. Half of them in this province need to be done. We undertook that plan in 1998. We had 20,000 new long-term-care beds, and we renovated all the D beds, which was 16,000. You are not continuing with the plan.

The other thing is the new issue of limited licensing. This will not lead to the construction of new homes. This is untenable for the sector, the lending institutions. It's going to create uncertainty and instability, and it certainly could compromise the financing and the operation of these homes. So for you to say this is going to provide safety and dignity for these residents, definitely it will not.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Ontario's small business sector is an important engine in driving Ontario's economy, but the government of Dalton McGuinty doesn't seem to want to walk the walk. It's too bad. How does the Premier demonstrate his appreciation for small business in Ontario? He breaks his promises. He promised not to raise taxes—broken. He promised to fix the property tax assessment system—broken. He promised to cap electricity prices—broken. He promised to roll back tolls on the 407—broken. He promised to abide by the Taxpayer Protection Act—broken. He promised to govern with honesty and integrity—broken. He promised to close all coal-fired electricity plants by 2007—broken. He promised to hire 8,000 nurses—broken. Broken, broken—

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

The Speaker: Order. The government House leader will come to order.

Responses?

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): The Minister of Health promised to bring in new long-term-care legis-

lation two years ago. I don't know why the government delayed doing so, but I can tell you that New Democrats expect full province-wide public hearings on this bill. And why? Because this bill does not deliver on the single most important promise the Liberals made in the last election to the frail and elderly in our long-term-care homes, and that promise was to guarantee a certain level of hands-on care per resident per day for those who live in our long-term-care homes.

Right now in Ontario there's no standard. There's no law regarding how much hands-on care a resident is entitled to receive. There hasn't been a standard in place since it was cancelled by the Conservatives 10 years ago. Under the New Democrats there was a standard of 2.25 hours of hands-on care per resident per day, and when the Conservatives cancelled that standard, it had a very negative impact on the frail and elderly.

In 2001, PricewaterhouseCoopers compared the levels of care received by residents in Ontario long-term-care homes to residents living in seven other jurisdictions in every category of care: nursing, specific nursing intervention, occupational therapy, behavioural therapy. Residents of Ontario long-term-care homes ranked last every time. That's probably why, in the last election, Dalton McGuinty promised, and I quote: "Ontario Liberals are committed to reinstating the standards of care for nursing homes that were removed by the Harris-Eves government, including minimum 2.25 hours of nursing care daily and three baths per week."

Are there minimum standards of care in this bill? No. Are the Liberals keeping the promise they made to reinstate minimum standards? No. Are the Liberals responding to the coroner's jury recommendation in April 2005 that the minister set and fund a standard of care of no less than 3.06 hours of hands-on care per day? No. The Liberals' standard on hands-on nursing care is the same as the Conservatives': There is no standard. This broken McGuinty Liberal promise will continue to negatively affect the frail and elderly who live in our long-term-care homes, and the government's got to deal with that.

Secondly, where has the government been on the critical issue of zero tolerance of abuse of the frail and elderly in our long-term-care homes? In April 2004 and again in March 2006, New Democrats introduced the Safeguard Our Seniors Act to protect residents in long-term-care homes from abuse. Our bill placed a duty on operators and persons aware of abuse to report it to the Minister of Health. The minister could have an investigation. The minister could refer criminal wrongdoing to the police. The minister could also report that individual to their individual college. Whistle-blowers were also specifically protected. And anyone contravening the act would face an individual fine of \$50,000, and for corporations a \$1-million fine.

On numerous occasions we urged this government to implement the Safeguard our Seniors Act, and the Liberals refused. If you were so concerned about protecting seniors in care, why didn't you bring our bill forward?

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Thirdly, what happened to the promise made by the Minister of Health to establish an independent ombudsman to advocate for long-term care and deal with complaints? At a February 2004 meeting with Gord Moore, provincial president of Ontario Provincial Command, the Royal Canadian Legion, the minister promised to create this position. We confirmed that with Gord Moore again this morning. Is the position of ombudsman created in the bill? No. Is the government giving the current Ombudsman oversight power of long-term-care facilities, as proposed by my colleague Andrea Horwath? No. These are important proposals. They should have made their way into this bill, and they didn't.

Long-term-care homes also need specialized staff, specialized units and funding necessary to care for residents who are violent and aggressive and likely to hurt other residents. This was recommended by a coroner's jury in 2005. Did that commitment make its way into this bill? No. This bill lacks maximum indoor standards regarding temperatures for long-term-care homes. It lacks a requirement, also proposed by the same coroner's jury, that a study be done every three years to determine how our frail and elderly are ranking in terms of the direct care they are receiving in comparison to others living in other jurisdictions. It fails to guarantee that the Liberals will invest in nursing home care, providing an additional \$6,000 in care for every resident—another promise from the last election. We know from the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors that this government has only raised that amount by \$2,000, a far cry and a big shortfall from the promise that you made.

Residents need hands-on care. They need a standard. It's not in this bill. The bill would be better named the No Minimum Standards for Seniors Act.

We demand public hearings on this bill.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery a parliamentary delegation from Gauteng Provincial Legislature in the Republic of South Africa. The delegation is the oversight committee on the Premier's office and the Legislature and is led by Samuel Johannes De Beer, chairperson of the committee.

Please join me in welcoming our guests.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, while you were out on your orgy of self-satisfaction tour, you were asked about the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. I need to be able to hear the Leader of the Opposition place his question.

The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: When you were out on this tour, you were asked about the current emergency room crisis at the Grand River Hospital in Kitchener-Waterloo. You said you were caught off guard. According to the Toronto Star, you said you were surprised at how quickly the problem arose at Grand River.

Premier, the problems at Grand River and nearly 20 other hospitals across the province have not been a secret. In fact, as you well know, last week alone the Grand River problem was specifically raised in this House on September 25 and again on September 28.

Here's the headline of the Kitchener-Waterloo Record of September 20: "Situation Critical: Two Emergency Rooms, but Only Enough Doctors to Fully Staff One." That refers specifically, and you know it, to the problems at Grand River and St. Mary's.

As Premier, how could you possibly have been unaware of the seriousness of this situation? Why would you say that? How could you possibly have been unaware?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Let me take the opportunity to thank all involved who have worked so hard to ensure that we can keep this emergency room open. I want to thank the Minister of Health and the member John Milloy. I want to thank local doctors. I want to thank folks at St. Joe's who have worked very hard to free up their talents and bring their expertise to bear on Grand River.

I want to say as well that we've taken the step of putting the hospital in question on notice that we may very well send in a supervisor. We believe that, working together, we have the situation in hand. Now we look forward to working not just with the folks at Grand River but in other emergency rooms throughout the province, our doctors and hospital administrators, to ensure that we have long-term stability for all of our emergency rooms.

Mr. Tory: The people of that region and other regions across the province will thank you for your inattention to this for months on end on October 4, 2007.

The fact is, you didn't hear the cries for help from Grand River and other communities across this province, from the doctors and nurses, and from the patients who are sitting in those emergency rooms not getting care.

Here's another cry for help from Dr. John Carter of the Kitchener-Waterloo Emergency Medicine Associates quoted in today's Kitchener-Waterloo Record saying, "The reality is without more full-time physicians, we are postponing the inevitable." Yesterday you said, and I quote, "We will need to do more." That is the understatement of the century.

The temporary solution for Grand River, by your own admission, is only going to be in place until Friday. Yesterday, we asked what the plan was beyond Friday. What is the plan beyond Friday specifically? What are

you going to do about it, and when are we going to hear about it here?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I know there would be one interesting fact, as unaccustomed as my friend is to dealing with facts, but there is an important fact here. The Tories cut funding to the Grand River Hospital Corp. by \$11.5 million. So far, our government has increased funding to the same hospital by \$20 million. If there is any indication of which party is most committed to working together with Ontario hospitals, and our emergency room physicians in particular, that says one heck of a lot—\$11.5 million out; \$20 million in. I think that says a lot.

Mr. Tory: Perhaps we should deal with the fact that the member sitting beside me produced a new emergency room for Grand River, and you have allowed it to deteriorate into a state of chaos, with no staff and no resources to run it. Not only that, but there are 19 other hospitals in the province facing issues with their emergency rooms over the past couple of months.

The Ontario Medical Association has a list: Quinte Health Centre in Belleville; Guelph General Hospital; Kirkland and District Hospital; Leamington District Memorial Hospital, which already had a temporary shut-down of its ER this year; Hanover and District Hospital; St. Marys Memorial. These are all emergency rooms the OMA says are in your trouble on your watch. You have been the government of Ontario for three years. We don't need you being caught by surprise again. Now that you've been made aware of these additional hospitals, in addition to Grand River, suffering these crises, when are we going to have a plan from your government to deal with this issue and deal with it properly?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: There is no doubt about it: We inherited quite a bit of a mess when it came to our emergency rooms. Let me just speak to two challenges in particular.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I need to be able to hear the Premier. Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Two specific challenges I'll address: While the NDP cut medical school spaces by 13%, and then the Tories sat on their hands, we've increased medical school spaces by 22%. We've doubled our international medical graduate spaces. We've opened our first new medical school with four more satellites coming online.

The second challenge: We don't have enough rooms in our hospitals. The NDP and the Tories, together, closed over 21 emergency rooms. The Tories, on their own, closed 28 hospitals, eliminating thousands of beds.

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We have begun rebuilding our hospitals. We have over 1,600 new hospital beds in the works. That is something that the Tories and the NDP don't support, but we are moving ahead to ensure we have sufficient rooms in our hospitals.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Interjection.

The Speaker: The Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal will come to order. I won't warn him again.

BOTTLE RECYCLING

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question again is to the Premier. With all the stuff you guys have got in the works, you'd better get going on it. You're running out of time.

Today the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario released his report, called Neglecting our Obligations. With respect to your promise in 2003 to achieve a 60% waste diversion within five years, the Environmental Commissioner wrote that your failure to take timely action likely rendered the 60% goal "a pipe dream." Instead of taking concrete action to divert waste, you've instead expended your energy saying anything you can that you think will help you get elected.

Let's talk for a minute about the LCBO bottle return program that you rushed out the door on September 10. As you know, I've been in favour of a bottle return program for the LCBO throughout the time I've been in public life.

Interjections.

Mr. Tory: Throughout the time—it's on the record since 2003.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): And it's just Tuesday. I need you to remember that the Speaker needs to be able to hear the question and that we need to have respect for those who are asking and placing questions and those who are responding to them. It's very difficult for us to operate in the fashion we're moving along in today.

I would ask the leader, then, to place his question.

Mr. Tory: It's on the record. I am concerned, in the case of your plan that you rushed out on September 10, that there's a lack of detail and a lack of proper planning. So let's start with one simple question: How much is this initiative of yours going to cost? What will the cost be?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'm really pleased to have the opportunity to compare and contrast the former Tory government record on the environment with ours. When it came to funding the ministry, they ripped \$102 million out; that's a 30% cut. We've increased funding by \$40 million; that's a 15% increase. The Conservative government fired one third of the staff within the ministry; we have hired, so far, 25% more drinking water inspectors. They allowed polluters to walk away; we have passed our "You spill, you pay" legislation. They wanted to dump garbage in a lake in northern Ontario. We said, "No, you can't do that."

They presided over the Walkerton disaster. I can recall when the chief medical officer of health of Ontario said, "You turned your back on public health." That is the record of that government when it comes to the environment. I'll gladly put their record up against ours any day.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr. Tory: Actually, last I checked, the Environmental Commissioner, an objective officer of this Legislature, passed judgment on your record—

The Speaker: Order. I would remind members, especially the member for Renfrew, that you shouldn't be using props.

The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: He passed judgment on this record of yours today. He called it "Neglecting our Obligations." Now there's an A plus if ever I saw one.

There was no answer, of course, nothing even approaching an answer on the cost of the LCBO problem. Let's take the \$5 million—another detail you should know—that the LCBO presently pays to the blue box program. The Minister of the Environment says this program means that all the glass will be going off to your new program, so we won't need to put the \$5 million into the blue boxes.

Now, 48% of customers don't shop at the Beer Store. A lot of them tell me, and I'm sure they've told you, that they're going to just put their bottles into the blue boxes, and yet the \$5 million won't be there anymore. So can you tell me what contingencies you have in the plan to make up for the \$5 million that the blue box program won't have anymore?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: It's really hard to figure out where the leader of the official opposition is on this LCBO bottle return policy. Is he telling us that he doesn't want us to take action to ensure that 80 million bottles are no longer placed in our landfill sites?

We have in place a new policy; we are confident it's going to be effective. It is going to ensure that people pay a reasonable premium, a reasonable return, on the bottle they acquire through the LCBO, or any other container. It's returnable at the Beer Store. We think it's going to be effective.

I can tell you, Speaker, that if the leader of the official opposition is saying he thinks it's okay for 80 million bottles to go into our landfill sites, then why doesn't he just stand up and say so?

Mr. Tory: What I will stand up and say is that when you're making important public policy, you don't rush it out the door for a photo op; you think through the details. That's what you do.

Now, you've told us that the details don't matter; they're unimportant. The program is scheduled to begin on February 1, 2007. That's 144 days during which the LCBO will sell 237 million bottles of wine and spirits, not even counting extra Christmas sales. You've said the deposits will be in line with other provinces—let's take a number of 40 cents in other provinces. That means that come February 1, we could have \$95 million worth of bottles out there in the public's hands which they haven't paid a deposit on that they can bring back to the Beer Store after February 1. Who's going to pick up the \$95 million for bottles on which people have not paid a deposit? Have you thought that one through?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I need to be able to hear the Premier.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: My advice to the leader of the official opposition is that no, he should not begin to save up his bottles.

What I can say is that bottles that will be covered by this new return policy will be specially marked. They will be specially identified.

Yes, we did think that through and we thought through many other aspects of this as well. There are all kinds of reasons put forward as to why we should not do this and why we should continue to send 80 million bottles into our landfill sites. Many of those were put up today by the leader of the official opposition.

We are determined to move this policy ahead. We will do so in the interests of our environment and of the greater public in the province of Ontario.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): Premier, your no-minimum-standards-of-care-for-seniors act that you introduced today is a huge disappointment for seniors living in long-term-care homes, for caregivers and for their families.

For three years, New Democrats have been asking you, "When are you going to establish your promised minimum standard of hands-on care for seniors living in long-term-care homes so that they will have the support and care that they need to live in dignity?"

In case you forgot, Premier, this is what you promised: to "ensure long-term-care residents get more personal care, including a minimum 2.25 hours of daily nursing care."

My question is, why have you broken your promise to seniors? Where's the minimum standard of daily nursing care that Dalton McGuinty promised?

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

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm so pleased that we had the privilege today of bringing in a piece of legislation that builds on the work my colleague Monique Smith has done, not on behalf of our government but to the benefit of the patients in the province of Ontario.

The one having the yak attack over there would know that already we've invested an additional \$750 million in long-term care that has afforded us the opportunity to employ 3,140 additional people on the front line.

The honourable member asked questions about care, and he looks inside a piece of legislation. But the reality is that those are resource allocations that we have already worked to bring to the front lines of the long-term-care sector. In addition, building a very strong compliance system ensures that, in the circumstance where care is challenging, where there's any evidence of neglect, people are obligated to inform about it so the compliance regime can take effect. This bill asks us all to work together to create a sense of community in these homes,

and we're very, very proud to bring it forward to the people of Ontario.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, the promise was specific, and it was in the Premier's own words. Today, when you look at this much ballyhooed piece of legislation, it's not there. But the Premier also promised an additional \$6,000 in care for every resident. In three years, you've provided seniors with less than a third of that amount, and today your no-minimum-standards-of-care-for-seniors act does nothing to make up the difference.

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Gordon Holnbeck lives in Peterborough. He's 90 years old. His copayment fees are going up \$400 a year under the McGuinty government. But because of the McGuinty government's broken promises, he's still only getting \$5.46 a day for food—half of what an inmate in a provincial jail receives. Mr. Holnbeck says, "Fruit is pretty well out of it. The odd time we get half of a banana."

Premier, Ontario's seniors deserve better. Why are you breaking your funding promises while seniors go without healthy food in our long-term-care homes?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Let me take this opportunity to correct at least one part of the record for the honourable member. We do know that in the NDP days, when they increased rates related to food, at one time they moved forward and increased the rates for inmates but not for long-term-care residents. But this has been misstated for a long time. The cost related to inmates is an all-in cost, which includes labour. The cost related to our long-term-care residents has been about raw food alone.

I'm pleased to tell the honourable member that \$11.43 a day for an inmate compares not so favourably to the \$18.10 a day that we're contributing to food in long-term care. The reality is that the honourable member likes to do apples-to-oranges comparisons, but when we look at the apples, we know that our long-term-care residents deserve and are getting the higher-quality apples for sure.

Mr. Hampton: Long-term-care homes receive a food allowance of \$5.46 a day, and no matter how the McGuinty government tries to explain it away, that's the reality.

But here's another promise by the Premier, one that the Premier made to Ontario's veterans. Premier, you promised the Royal Canadian Legion veterans, who fought for our country, that you would bring in an ombudsman for long-term care: an independent, third-party advocate to stand up for seniors living in long-term-care homes. We look at your no-minimum-standards-of-care-for-seniors act today, and what do we find? No ombudsman for long-term care, no independent place where seniors and their families can appeal to when there's a problem in terms of a long-term-care home.

Premier, you said our seniors deserve better. When are you going to keep the promise that you made to our veterans, to our grandparents and our parents to bring in an ombudsman for long-term—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The question's been asked. The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I note that the honourable member didn't like the answer to the earlier question, so let me give him a bit more information about that. Based on the financial returns of long-term care—

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Oh, I'll get to that too.

Based on the overall food spending, which takes into consideration the combination of raw food costs, dietary services, meal preparation, menu planning to meet specific medical requirements and the delivery of food to residents, the total cost is \$18.10 per day, per resident. This compares quite favourably to \$11.43 per day for each inmate. We've worked hard to enhance the quality of meals. We've made sure that as we go forward, each year there will be built-in increases to the raw food contribution, and as I made the point, there are of course other costs associated with that.

I'll look forward to more debate with the honourable member as we move forward on other points.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is to the Premier. You have broken your election promise to overhaul a flawed school funding formula that was forcing classroom cuts, and you've broken your promise to create a standing committee on education to fix the school funding formula. As a result, there is a classroom funding crisis in schools across Dufferin–Peel, where local trustees, parents and students are united in their opposition to classroom cuts.

Premier, today, as you're about to strip power from elected school trustees in order to force your classroom cuts, parents want to know: What happened to Dalton McGuinty's school funding promises?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'm pleased to say that we've been working very closely with the Dufferin–Peel Catholic District School Board to help balance their budget.

At the province-wide level, as you will know, we've invested \$2.7 billion more into public education. Under the previous Conservative government, they took \$200 million out during their first three years; in our first three years, we've put \$2.7 billion in.

At this particular board, per pupil funding has gone up by 18%. When it comes to class sizes, half of the early years classes are now capped at 20. We put in place funding for 137 new teachers for smaller classes, 64 additional elementary teachers and 74 new secondary school teachers. Test scores have gone up by over 10% across the board, and we've put in place almost \$60 million for investment in projects to make repairs to schools.

So, yes, we've been putting a lot more money into public education, and we've brought a lot of goodwill to the table, and we'll continue to work with that particular board.

Mr. Hampton: The reality, Premier, is that school trustees and federation leaders all say that what your

government has done, more than anything else, is move money out of one funding envelope and into another funding envelope, but at the end of the day, there still isn't the funding that you promised.

The reality is that in 2003, you promised anything and everything to win votes. Now you're breaking those promises to our kids and talking about taking over school boards and forcing cuts in the classroom. You know what, Premier? It's like listening to Mike Harris and Ernie Eves all over again.

Premier, parents, students and trustees in the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board refuse to cut \$2 million from the reading recovery program—something which helps struggling grade 1 students learn how to read. These parents and trustees ask you this question: How is Dalton McGuinty's order to cut \$2 million from reading recovery going to help their children learn to read?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The leader of the NDP remains mistaken in a number of areas, but just to correct his record once again, under the first three years of the previous government, they took \$200 million out of public education. On our watch, during our first three years, we put \$2.7 billion more into public education.

Again, we've increased per pupil funding by 18% in this board, while, on the other hand, the student population there has only gone up by some 3%. It's gone up 18% in terms of funding, but student population only by 3%.

On behalf of the good people of Ontario, we have been very privileged, in a most demonstrable, concrete and real way, to invest in public education with a tremendous amount of money. We place a corresponding responsibility on the shoulders of our trustees and school board administrators as well, to make sure they're spending that money in the best possible way.

Mr. Hampton: We know you're famous for wanting to have it both ways, but you can't. You admit that the school funding formula is flawed and inadequate, but then you order underfunded schools to live with it. You promise to respect democratically elected trustees, but then you order them to make your damaging cuts to our children's education.

Premier, parents, students and trustees won't slash reading recovery as you ordered. They want to help struggling grade 1 students learn to read. So the question is this, Premier: Are you going to override that democratically elected school board to make your cuts, or are you finally going to keep your promise and fix the school funding formula, which you admit is flawed and inadequate?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Only the NDP could possibly argue that a net increase of \$2.7 billion into public education was grossly inadequate. Only the NDP could possibly argue that although student population has gone up by 3% and we've funded an increase of 18%, that funding increase was grossly inadequate.

We think that we are doing our share on behalf of the people of Ontario, not only making additional invest-

ments in education, but in health care and in infrastructure as well, to ensure we can grow this economy. We will continue to work with all of our boards, not just the 68 out of the 72 who have already balanced their budgets but those who are finding some challenges. We will continue to work with them.

1500

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. I want to go back to the emergency room issue. Premier, yesterday, we finally got a chance to see this report which we've been asking to see for a week on emergency rooms and which the minister has been sitting on for weeks. It makes a series of recommendations for a system-wide fix for the emergency room crisis we have across the province of Ontario.

The first recommendation in the report is that ER wait times be measured and benchmarks set for the maximum length of stay in an ER. This is the same recommendation that was made in the Schwartz report, which has been gathering dust with your Minister of Health since last September 16. The Schwartz report said that this should become something on your list of priorities. That's the message echoed by the emergency room doctors when they came here to visit you to tell you about this crisis last November.

My question is this: Will you demonstrate a real, genuine commitment, for once, to resolving this issue by announcing that ER wait times are going to become, in fact, a priority for your government? Will you do it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): It's good to know that the leader of the official opposition is now, for the very first time, embracing the concept of wait times, something we introduced to the people of Ontario. It's good to know he's finally bought into our agenda.

That report confirms something we've known for a long, long time: that we, the people of Ontario, have had foisted upon us a terrible shortage of hospital beds because of serious cuts made by that government. They shut down 28 hospitals, eliminating thousands of beds. We've begun rebuilding our hospitals. Those are, on average, some 43 years old. We have over 1,600 new hospital beds in the works. I would ask the leader of the official opposition to support us in that work as we do everything we can to repair the damage that was left to us by that government.

Mr. Tory: I'd support you if you actually did anything; everything's in the works. Anyway, whether—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Stop the clock. The Minister of Health will come to order.

The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: You could act on this today and it could almost immediately help to alleviate it.

Here's another idea: The Ontario College of Physicians and Surgeons currently has a pilot project in place

that is set to come to an end on December 31, 2006. It allows residents to apply for restricted certificates but requires the sign-off of medical school deans. As of May 15, 2006, no dean has agreed to participate.

Here's a request that might help—and it was told to me at Grand River that it would help—in the supply of personnel. Will you commit today to bringing together the college council, the medical school deans and the hospitals to at least permit some of these residents to be deployed in helping with the emergency room crisis that has been created on your watch while you have been governing for the past three years? Would you bring them together and try and use that as partly an answer to this?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I can tell you that we're giving that matter very careful consideration, but more than that, we're bringing real leadership to this.

There are also a few other things in that same report that are worthy of our public consideration. The report also said that there has been, until now, a lack of community integration. I can note that the NDP and the Tories did nothing to make sure we had a true system with local health care providers working together. As you know, we have brought into place our local health integration networks, which Mr. Tory and his party of course voted against.

As well, the report noted the importance of making investments in community health care. The Tories never added money to community health care. In fact, they cut people off of home care. On our watch, we brought home care to 71,000 more people, we have 49 new community health centres and 150 new family health teams, we are rebuilding public health, and we've made the first investments in community mental health in a decade. Together we are undoing the damage of the last 13 years that happened on this watch and on that watch. We are investing in medicare.

WASTE DIVERSION

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): My question is for the Premier. Premier, the Environmental Commissioner's report, *Neglecting Our Obligations*—I'm sure you've seen it—confirms what we've known for many months, and that's that your government has no plan to meet the promise you made of 60% waste diversion from landfill.

The Environmental Commissioner emphasized that a waste diversion strategy for all waste is urgently required and, with every passing day, more undiverted waste, more organic waste is going to landfill. When will you keep your promise? When will you introduce a fully funded plan for waste diversion?

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

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I'm pleased to have a chance to comment on the

Environmental Commissioner's report today and speak specifically about the steps that our government is taking with respect to waste diversion.

A 60% target is, no doubt, a difficult stretch target. We are giving municipalities the tools that they need each and every day to meet that target, and many of them will meet that target. We're three years into that program, and we remain committed to working with those sectors to meet their obligations. By providing funding for the blue box program, by the LCBO return program, by the household hazardous waste and electronics programs—all of those initiatives will help municipalities get there. We're cracking down on the ICI sector, which is dragging those diversion rates down. It's a work in progress, and we will do more because we are committed to seeing increased diversion.

Mr. Tabuns: The Environmental Commissioner's report not only confirms that the McGuinty Liberals have no plans to meet their waste diversion promises—and you've just confirmed that—but they also have no plan or strategy for dealing with adaptation to climate change. We already know that the McGuinty Liberals do not have a climate change plan.

Minister, you will recall, last month in estimates, I asked if you thought climate change was one of the most important environmental crises facing the world. Your response was an unqualified "Absolutely." Will you immediately introduce and fund a climate change plan for Ontario to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and a plan to deal with adaptation to climate change, as outlined by the Environmental Commissioner?

Hon. Ms. Broten: My friends across the House are caught in an old way of thinking, where we only tackle environmental issues in the Ministry of the Environment. I'm part of a government where every ministry is working on those files. The Minister of Natural Resources, the Minister of Energy, the Minister of Transportation: All of us collectively are making significant investments that are reducing greenhouse gases in this province.

Getting ethanol, getting cleaner sources of electricity, energy conservation, creating a greenbelt: All of those initiatives are part and parcel of the steps that we need to collectively take, as a society, to tackle a critical environmental issue. No doubt about it: There's more to do. We continue to build our efforts in that regard and work for the next generation, to deliver them what we've promised them—a clean, healthy, sustainable future.

LAVAL BRIDGE COLLAPSE

EFFONDREMENT DU VIADUC À LAVAL

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry–Prescott–Russell): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. I want to raise the issue of the tragedy this past weekend in Laval. I know that each member in this House would join with me to express our sorrow and sympathy to our neighbours in Laval.

Oui, c'est au nom de tous les membres de cette assemblée que je veux offrir mes sincères sympathies aux familles éprouvées.

In times like this, with the collapse of an overpass on Highway 19 in Laval, Quebec, and other tragedies in other countries, Canadians come together to assist. Minister, can you tell us just what our government is doing to assist our neighbours in dealing with this crisis?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation): I'd like to thank the member for the question. I would also like to extend my thoughts and prayers to the families for this tragedy.

The first thing that occurred was that we were in touch with the ministry. The Premier called the Premier of Quebec, Premier Charest. We were in touch with both the minister and ministry staff and we have offered our assistance. What we will be doing is sending a GO train to Quebec to help them. It's one locomotive and a number of cars. It will move about 1,400 people every day, and they will have this until they no longer have need of it.

What we will also do is continue to assist in any way we can with expertise from our ministry. We will also be sending some folks from both GO and the ministry on the train, and CN will be participating in terms of the movement of that train through to Quebec. So we are working with Quebec in any way we can to ensure that we can help them during this very difficult time.

1510

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Supplementary? The member for Mississauga East.

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): Let me join my colleague and offer my personal condolences to our neighbours in Laval.

I am pleased to hear that we have taken these steps to assist those who have been affected. However, this incident has caused all of us here who travel on our highway system to wonder just how safe the highways are here in Ontario, with our wide system and the many bridges that we have. Minister, can you tell us just what we are doing here to ensure the safety of Ontarians and to reassure my constituents as we travel on these highways to get to work, to get home, that this type of incident won't happen here in our great province of Ontario?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: It is important to reassure. I can tell you that we have about 28,000 bridges provincially and 13,000 bridges and large culverts municipally. Our bridges are visually inspected annually; they are then re-inspected every other year by professional engineers. So the professional engineers out of the Ministry of Transportation inspect visually and then also do an additional inspection every two years, which is also required municipally.

In addition to that, we do inspection that would core into the bridges. It's called destructive looking at the bridge in terms of actually coring into the concrete. They then also will do magnetic, for example, or they'll do ultrasound, to ensure that the bridges are safe.

In the case of steel bridges, they do actual fatigue stress. This is done on a regular basis.

One of the most important things to note is that we have, without a doubt, one of the finest sets of bridges in this province. But more importantly, we are reinvesting over \$400 million from Move Ontario alone municipally—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

BOTTLE RECYCLING

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Minister, today the Environmental Commissioner released a rather scathing report on your government's record on the environment. It's entitled *Neglecting our Obligations*. It sounds a lot like "breaking your promises" to me.

Interestingly enough, there was no information in this report regarding the LCBO. The Environmental Commissioner himself is on record as saying that, "Prescribing the LCBO under the EBR would increase transparency and accountability of their decision-making." This would allow the public to respond with a request for review of your policy decisions, such as the proposed LCBO recycling program with the Beer Store.

Minister, are you willing to stand today and say you will encourage the Premier and the rest of your cabinet colleagues to ensure that the LCBO will be included under the Environmental Bill of Rights?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I'm pleased to have a chance to talk about what we are doing with respect to the environment, and what we are doing to increase diversion across the province.

We talk about the blue box program and the diversion of bottles. I can tell you, at the Ministry of the Environment, we're working hard to turn the corner from the sad state of affairs that existed in this province under your former government. As the Environmental Commissioner himself also said today, the law was not in force. Regulations 102 and 103 have been in place since 1994. The ICI sector has dismal rates of diversion, and that is because there was an understanding under your government that those rules would not be enforced.

Our government does not pick and choose what rules we enforce. We're enforcing the rules. We've commenced an inspection blitz and we will see increased rates of diversion in the province because that, along with the blue box program and the bottle return, are all steps and initiatives to make sure that we—

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

Ms. Scott: Minister, I was asking for results. You refused to answer questions on the cost and implications of the proposed LCBO recycling plan when we were in estimates last month, saying that it was a government decision, not a decision of your ministry, and that it falls under various ministries other than your own.

Minister, after today's scathing review of your ministry, your failed promise of diverting 60% of Ontario's waste, which just adds to the three years of broken promises, and your own member's lack of representation

on the Green Lane landfill situation, don't you think that at the very least you should tell the hardworking people of Ontario what your LCBO-to-the-Beer-Store proposal is going to cost them? It's only the right thing to do.

Hon. Ms. Broten: We've said to Ontarians that we are investing in the Ministry of the Environment, unlike your government, which decimated the ministry, which indicated that the Ministry of the Environment was not an important ministry. Our government has turned the page.

I guess you're against the bottle return plan. Our goal is to provide municipalities with the tools they have asked for, such as a bottle return program, to assist them in diverting waste from landfills. We will always need landfills, there's no doubt about it, but let's collectively provide municipalities and the ICI sector with the tools they need. Ontarians are calling for increased diversion. Your party needs to get with the program, and get with the rest of Ontarians who want to divert waste from landfills.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Premier. This past weekend, in a last-minute scramble, your government narrowly avoided the closure of an ER in Kitchener. This past summer, in a similar scramble at the last minute, at the start of a long weekend, staff in the Ministry of Health's office had to phone doctors to get them to staff the ER in St. Marys.

Throughout the summer, the OMA identified 19 hospitals across the province where ERs were at risk of closing or where there were not enough staff to guarantee emergency care. These crises in ERs are not going away.

Where is your government's comprehensive plan to deal with these crises, instead of having to resort to last-minute scrambles to keep ERs open?

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

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I would like to say, on behalf of the patients of the province, that if it requires a last-minute scramble to lend assistance, then we will.

The circumstances, as the honourable member will know, are made very complex by the overall shortages that we have related to doctors. And we have well established in previous debate that her DNA is well associated with that problem. The comprehensive strategy that she speaks about can be found in enhanced compensation for emergency room physicians, dramatic increases to the range of community resources that are available, and the efforts that are under way to enhance physician supply in Ontario: to date, 750 additional foreign-trained doctors deployed in communities across Ontario, and a 23% increase in the size of our medical schools. We will continue to work on behalf of Ontario's patients to address these long-standing challenges, and we'll do so in a fashion that helps to make them a thing of the past.

Ms. Martel: A supplementary to the Premier: Whatever strategy you claim to have in place, it's clear that it's not working. That was clear with the last-minute scramble in Kitchener this weekend.

Premier, the Manitoba government was proactive in developing a strategy to ensure that ERs would not close this summer. At the beginning of June, the government announced a four-point plan to prevent the closure of its ERs and to address staffing problems in ERs, both in the medium term and the long term. Manitoba's strategies worked. The ERs were kept open. In fact, the government has now decided to extend its program until March 2007. And its working group, which includes ER physicians, is due to report in November with respect to recommendations to change the work environment in their ERs.

We've urged you to look at the Manitoba model. You have refused. If you don't want to look at Manitoba's strategy, where is your comprehensive plan to ensure that ERs in the 19 hospitals that are at risk are going to stay open?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Obviously, the honourable member's only plan can be found on the palms of her hands, and they were awfully warm, because she spent her whole time in government sitting on them. The reality is that she sat there, she sat idly by, while they made a decision to shrink the size of medical schools. At least one of them had the good conscience to go screaming out of the parking lot, squealing their tires as they went, when the public policy debate didn't go their way. And it's enough of the honourable member's pretending her way through these things. She wants the Manitoba solution. She wants to top up the compensation of doctors while her partner there, her seatmate, when we brought forward a resolution with doctors through a negotiated agreement, said that we were bribing them. So the policy incoherence offered by that party continues.

The Manitoba solution was Hamilton's solution, which was to move forward with top-ups. We are working on a comprehensive plan that at the heart of it builds community capacity, replaces beds that they closed, and works hard to make up for the doctor shortages that these two parties—

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

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): My question is for the Minister of Culture. Last week we learned that the Conservative government in Ottawa is cutting funding to its museums assistance program by 50%. Hamilton hosts several museums, and I am concerned about the impact of this change at a time when Hamilton can least manage it. Hamilton boasts several wonderful points of interest—the Canadian Football Hall of Fame and Dundurn Castle, just to name two.

Minister, can you please tell me how these federal cuts will impact museums in Hamilton and, by extension, in the province of Ontario?

1520

Hon. Caroline Di Cocco (Minister of Culture): I thank the member from Hamilton West for the question. Last week, I hosted the culture ministers from across Canada at the federal-provincial-territorial meeting, and all the provincial ministers conveyed their concern about these cuts. In my conversation with the federal minister, Bev Oda, I conveyed in no uncertain terms my disappointment and grave concerns over these cuts. I also asked the minister to convey to the federal Minister of Finance that, of their \$13.2-billion surplus, approximately \$5.3 billion comes from the people of Ontario. I was disturbed to hear the news, and it means that about \$1.4 million less will come to the province of Ontario—to the museums.

On the other hand, this government, under the leadership of Premier Dalton McGuinty, continues to fund 180 museums through our community museums operating grant and through Ontario Trillium grants. I continue to impress upon the federal government that they must meet their—

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

Supplementary?

Ms. Marsales: I'm familiar with this grant program, and in fact I believe that Dundurn National Historic Site in my riding received almost \$60,000 this year in provincial funding. But I'm still concerned about other federal cuts. Can you tell me what they involve and assure the people of Hamilton West that the Ontario government has a different view of culture and the value of heritage and culture?

Hon. Ms. Di Cocco: Again, thank you for that supplementary question. Not only did Stephen Harper cut museum grants by half, but other cuts have been made: the termination of a commercial heritage properties incentive fund, which protected heritage buildings; elimination of the goods and services tax rebate for tourists; and elimination of support to the Canadian Volunteerism Initiative, considering that thousands of volunteers are those who support our museums.

We are bringing Ontarians into museums and building pride in our heritage through Doors Open Ontario, a program designed to open historical sites to the public for free, organized by Ontario Heritage Trust. Unlike the actions of the federal government, we have spent more than 38% more in the Ministry of Culture in 2005-06, for a total of \$475 million to culture.

GREATER TORONTO TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Last April, with great fanfare, you introduced the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority. Even at that time, that announcement was three years overdue. It had been announced and re-announced in three successive budgets. Your government promised, but again, they didn't deliver.

Bill 104 established the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority, and the John Tory government supported that initiative. Recently, Glen Grunwald, president and CEO of the Toronto Board of Trade, was quoted in the Toronto Star as saying, "Our hopes rest with the new Greater Toronto Transportation Authority...." He went on to say, "With no board of directors named, no CEO appointed and no money in sight, that road ahead" looks "pretty ... rocky" indeed.

Minister, what has taken so long to get this agency up and running, or is this simply another McGuinty election promise that's been broken?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation): I thank the member for the question. The Greater Toronto Transportation Authority is something we're very proud of. As a matter of fact, both the chair and the vice-chair will be announced shortly. As the member knows, everyone in the region from Hamilton to Durham will have an opportunity to participate in the board, but they can either be elected or non-elected, and they come from those municipalities or regions. Given the fact that there is the November election, it makes a great deal of sense for those folks to be appointed after the election, and so we have asked them to do that. They then will be available for January, and that board will be up and going, sir.

Mr. O'Toole: Another strategic delay, I would say.

A further announcement during the election was dealing with gridlock. All Ontarians know that your government would say anything to get elected; we know that. The reality is that in the GTA—there was a study a couple of weeks ago—the average commuter from my region spends about two hours a day commuting to Toronto. That's 400 hours a year, about 16 days out of their lives. The problem is not just gridlock; it's gridlock in your government, because you simply have no plan.

Last April, your government's own news release claimed that the GTTA would be operating in September. It's October. Now you've delayed it till after the November elections, and then it'll be Christmas. These are simply delays for political purposes. Why don't you tell the people the truth for a change, that you simply have no plan for the GTTA or for gridlock for the people of Ontario?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I welcome and acknowledge the fact that we did make a very strategic decision to delay who would participate on that board until after the election. You're correct: It makes a great deal of sense to do that, and I thank you for that support. As a matter of fact, that board will be up and going, and it will have to deal with the gridlock that is here.

It was interesting, when I travelled across the province this summer. There is no question in my mind that if I thought there was neglect in the energy field when I was there, neglect and total underinvestment in our infrastructure by the previous government is virtually abhorrent. That's why we've put in \$5.6 billion over the next five years—all you have to do is go on the website, and you'll see exactly where that investment will occur—

in addition to a one-time \$1.4-billion investment, \$400 million of which goes to roads and bridges municipally. So although you may not choose to look at that as a plan, I can assure you that it is a plan. All you have to do is go on www.mto.gov.on.ca, and you can look—

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

WINDSOR RACEWAY

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Working families in Windsor are furious that they are losing their racetrack, their slots, and possibly a proposed new rink for the Spitfires, an OHL franchise. This is a devastating blow that will cost your community an important industry and hundreds of good jobs. Slots run by the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. can't just pick up and move without government's knowledge. My question is simple: When did you and your McGuinty government colleagues first learn of the OLG move?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues): I appreciate, once again, the opportunity to clarify the position that the provincial government has when a private company is dealing with a municipality, as is the case with the Windsor Raceway, the town of Tecumseh or the city of Windsor. It is a private relationship between those two parties.

Let me say this: When the last government introduced slots to raceways, they did so to support the horsemen and the horseracing industry. The horsemen who are participating, wherever that Windsor Raceway may be, whether it's 20 kilometres at one end of Essex county or the other, are the same: They're at that same raceway, and the slots are there to support those horsemen. The lion's share of that funding for slots, in fact, goes to the purse that is used in those raceways. But this member opposite must understand that this is a private deal between a private company and a municipality.

Mr. Prue: My question was a simple one: When did you and your government first learn of this? You're not going to tell us.

The residents are stunned by your government's plans to pull the racetrack and the slots out of Windsor. This backroom deal will cost your city \$3 million in lost revenues.

I can only quote what the Windsor Star had to say about you today. A Windsor Star columnist said today, and I quote verbatim, "Where the hell are Dwight Duncan and Sandra Pupatello on this file? Why are they running for cover instead of fighting tooth and nail to preserve this city's slots revenue? Are they knuckling under because the Premier, who's being feted at a \$1,000-a-plate fundraiser here next month, has more pressing priorities?"

Minister, what are you going to do to keep Windsor from losing \$3 million—

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

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: I appreciate the opportunity once again to tell the people of Windsor and the people of Essex county that 90% of all of that slot revenue benefits the people of Essex county. That additional perhaps 10% is actually \$2.4 million that did sit with the municipality to host the raceway. The lion's share of that money is staying in the same county. All of the horsemen are still there, the people riding the horses and those horses are the same, and they are very happy with the recent happenings with Windsor Raceway.

1530

Let me say this to the people of Windsor: If they think for one moment that there has been an historic government in this province that has done more for Windsor, there simply has not. Since we have become a government, in these short three years alone we have seen the advent of a medical school for Essex county; we saw the expansion of Valiant Machine just last week; we are looking at saving the Nemark plant—that was last year; we've looked at the DaimlerChrysler expansion, which holds our paint shop for Windsor. These are very important initiatives.

As I mentioned to you yesterday, since we have become—

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. New question.

AMATEUR SPORT

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): My question is for the Minister of Health Promotion.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. I cannot hear the member for Ottawa–Orléans. Perhaps his colleagues would stop heckling. The member for Ottawa–Orléans.

Mr. McNeely: Thank you, Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Health Promotion. Last winter our government launched the Quest for Gold lottery, which offered Ontarians a voluntary way to help out young high-performance athletes.

In my riding of Ottawa–Orléans, athletes have benefited from the funds, which enable them to cover the many costs associated with performing at a very high level. Quest for Gold funding helps athletes attend national and international competitions by encouraging them to stay in Ontario to live and train.

Minister, this summer you launched a new round of this innovative lottery. Can you please provide me with the details of round two so I can communicate them to the athletes in my riding?

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): I want to thank the honourable member from Ottawa–Orléans, who's a great supporter of amateur sport.

I was pleased to be in Ottawa at the commencement of the Ontario Summer Games to launch phase two of the Quest for Gold program. I'm also very pleased to recognize that in the first round, \$2.9 million in funding went directly to amateur athletes in sports in this province and, in fact, 892 athletes received cheques prior to March 31 to support them in their quest for gold.

I'm proud to be a part of this government under the leadership of Premier McGuinty, who has not turned his back, and we have not turned our backs, on amateur athletes. The previous government, to set the record straight, cut 42% of the funding to provincial sport organizations, for a grand total of \$3.3 million.

Mr. McNeely: Minister, odds like that make supporting our athletes a winning choice. We've gone over how this will benefit athletes directly, but how will this lottery increase their access to training and competitive opportunities, both of which are vital to high levels of performance?

Having adequate training facilities is also essential to growing the next generation of Olympic and Paralympic gold medalists. Velodromes, Olympic-sized swimming pools and speed skating tracks are desperately needed. Even standard arenas in my riding are in desperate need of repair and renovations. Minister, I know you met last week with the provincial and territorial sports ministers. Was any progress made on sports infrastructure?

Hon. Mr. Watson: I just wanted to point out the sad record of the previous government. Our government has increased by 134% the funding to amateur athletes in Ontario.

We had a federal-provincial—FPT—meeting, but the “F” didn't show up; the federal minister failed to show up. Prime Minister Harper has such a tight leash on his ministers from Ontario that they're not standing up for Ontario. They're not doing their job; they're not coming to meet with provincial counterparts.

We set out a very realistic plan to talk about sport and recreation infrastructure. Eighty per cent of the single-pad arenas in the province of Ontario are 25 years or older; 13% of them are 50 years or older.

We recognize that this government has put money into infrastructure for sport and recreation and community activities in Ontario. We're very proud of the track record—

The Speaker: Thank you.

PROCLAMATION OF BILL 86

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): I have a question for the Attorney General. Minister, I'm sure you're familiar with Bill 86, a powerful tool to protect children from sexual exploitation. That bill was passed in 2002, brought in by former Attorney General David Young.

In the run-up to the election of 2003, your seatmate, the member from Sudbury, was quoted as saying, “The failure to proclaim the act after 10 months since passage was shameful, cynical politicking, and it's vulnerable kids who are paying the price.” That member has been sitting beside you for three years. You've been in government for three years. Would you suggest, Minister, that your seatmate was engaged in shameful, cynical politicking? If not, why have you not proclaimed this legislation?

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): I know that my seatmate would like to answer this question, but

you've directed it to me. I will say more on this to come, other than saying that the member was right then and he's certainly right now to say that it was absolutely shameful that the previous government would have brought forward this bill, had the bill passed and not have it proclaimed. It's really as simple as that.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Pursuant to standing order 37(a), on Thursday the member for Timmins–James Bay gave notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Education concerning French-language schools. This matter will be debated at 6 o'clock today.

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: On Thursday of last week, we asked about two outstanding questions on the order paper whose answers are overdue. We thus far have received the answer to only one question, 183, standing in the name of the member for Simcoe–Grey. That remains—pardon me—outstanding.

As you know, standing order 97(d) requires the minister to respond within 24 sitting days, and that deadline has long come and gone.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I'd like to remind the minister responsible that you are required, under standing order 97(d), to provide answers to written questions within 24 sitting days, that the response is now overdue, and I would ask that the minister give some indication as to when the answer is forthcoming.

Perhaps the government House leader could respond on behalf of the Premier.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): We will endeavour to get the question answered as quickly as possible. I used to sit in the opposition and ask the same questions of the government, so I'm sympathetic to the opposition asking that question.

PETITIONS

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound): I have a petition here that many people across Ontario are concerned about, but this one is with over 1,000 signatures from around the area in Hanover. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there has been a lack of action on the acute doctor shortage for rural Ontario, particularly in Grey-Bruce, and many do not have a family doctor, and specialists are leaving the area;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: asking for initiatives and timelines to deal with this current problem, financial incentives and support for family health networks.”

I’ve also signed this.

CAFETERIA FOOD GUIDELINES

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition today in support of healthy food education.

“Whereas childhood obesity rates have tripled over the past two decades in Canada, causing many other serious health problems, including diabetes, heart diseases, cancer and hypertension; and

“Whereas the increase in childhood obesity rates has been greatly affected by the increased amount of commercialized funding to the Ontario school boards; and

“Whereas some corporations who give funds to schools have no interest in the health of today’s youth and cannot be held accountable for the increased obesity rates and other health problems; and

“Whereas students between the ages of 14 and 18 are responsible for making their own food choices; and

“Whereas the Ontario food premises regulation only provides safety policies that must be followed by the cafeterias of Ontario school boards but does not define regulations regarding the nutritional standards of the food being served;

“Be it therefore resolved that the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Education, support Ontario school boards to educate students more thoroughly and systematically about making healthy food choices according to Canada’s Food Guide to Healthy Eating.”

I’ll affix my signature to this petition.

1540

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. John O’Toole (Durham): It’s the proper day to introduce a petition on long-term care, as the minister introduced this legislation today. The petition reads as follows:

“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”—and George Smitherman, under the Dalton McGuinty government—“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’m pleased to support this on behalf of constituents of the riding of Durham and present it to Breanna.

CHILD PROTECTION

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I’m pleased to present this petition from a number of people in my community and, in fact, from all over the province. It’s to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas Ontario is one of the few provinces that does not have independent oversight of child welfare administration; and

“Whereas eight provinces now have independent oversight of child welfare issues, including child protection; and

“Whereas all provincial Ombudsmen first identified child protection as a priority issue in 1986 and still Ontario does not allow the Ombudsman to investigate people’s complaints about children’s aid societies’ decisions; and

“Whereas people wronged by CAS decisions concerning placement, access, custody or care are not allowed to appeal those decisions to the Ontario Ombudsman’s office;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we support the Ombudsman having the power to probe decisions and investigate complaints concerning the province’s children’s aid societies (CAS).”

I support this petition. I’ve signed it and will send it down to the table by way of Dominic, the page.

CAFETERIA FOOD GUIDELINES

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): I have a petition entitled Support Healthy Food Education.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas childhood obesity rates have tripled over the past two decades in Canada, causing many other serious health problems, including diabetes, heart disease, cancer and hypertension; and

“Whereas the increase in childhood obesity rates has been greatly affected by the increased amount of commercialized funding to the Ontario school boards; and

“Whereas some corporations who give funds to schools have no interest in the health of today’s youth and cannot be held accountable for the increased obesity rates and other health problems; and

“Whereas students between the ages of 14 and 18 are responsible for making their own food choices; and

"Whereas the Ontario food premises regulation only provides safety policies that must be followed by cafeterias of Ontario school boards but does not define regulations regarding the nutritional standards of the food being served;

"Be it therefore resolved that the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Education, support Ontario school boards to educate students more thoroughly and systematically about making healthy food choices according to Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating."

I support this and am pleased to attach my signature.

HEALTH PROTECTION LEGISLATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton): I'm bringing this petition on behalf of residents in rural Ottawa and Nepean–Carleton.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"It is a long-standing tradition in rural Ontario for churches and other organizations to raise funds by holding suppers and feature home-cooked food and home baking. These suppers provide a venue for people in the community to gather to share a nutritious meal at a reasonable cost. The funds raised enable the host groups to continue to provide a wide range of other services to their communities;

"Whereas provincial legislation requiring food served at public events to be prepared on site in approved kitchen facilities places an impossible burden on small groups of volunteers who cannot afford to rebuild or upgrade facilities to commercial standards, or to undertake to prepare all the food on site; and

"Whereas regulation 562 of the Health Protection and Promotion Act already recognizes this by providing an exemption, allowing churches, service groups and fraternal organizations to prepare and serve meals for members and personally invited guests at special events;

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend section 2 of the Health Protection and Promotion Act, RSO 1990, to permit churches, service clubs and fraternal organizations to serve home-cooked food at public events for fund-raising purposes."

Since I not only support this petition but have also undertaken to go to many of these church suppers in my community and will continue to do so, I affix my signature and present it to page Chad.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to introduce this petition on behalf of grandparents across Ontario. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the people of the province of Ontario deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child.

"Subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant's willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child;" and

Whereas we support the introduction of Bill 8, introduced by the member from Niagara Falls;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents."

I'm proud to sign my signature in support of this petition.

WATER QUALITY

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

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas every Ontarian wants the best water quality possible; and

"Whereas the goal of clean water can be achieved effectively through amendments to existing legislation; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals are determined to hammer through the flawed legislation known as the Clean Water Act; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals have failed to put in place adequate, stable, long-term funding into the bill; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals have failed to effectively address the numerous problems in the bill; and

"Whereas rural Ontario stands to suffer significantly under this poorly-thought-out policy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: To not pass Bill 43 (the Clean Water Act) until proper funding and amendments are in place."

This was signed by many people at the International Plowing Match in Peterborough.

AGGREGATE EXTRACTION

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I've got a petition to rescind the joint board decision of June 8,

2005, approving the applications of Dufferin Aggregates to expand its mining licence in the Niagara Escarpment World Biosphere Reserve:

“To the Legislature of Ontario:

“There are numerous reasons for rescinding the joint board decision, including the following:

“Whereas the decision contravenes the purpose of the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act;

“Whereas the decision sets precedent for quarry expansion licences on the Niagara Escarpment;

“Whereas this decision could lead to habitat destruction for species of concern;

“Whereas escarpment rural lands are equivalent to buffer designation under the United Nations’ framework for biosphere reserve (buffer designation is expected to protect the sensitive nature of the core protected areas);

“Whereas to attempt to maintain the significant wetlands and the streams’ course, water will have to be pumped in perpetuity;

“Whereas this decision allows for pumping 50 feet ... below the water table;

“Whereas the 50-foot dams to be constructed have a potential for failure;

“Whereas aggregate can be readily accessed close to market off the Niagara Escarpment in land that is not protected or at risk;

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

“We call on the government of Ontario to:

“Issue an order by the Lieutenant Governor in Council ... rescinding the decision made by the joint board dated June 8, 2005, approving the applications of Dufferin Aggregates in regards to this matter;” and

“Issue an order by the cabinet substituting for the decision of the board on this matter, a decision rejecting the applications of Dufferin.”

PROPERTY RIGHTS

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby–Ajax): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is silent on property rights; and

“Whereas the Alberta Bill of Rights specifically protects the right to the enjoyment of property; and

“Whereas the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms provides that ‘Every person has a right to the peaceful enjoyment and free disposition of his property, except to the extent provided by law’; and

“Whereas ownership rights should not be abridged or usurped without due process of law; and

“Whereas owners of all lands affected by expropriation should have the right to be included as parties to a required inquiry to consider the merits of the objectives of the expropriating authority; and

“Whereas the decision of an expropriating authority should be subject to judicial review; and

“Whereas, subject to specific limitations of law, the right to peaceful enjoyment of one’s land must be recognized by Ontario law;

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

“To pass Bill 57, the Land Rights and Responsibilities Act, 2006.”

As I agree with this petition, I’m pleased to affix my signature and to give it to Paul.

1550

CAFETERIA FOOD GUIDELINES

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It has been given to me by some students from Streetsville Secondary School in Mississauga, and I especially thank Jennifer Choi and James Kim for circulating it. It reads as follows:

“Whereas childhood obesity rates have tripled over the past two decades in Canada, causing many other serious health problems, including diabetes, heart diseases, cancer and hypertension; and

“Whereas the increase in childhood obesity rates has been greatly affected by the increased amount of commercialized funding to the Ontario school boards; and

“Whereas some corporations who give funds to schools have no interest in the health of today’s youth and cannot be held accountable for the increased obesity rates and other health problems; and

“Whereas students between the ages of 14 and 18 are responsible for making their own food choices; and

“Whereas the Ontario food premises regulation only provides safety policies that must be followed by the cafeterias of Ontario school boards but does not define regulations regarding the nutritional standard of the food being served;

“Be it therefore resolved that the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Education, support Ontario’s school boards to educate students more thoroughly and systematically about making healthy food choices according to Canada’s Food Guide to Healthy Eating.”

I thank the students of Streetsville Secondary for having drafted this petition. I’m going to ask page Patrick to carry it. I support this petition and I’m pleased to affix my signature.

FAIR ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS

Mr. Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): I’m pleased to introduce this petition to the House. The petition reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the McGuinty government is committed to establishing measures that will break down barriers for Ontario newcomers; and

“Whereas these measures will ensure that the 34 regulatory professions in Ontario have admissions and application practices that are fair, clear and open; and

“Whereas these measures will include the establishment of a fairness commissioner and an access centre for internationally trained individuals; and

“Whereas, through providing a fair and equitable system, newcomers will be able to apply their global experience, which will not only be beneficial to their long-term career goals but also to the Ontario economy as a whole;

“We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

“That all members of the House support the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, Bill 124, and work to ensure its prompt passage in the Ontario Legislature.”

I'm pleased to sign my signature in support of this petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FAIR ACCESS TO REGULATED PROFESSIONS ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR L'ACCÈS ÉQUITABLE AUX PROFESSIONS RÉGLEMENTÉES

Mr. Colle moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 124, An Act to provide for fair registration practices in Ontario's regulated professions / Projet de loi 124, Loi prévoyant des pratiques d'inscription équitables dans les professions réglementées de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to recognize the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration for his leadoff speech.

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope to share my time with the member from London-Fanshawe.

I want to thank the member from Niagara Falls, Mr. Kim Craiton, who just read the petition in support of Bill 124. I do appreciate his work in the Niagara area in helping newcomers, and thank him for that.

I also want to welcome some great champions of newcomers for many years in Ontario, who are here in the gallery. With me today is Lawrence Yu, president of the Chinese Professionals Association of Canada; Debbie Douglas, executive director of OCASI; Dr. Kazi Hoque, executive director of South Asian Family Support Services; Noor Din, executive director of Human Endeavour, who is doing great work in York region; Ahmed Iqbal, executive director of the Brampton Multicultural Community Centre; and also, all the way from Peel region, Haroon Khan, who just got back from Pakistan, where he's building a school for underprivileged children.

I want to thank them for being here, and for their advocacy for many years in trying to help all the newcomers to Ontario every year. They're on the front lines. Their organizations are on the front lines. They have been of great help to my ministry, of great help to the previous ministry—the minister is here—and also to Madam Chambers, who is here as Minister of Children and Youth Services right now.

They have really helped to shape this legislation. Over the last year, we've gone out to get their input, their advice. I have talked to them one on one. We have had countless meetings. I have gone into the communities, talked to literally thousands of newcomers who are trying to find their way here in Ontario. I've also talked to the front-line workers who have been their counsellors and mentors. Really, Bill 124 is the result of their suggestions, their recommendations. It's really a result of that kind of expertise. It's presented by me as the minister and by our government, but it's really a reflection of their many years of trying to ensure that foreign-trained individuals and all newcomers get a fair shot at working in their chosen field here in Ontario.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, over 140,000 newcomers come to this province every year—about 60% of all the newcomers to Canada come to Ontario. So it is a daunting task to ensure that all of our newcomers are given proper housing, proper counselling and support services; that their children get into schools; and that they're also able to get jobs. It is like increasing the population of Ontario every year by the population of Prince Edward Island. So it's quite an undertaking, and it has been successful for the most part because the community agencies, which many of our guests here today represent, have been working on the front lines offering support to newcomers.

We have many successful newcomers who have contributed so much. Over the last couple of days we were able to celebrate China's national day and to see the great contribution that Canadians of Chinese origin have made. Today we were at the flag-raising at Hart House honouring the great contribution that Canadians of Korean origin have made to this province and country. It is at the heart of who we are as a province that respects diversity, that practises multiculturalism. That is one of our hallmarks. We have always had, I think, a commendable approach here in Canada, saying to newcomers that they're welcome to come here if they work hard and respect the laws of Canada. They're also given the opportunity to ensure that they do not lose their pride in their roots, in their traditions, in their culture that they bring to us from their many, many different shores. That is one of the reasons why I say Ontario is so blessed by so many people coming to Ontario.

1600

Our newcomers sometimes take the worst jobs. They'll take any job. They will also work two or three jobs. They really aspire to go to school. They really aspire to a better future for their children. They are here with great ambition, with great dedication to their family

and great respect for this country. We are, as I said, honoured to have so many choose to come to Ontario. In fact, many of the other provinces are now trying to actively recruit newcomers, because they know that the key to economic, cultural and social success as a province is to have a welcoming place for newcomers. We in Ontario have always been blessed by so many choosing to come to Ontario.

One of the challenges newcomers do face is that many of them—in fact, over 70% of the newcomers that come to Ontario—are very highly educated; 70% have post-secondary education or training, or better. So, unlike my father, who came here with essentially an elementary school education, who was willing to do any job just to ensure that he had food for his family, the newcomers who come today have greater expectations to be able to contribute their skills and talents in a much more focused way in the skills they're trained for. My generation that came to Canada in the 1950s as immigrants was willing to wait, willing to take anything, as I said, because we knew that it was a welcoming country and we were very eager to work at anything. But the newcomers that come today have incredible talent and skill, for the most part. They want to make a contribution as fast as possible because they come here with technical degrees, with university degrees, they come here with great training and experience; therefore, we can't expect them to wait and do any job when there are many jobs that are going wanting or there are skill shortages in this province and this country.

That is why it is essential now to have a comprehensive approach of investing in the success of newcomers. We do that with our English-as-a-second-language programs, with our settlement programs, with our Job Connect programs. All these programs which go on throughout the country, and especially in Ontario, are critical investments in these newcomers so they can transition from their skills in India or Pakistan or Dubai to a job here in Ontario. That kind of transition has been very rocky in recent years for those that are especially highly qualified. And remember, the highly qualified make up about 15% of the newcomers; in other words, those with the degrees and the academic credentials, the training. The other 85% are also in need of support, so we also have to offer support for the whole population, not just the 15%.

This bill deals mostly with the 15% that come under the regulatory professions. We know, from talking to the Conference Board of Canada, from talking to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, that it is not only a benefit to the newcomers if we invest in their transition into new jobs; it's of optimum benefit to the Ontario economy, the Canadian economy, that these newcomers can continue to practise and work in their chosen fields that they're qualified for.

In Ontario, we are actually losing economic opportunity by not having these newcomers able to work in their chosen professions or fields. There is an economic loss that takes place every day because very talented

newcomers aren't able to achieve their career goals here in Canada and Ontario. The same thing happens as far as the individual is concerned. Many newcomers who cannot find the job they're trained for suffer all kinds of frustrations, lack of family harmony. They really feel let down when they come here because they're not given the opportunity to practise and work in the field they're trained for.

That is why, for years, there have been many attempts and many discussions about why we have so many underachieving newcomers, and we should do something about it. I know, in talking to Debbie Douglas and others—Kay Blair from MicroSkills—all across this province they will tell you that for 25 years they've been talking about some way of ensuring that these trained professionals have a fair chance at getting a job, following a career they're trained for.

This bill attempts to address that opportunity for newcomers. There are many other strategies that have to be employed, but this is part of a comprehensive strategy.

As you know, part of the problem also lies with our immigration selection system. It's called the point system, where Ontario and its labour market needs are never met by the present system as it's now structured. We're asking to reform that system, make it better, because, as much as the challenges come to the doors of the regulatory bodies who choose who's licensed in Ontario, many of the challenges arise from the fact that our immigration selection system is, at best, dysfunctional.

For instance, every year in Ontario, through the present system, 15,000 to 20,000 engineers come to Ontario—15,000 to 20,000—with aspirations of getting work in that field. When they come to Canada and Ontario, there's no connection with the reality of the job market. We already graduate 5,000 engineers here in Ontario. That's why we've asked the federal government to reform and change the point system so there's better correlation between who they select to come into Canada and Ontario and the jobs that are available—that has to be done also because sometimes the undue pressure at the doors of the regulatory body is caused by the fact there's no connection between the immigration selection system and the job markets here in Ontario. Ontario has been saying repeatedly, "We love the fact that there are engineers, there are nurses, there are highly qualified academics coming to Ontario, but we also need blue-collar workers. We need bricklayers. We need midwives. We need truck drivers." But the present system of selection doesn't allow easy entry for those highly motivated individuals who may not have the academic credentials but still want to come to Ontario. So we are working with the federal government and Minister Solberg to try and change that selection system to make it much more reasonable and wider in scope beyond what it is right now.

Bill 124 tries to address the reality of the fact that when a foreign-trained individual comes to Canada and Ontario, there is a complexity of regulatory bodies, 34 in all, that range from architecture to the College of Phys-

icians and Surgeons of Ontario to the College of Midwives of Ontario, the chartered accountants' institute, teachers' colleges and engineering. All of these regulatory bodies, up until this bill is proposed, have never had oversight by a provincial government. This is the first bill of its kind in Ontario or in Canada where these 34 bodies that are independent under statute—in fact, the Law Society of Upper Canada, which is under the regulatory bodies, dates back to 1797. What this bill is saying is, it respects their independence, but when it comes to fair access, it is asking them to follow the establishment of a fair access code of registration that is open, accountable, applicant-friendly and easy to understand, where the application forms are in understandable English and there is fair due process. That's one of the major components of this bill.

1610

The second component of this bill asks for the establishment of a fairness commissioner. The role of the fair access or fairness commissioner would be to ensure that the practices of the 34 independent regulatory bodies adhere to the test of fairness, ensuring that applications don't cost above and beyond what is reasonable to be licensed; to ensure that when someone makes an application, they don't wait a year and a half to get a response back from the regulatory body; to ensure that if someone asks why their application was refused, they get an answer; to ensure that the person who is assessing the application, if it was denied, is not the same one undertaking the appeal of the application. So there would be an appointment of a fairness commissioner who would be the champion of newcomers applying to go through this regulatory process.

By the way, this is not just for the internationally trained. These fair practice codes and the fairness commissioner would help all applicants who are trying to get into regulatory bodies. Whether they're a foreign-trained individual, the member from Essex's son or anybody who's been here a long time, they would all benefit from this fair access. So it's beneficial to all, that all would have this benefit of the fairness commissioner and a fair access code.

The third part of this bill, which again is one of the main recommendations made by all the stakeholders and the front-line workers helping newcomers, is that there has to be some kind of resource centre within government that would enable newcomers to get resources, to get information, and help newcomers navigate through this complex system of regulatory licensing. So this bill, if passed, would establish an access centre for the internationally trained. They would get independent advice from a government public servant that would work in partnership with the community agencies to ensure that they get the right information, the right direction and the right counselling, you might say.

For instance, I was told just last week in my own office that there is a pair of brothers who own a refrigeration company in my riding who for years have been hiring foreign-trained technicians to work in the refriger-

ation unit they have. They said that one of the frustrations they have is that people come to their office every day. One who came to their office the other day had been working at a minimum-wage factory job for seven years, and they asked him, "Why did you come and apply for this job only now? Why did you wait seven years?" What the applicant said to them was, "Well, I've been so busy trying to put food on the table and so busy paying my rent that I really didn't have time. I didn't know where to go to find information." When he came to the office of the two young owners of this refrigeration company, they told him that if he were to take a six-month course—and there's a brief three-month course at George Brown College—he would be able to qualify in gas-fitting, which would give him an almost instant job paying over \$20, \$25 an hour. But he wasn't aware of the fact that in Ontario he would have had that opportunity to be licensed in gas-fitting, which is for heating, and refrigeration. There are many newcomers in Ontario who come from countries like Pakistan who are, for instance, very capable in refrigeration but they don't have experience on the heating side. That kind of information was not available to this newcomer who had been working in this factory for so many years.

That's why we need the information that is now provided in many cases by settlement agencies. But we need a place in government that promotes this kind of communication to newcomers, a place where they can go, a place where they can get this kind of direction—not seven years later but when they come into this province.

This province has incredible opportunity because of the newcomers coming here. We are endowed by so many wonderful, creative people who have built cities like Markham, Brampton, Mississauga—look at Toronto. I was in Windsor just the other day. I was in Leamington, where an immigrant family has just built this incredible greenhouse operation. These success stories can be even greater if we give more attention to opportunities for newcomers, and this bill is really a strong statement, basically saying that everyone has to do better, all the regulatory bodies; government has to do better.

That's why the fairness commissioner in government will work together with the regulatory bodies to ensure that their practices aren't redundant, to make sure their practices are reasonable and affordable. That is why this legislation calls for the fairness commissioner to work with the regulatory bodies.

It also asks the fairness commissioner to require annual reporting of the regulatory bodies so we know how many applicants applied and how many failed. With that kind of data that would be regularly available, we could then find out if there's a common thread of why a certain number of applicants to become perhaps nurses are failing. We would then be able to fund a program that would fill that gap, so we wouldn't just have the failures and rejections. But right now we don't have the comprehensive data to know how many applied, how many failed, and this reporting is essential.

The act also calls for the fairness commissioner to undertake audits of the regulatory bodies. That doesn't

mean an audit is done every day or every year. It could be done every three years, at the discretion of the fairness commissioner, to ensure that there is comprehensive compliance. So the audit function is one that I think works with the regulatory bodies but also sets a high standard that the regulatory bodies have to ensure that this is not just an ad hoc approach; it's a systemic, legislative approach. We're all regulatory bodies.

I know a number of regulatory bodies have spoken to many of us over the year, year and a half. They said, "We shouldn't be included. Our processes are very good." I've said, "Yes, your processes are very good, but we can't exclude you, because we want to have this uniformity of fair practices." So if they have a good process, and many of them do, they will have nothing to worry about. The open process is there. They can continue to do what they've done. That's why I'm glad to hear that a number of regulatory bodies are supportive of this bill.

We've had support from the chartered accountants, management accountants. We've had support from the Professional Engineers of Ontario. We've had support from the Law Society of Upper Canada. We haven't had support from all the regulatory bodies; I can sort of understand. Some of them, for 150 years, have never had this kind of legislation. They've never had this kind of compulsion to co-operate on ensuring fairness and opportunity for newcomers. So I can understand that they've never had this approach before.

As I said, thankfully many of them see that this is essential. We can't afford to maintain the status quo anymore. We need to raise the bar. We need to be proactive. We need to ensure that all the regulatory bodies are in compliance, co-operating and listening. As I said at the very beginning, it is not just the fault of the regulatory bodies that we sometimes have this gridlock with our newcomers, because the gridlock is sometimes a reflection of society.

You know, for many years the word "immigration" was like a four-letter word. Immigration now has been accepted by almost all parties—not in the political sense. It is a positive. Immigration has built our cities.

1620

I know that in Portugal they're running ads thanking immigrants for coming to Portugal. I saw that. That's why, in our government, we ran the first ads by any government which asked employers to hire immigrants. It's part of our Mumbai campaign. You may have seen it. The ad has a young lady speaking Hindi walking into an office, talking to someone long distance in Mumbai about the fact that they got a contract for Peterborough to open up a plant. We did that in French and in English. It has been very well received. People said, "Wow; it is so important to remind us of how important it is to give an opportunity to a newcomer." Because it's not only, as I said, good for that newcomer, but that newcomer brings global experience to the table, international experience. You've heard it over and over again, to the point where we're all tired of it: The applicant comes in. "Where is your Canadian experience? Sorry, you can't get the job.

Canadian experience is needed." The person says, "I just worked as the project manager on the Three Gorges dam, and I can't work on a sewer project in Pefferlaw?" "Well, you don't have Canadian experience."

That kind of attitude has got to change. Canadian experience is complemented by international experience. Canadian experience is complemented by global experience, especially in light of the fact that our economy is only 0.5% of the global economy. So if I can get someone who has experience in India and Pakistan and China and I can get that person to work in my plant, what am I bringing to the table? I'm bringing to the table global experience. It's a global economy. It makes us more competitive. Smart companies are doing that.

One of the areas that is really co-operative is the financial services sector—our banks, insurance companies. They know who their customers are. They know who they have to market to. They know that this talent, international talent, enriches their coffers too, but enriches their workplace. That's the kind of message that this bill is trying to give out, that it's part of a new mindset we need. It's part of reaching out to business, reaching out to our academic institutions, reaching out to our regulatory bodies, saying that we must all do better and as governments we haven't done enough. We're starting to do more and we have to do more.

That's why, beyond this bill, we've also made the biggest breakthrough of all: Thankfully, after 20-odd years of trying, we finally got the federal government to agree that there are immigrants in Ontario. It took 20-odd years. We got the federal-provincial, Ontario-Canada immigration agreement signed last November, finally. I remember talking to Bob Rae, saying that they were trying to deal with that back in the early 1990s. By getting that agreement, what it means is that there is at last going to be an investment of \$920 million into Ontario, not to the government of Ontario but to the service providers and program enhancement in the communities across Ontario, whether it be Peterborough, whether it be Simcoe, whether it be Leamington, Niagara Falls. That's where that \$920 million will go: into the communities. So you can imagine how much good that money would have done to all of our communities and our newcomers if we had gotten that money at the same time Quebec did, in 1992. We never did get it. That's why I'm so proud of our Premier, who, over and over again, stood up in this House, stood up across the country, saying, "It is wrong that if a newcomer goes to Montreal or Quebec, they get \$4,000 worth of federal investment in their success as newcomers, in their programs in Quebec. That same newcomer coming to Mississauga got \$800 worth of federal program investment." We told the previous Liberal government, we've told the present Conservative government, that that was unfair to Ontario, it was unfair to Ontario's newcomers and it deprived many of these newcomers of the opportunity to reach their potential because you need those dollars to ensure you have language training programs, counselling, Job Connect programs, LINC programs, counselling for some of our

immigrants who need help overcoming the stress and frustration sometimes that the seniors and their children have. That money was never invested in Ontario. Our agencies that were on the front lines never had the kind of resource to provide the services they needed to provide. They somehow hung on by a thread, and it's a tribute to the agencies—some of them with us here today, like OCASI and COSTI—that for years toiled with very limited resources.

Thankfully, we've got that money committed, but let me tell you, the money is flowing very slowly. So if you know a federal cousin or something, please tell them we're waiting for that money. The agencies here have been waiting for that money. I know they have good intentions and they keep saying the money is coming soon, but we've been waiting for over 20 years. We need that money to flow into the community groups; we need that money to flow into the schools. We need that money to start flowing; it's there.

I've had a very good relationship with Minister Solberg. He's been very co-operative and he assures me the money is soon coming. I sincerely hope it is.

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): The cheque is in the mail.

Hon. Mr. Colle: The cheque is in the mail. No, it's there. Some of it has already flowed, so we've got some breakthroughs.

The other thing I want to say is that, beyond that historical agreement, we've also looked at ourselves as a government and we've said, "One other thing we can do: If we're going to ask industry to do more, we're also going to do more as a government." That's why we've set up an internship program within the civil service. We're asking all ministries to give an opportunity to foreign-trained individuals in a six-month internship program where they get paid \$2,000 a month so they can get valuable experience in the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Energy, Ontario Power Generation, the LCBO. That program has been established and it's got great potential to really show that all of our ministries and our agencies are also doing the right thing. That is the first program of its kind in Canada, where an internship program for the internationally trained will now be part of all of our ministries' mandates. I hope we get moving, and I want to see the LCBO and Ontario Hydro, Ontario Power Generation—all of them—start into this internship program, which is a great breakthrough.

The other thing which is very significant is that many of our advocates told us that what newcomers also need is a little bit of financial help in the first few months or year or two when they come here. We've established, along with the Maytree Foundation, which is a great charitable foundation that has helped newcomers for many years, and TRIEC, which is a great economic council for the greater Toronto area and beyond—with their partnership, we've established for the first time a fund for the internationally trained. Up to \$5,000 is available so that an internationally trained individual who may have to pay for a course or a fee or an assessment

will be able to access this. That's a repayable loan especially targeted for the internationally trained. Many of them said that in the first few months it's pretty hard to get money in to pay their rent, their transportation fees, when they're not working. They said, "Please do something to give us a bit of money to tide us over until we get a job that will pay us a decent wage." That loan program is under way and is available to all the internationally trained.

We also are very proud of the fact that in Ontario we have an extensive English-as-a-second-language program for adults, which for the most part is for the internationally trained seeking improvement. That English-as-a-second-language or French-as-a-second-language program is now under my ministry, and it's about that \$53 million a year we are investing for adult ESL throughout Ontario, mostly administered through the school boards, but also through other community agencies.

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Just to let you know, that program is now being revised. It's being made more robust, there's a new curriculum and there has also been the establishment of a more career-focused English language. The newcomer not only learns basic English but learns English they would need to be an accountant, English they would need to be a nurse or English they would need to be a physician.

This new ESL program is now focused on occupation-specific English along with the regular English, because that's what the newcomers and the agency said was needed: an English-as-a-second-language program that was updated. It hadn't been updated in a couple of decades, so now, in co-operation with the professionals who are overseeing the curriculum revision, an update is under way and will soon be delivered in this new, robust format to help newcomers.

As you know, the other thing that works very well for newcomers, which is a complement to this bill—because the regulatory bodies do their part. One of the things the regulatory bodies do say is that sometimes an experience you may have in another country just needs some acclimatization to an Ontario or a Toronto or Leamington or Sudbury work experience. This is why we have established—and I think it was the previous government that first started it—the internationally trained bridge training programs. We have been spending up to \$37 million over the last three years for this very successful program.

The beauty of this program was brought home to me when I visited Ryerson. I went to a graduation ceremony for 34 midwives. They had come from Iran, Iraq, Ethiopia, Egypt, and they were so excited about the fact that they were able to take a bit of a bridge training program which gave the best of their experiences overseas into the Ontario experience with the College of Midwives of Ontario. Along with the expert and wonderful teachers at Ryerson—the school of continuing education at Ryerson is exceptional—they were so happy to be able to get this enhanced language training. They also got the sort of prepping on how to do better on the exam for licensing.

The beauty of the program was that there was a 100% pass rate for the midwives program.

We just expanded the program for nursing. It's been in Hamilton and Ottawa. It's called the CARE program. It's another bridge training program that has now been expanded to Hamilton. That CARE program—again, with the College of Nurses—ensures that nurses who are trained internationally get the best sort of acclimatization to nursing in Ontario. The pass rate before we had the program for nursing was about 20% to 25%. When they take the CARE program, the pass rate for internationally trained nurses has gone up to 80%—from 25% to 80%.

That is why I reinforce the fact that it is important to work in collaboration with the regulatory bodies and colleges and to work in collaboration with the agencies to ensure that there are fair rules and that there are also resources for them to get the right information, the right direction and the right courses to take. We also have to ensure, when there are shortcomings or needs identified, that these investments are made so they will be able to become full-time practising architects or veterinary doctors or whatever they wish here in Ontario.

This legislation, again, is an attempt to reflect the many years of input that our settlement workers and our community agencies have given us. It is a reflection of the fact that many of our newcomers have spoken out loudly and clearly that the status quo is not acceptable, that we all have to do better, that we have to make things fairer—that it's very good to welcome people into Ontario, but that we make sure we're doing everything we possibly can to give them a fair chance of achieving their life dream and their career.

That's what this bill does. It works in an area that has not been easy for government to tackle, but I think we all agree that this will benefit all of these wonderfully talented, gifted people we're blessed with who come to Ontario. It also sets up a very strong framework for helping newcomers through the access centre, fairness commissioner, so that they will get support as they go through sometimes very complex systems.

In conclusion, I want to say thank you again to the guests who have come here today and the countless others who have been helping newcomers quietly and without resources in all of our communities, in all of our cities, across Ontario. They know too well that these wonderful people are all asking for a fair chance. So this Bill 124 is an attempt to do something about fairness, transparency and accountability so that these wonderful people will get to work, feed their families and contribute to Ontario's economy so that we can really celebrate our diversity, our multiculturalism, economically and socially. We really need to do this more than ever because we are in such a competitive world. Just out of equity and fairness, we have to do this. *Merci beaucoup.*

The Acting Speaker: The member for London—Fanshawe.

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London—Fanshawe): Before I start, I want to also recognize all the people with us in the gallery today who worked very hard to make this bill

happen. I also want to thank the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration for his leadership in this field. Without him, I guess we couldn't do what we're doing today.

This bill is about fairness. It's about transparency and consistency, accountability and high standards. It's about opportunity. It's about our basic values as Ontarians. This bill is about prosperity and success for our province in the years ahead. It's about making the most of our limitless possibility to compete in the global economy. But most importantly, this legislation is about people. The Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, will help make sure that Ontario's immigrants have a fair shot at success. The legislation will help Ontario to continue to attract the best and brightest people from around the globe.

This issue of fair access to regulated professions is of enormous economic, social and cultural importance to immigrants. This bill is of tremendous symbolic importance to newcomers. It says to all Ontario's people, "You are full partners in our society and we will do everything we can to help you succeed." This legislation before us is an enlightened, balanced and progressive response to a long-standing problem. Through Bill 124, more of our province's people will be able to apply their advanced education, experience, ideas, creativity and knowledge of the world.

This debate is very close to my heart. At the age of 29 I was a newcomer to Ontario. I couldn't speak English, only knew a few people here and wasn't absolutely sure of how I would make my mark. But I know one thing for sure: I was at home here in Ontario. Thanks to the friends I had, the warm welcome I received from Ontarians and the help I obtained from many settlement agencies in London, I began to build a life for myself. I was fortunate. I found a way to make the most of my bachelor's degree in sociology and master's degree in social politics from the Lebanese university, and I was able to carry on my Ph.D. studies here in Ontario. By having the capacity to make the most of my education from abroad, I was able to work as a counsellor for Ontarians with disabilities. Using my teacher's diploma from the Lebanese Ministry of Education, I had a solid foundation to be a teacher in London, and my accountant diploma proved extremely valuable to me as a small business person.

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I want every immigrant to have the same full opportunity as I have had. I want to make sure that all those much-needed professionals are able to provide their services to Ontarians, just as I have been able to, and just as my wife has had the opportunity to do with her medical degree from abroad. Ontario needs those talented immigrants who have not found work in their professions to find work. Ontario needs those people to succeed. We need the doctors, nurses, engineers, laboratory technologists, pharmacists, teachers and accountants. Our loved ones will benefit from more respiratory therapists, physiotherapists, dentists and optometrists. With this legislation, newcomers will finally be in a position to put their advanced knowledge and wisdom to full use, for the

benefit of themselves, their families and all of our society.

While maintaining the independence of the regulated professions, this legislation makes certain that there is a clear, fair process, with common benchmarks across the board. If you're a foreign-trained professional, your education and credentials would be assessed fairly and within a reasonable time. You will know the rules up front, and your experience will be judged objectively. If you need Canadian work experience, specialized language training or any information about registration documents, you will have easy access to the information you require.

Every person in this Legislature knows a foreign-educated professional working at a minimum task, while businesses, hospitals and communities across the province are short of their talents. There is something very wrong here. There is something very wrong when we attract exceptional people to Ontario and then watch them struggle to have their credentials recognized. That's what we are all determined to change. That's what this legislation, the first of its kind in Canada, will help to change. This legislation will cut through the red tape and knock down the barriers standing between talented immigrants and their capacity for success. With this bill, we are saying very clearly that Ontario will always be on the side of newcomers. We want to seek out immigrants and we want them to shine in their chosen fields.

If passed and implemented, the bill will change the lives of thousands of professionals trained outside Ontario and it will provide profound benefit to the province as a whole. Together, Ontarians will make our province stronger, better, richer and more appealing by actively encouraging the contribution of all. That's what makes Ontario a great province. Should this bill pass with support from all members, it will be a very good day for immigrants and a very good day for Ontario. We are providing a welcome mat to a brighter future for all of us.

Thank you very much for allowing me to speak.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): It's my pleasure to add some comments to the speech from the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and also the member from London–Fanshawe on Bill 124, An Act to provide for fair registration practices in Ontario's regulated professions.

I do want to speak on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus and note that we certainly support all measures to provide for foreign-trained professionals and skilled workers to have access to success and to remove unnecessary barriers.

This bill has taken a long time to get here, and I would like to point out the actual commitment the government made in the past election. I note that Mr. Prue, on June 8 when it was introduced, noted that the government has been in power three years and they promised in the last election, "We will require that all Ontario trades and professions accelerate the entry of qualified new Canadians. If, after one year, the professional trade has not elimin-

ated barriers to entry, we will act." That was in the election. We note that it's three years later and we have a bill that hopefully will improve things, but there are certainly some questions to be answered.

I note some commentary in the National Post, July 15, 2006, which notes that:

"The problem with Bill 124's proposed solution is that it (a) whittles away the autonomy of private association; (b) replaces self-regulation with state regulation; (c) adds another layer of bureaucracy; and (d) instead of reducing obtuse uptightness, it only stirs it up, spreads it around and gives it more room to manoeuvre.

"If Ontario ever gets a Fairness Fairy, you can bet on one thing: The chief concern of his or her office won't be either fairness or openness or expediency. It will be political correctness."

There are obviously many questions as to whether this bill has been properly thought out, whether it's actually going to work or whether it's just another level of bureaucracy like LHINs adding to the cost of the health system, not necessarily improving health care or addressing the shortage of doctors and all the problems we have in the many emergency rooms around this province.

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): I believe we have a profound problem in this society, a profound problem with the integration of new Canadians into our society here in Toronto, the GTA and Ontario as a whole. I have felt for a long time that one part of that problem, the recognition of the credentials of professionals, was something that had to be addressed by government, that it was the role of government to take on the responsibilities, the activist role that would be needed to actually break through the barriers and make sure that people's skills, their talents, their commitment and their experience were reflected in the careers that they were able to attain here in this province.

My concern with this bill is that, unfortunately, it does not incorporate a number of the key recommendations made by Judge Thomson in his report. My concern is that failure to integrate key recommendations into this bill will mean that, a year from now, two years from now, the concern we have about the falling income status of new Canadians will continue to be present, that the reputation of this country and the reputation of this province will be darkened in other jurisdictions, in other countries, because people will say, "You come to Canada trained, committed, skilled, educated, but you can't work in the areas where you have talent."

We waste the lives of thousands of people. We undermine our economy when we do not take effective steps to integrate these skilled, talented, energetic people into our lives.

I'm going to talk today about what has to be done to improve this bill.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): To begin with, of course, I think we must commend the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, the Honourable Mike Colle.

As the MPP for Parry Sound–Muskoka quite rightly said, it has taken a long time. I repeat: It has taken a long time. Fundamental change of this calibre, addressing the needs and the regulatory authority of 34 associations, from physicians to nurses to optometrists to chiropractors and so on—that kind of fundamental, generational change is something that, of course, takes a great deal of time, a great deal of thinking, extraordinary insight and, I would also say, leadership. It is something whose time, I'm happy to say, under the watch of Dalton McGuinty, under the watch of this Liberal government, is finally coming to fruition.

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As my colleague the honourable Khalil Ramal from London–Fanshawe quite rightly and eloquently stated, embedded within the logic of this particular bill are the aspirations of many, many families, the aspirations of the new face of Ontario, the aspirations of a whole global community that is taking root and flourishing and is now second-, third-, fourth- and even fifth-generation Canadian.

It has taken, as I said earlier, and as my honourable colleague opposite quite rightly pointed out, a long time. It has taken generations to actually arrive at this moment. With that, I am truly honoured, privileged and humbled to be a participant in this momentous occasion.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): I want to indicate to the minister that I believe, from our perspective, that the legislation is a good first step—good intentions on the part of the government. I don't think we should suggest it's a panacea, but I believe it is a good initiative and one that is long overdue. There is no question that population growth in this province is stagnating to some degree and we can't meet the future demands of the labour market within our borders.

Having been a member of this place and living part-time in Toronto for the past 25 years, I've had the opportunity to meet many people in a range of occupations where they were not able to practise their trained professions or trades because of the barriers that were in front of them once they entered this province or this country. Hopefully this initiative is going to address some of those barriers and allow us to get many more good people into their chosen professions and trades and assist in the growth of this province.

Certainly, we have some concerns about the legislation. Those will be addressed during debate, and hopefully there will be an opportunity at some point for additional input. I think that some of the problems we are faced with—it's a double-edged sword, and we don't have an opportunity to get into all the discussions in a response. But when we are looking especially on the medical side, where we're trying to attract medical professionals and we know there is a dire need in Ontario, what happens is that we are drawing and attracting them from some countries that have much greater needs in terms of the health and well-being of their own populations. That is the downside of this, but hopefully initiatives to encourage training and growth in our own province will address that as well.

The Acting Speaker: I'll turn to the member for London–Fanshawe, who has two minutes.

Mr. Ramal: First, I want to thank all the members from both sides of the House who spoke in support of Bill 124. This bill is about people. It's not about political parties; it's about people. It's long overdue. We have to break down the barriers that are facing many, many talented people who decided to be Ontarians, who decided to be Canadians, who came from many different parts of the globe to give us their talent and their experience. It's our duty as elected officials to help them utilize their ability and their skills to be able to be good citizens of this province, to better themselves, to better their families, and also to help us to continue building this province, to continue helping to build this beautiful province, to help make sure all the elements are being utilized for that cause.

I think this bill is long overdue. I want to thank the government, which gave us the tools. I also want to thank the minister, who took the leadership in this avenue because he believed in it passionately. He saw it firsthand. He knows how important it is, not just for London or Toronto or part of the province of Ontario; it's good for the whole nation. If we are able to utilize those capacities—the doctors, the professors, the teachers, the engineers who come with good intentions to use their skills and their talents—I think we are on the right track.

I would invite all the members of this House to support this bill, because this bill is about people, as I mentioned, not about one party. It's about the talent that is sitting out there, not using their ability, not using their skills. In the meantime, our hospitals need them, our builders need them, our factories need them, our institutions need them. I think that by passing this bill we will give them the ability to participate, to be good builders like everybody else in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): I'm certainly pleased to announce, first of all, that we had reached agreement to stand down the lead. So I am going to be speaking first, and our member from Oak Ridges will be following up.

The Acting Speaker: Is there consent of the House to stand down the lead of the official opposition? Agreed.

I return to the member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

Mrs. Witmer: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 124, entitled the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006. This act, of course, is going to provide for fair registration in Ontario's regulated professions.

Let me put on the record, first and foremost, that certainly the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus does recognize that foreign-trained professionals and skilled workers must—and I stress the word “must”—have the barriers removed from their path to success. In fact, prior to 2003, our party actually was working on legislation that we could bring forward and introduce.

I would say, from my own personal experience as the daughter of immigrants, as an immigrant myself, that I

have long been aware of barriers that people have faced when they've come to this country with knowledge, with skill, with a trade, with a profession. It was certainly reinforced for me when I was chair of the Waterloo county school board. We had many, many immigrants who came to this country whose children were engaged in our heritage language programs, and again, we had many, many disappointed, frustrated, dejected parents who came—highly skilled professionals, skilled trades, different areas—and continued to knock on doors and find those doors closed. One of the barriers I heard about over and over again was the lack of experience they had in Ontario or the lack of experience they had in Canada. So I certainly recognize and acknowledge that there have been problems. The problems need to be resolved, and we have this bill.

Although there are parts of this bill that I think need some amendment—in fact, parts of this bill are not consistent with the recommendations Justice George Thomson put forward—I do believe it is the right thing to do and that we need to move forward as quickly as possible to ensure that those individuals who, like my family, chose to make Ontario and Canada our home have the opportunities available that all people do.

If I take a look at this bill, I am disappointed. It has taken a long time to get here. The government originally pledged that it would all happen within one year, and here we are three years later and just barely beginning the process. It's important, as we take a look at this bill, that it ensures that there is balance. We need to take a look and make sure that it does remove the barriers, the obstacles, for those who come to this country with skills and professions. At the same time, obviously, we need to balance that with preserving the important independent roles and duties of Ontario's 36 regulated professions. This bill deals with 21 health colleges and 15 non-health professional bodies. So there is a careful balancing act that is going to be required.

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I would say that in my own community, Kitchener-Waterloo, I have certainly met with, throughout my time as an MPP, many individuals who have been looking to gain full-time employment here in the province of Ontario and have been denied the opportunity to do so. Again, this bill is going to help those individuals.

My community has recognized for several years now the important contribution that immigrants make to the economic life of our province and our community, and I will tell you that our business community has been working hand in hand with others in order to ensure that those barriers are removed and that all individuals who come to this country have the same opportunity to be gainfully employed. So I am proud of my community, and I'm proud of the leadership that they have shown in trying to make sure that all immigrants have equal opportunity to get the job and to be able to use the skills and the profession for which they have trained.

I know of one young woman who came to this country with her husband. She had been trained as a doctor in a

European country, and to this day, she has actually never had the opportunity to practise. I hope for her and for others that this bill will eventually give her that opportunity. So certainly I do support this bill and, as I say, I know that I speak for many people in my community who also acknowledge the importance of moving forward.

I think that for a long time we had hoped that many of the health colleges and many of the other non-health professional bodies would put in place steps that would help facilitate the entry into practice of these individuals or help them gain a position. Unfortunately, sometimes it does require just an extra push in order to make sure that this does happen. So I would just like to put on the record some issues that we need to consider.

I want to talk a little bit about this fairness commissioner because, in many ways, this bill does stray from the recommendations that were made in Justice George Thomson's report. The most contentious initiatives of the government not recommended by Justice Thomson included the creation of a fairness commissioner and regular audits. He did not recommend this, and I think we need to take a look at that fairness commissioner, because we need to keep in mind that the 36 regulatory bodies in Ontario do have specific mandates. They have been invested with those mandates by this Legislature and thus the people in the province of Ontario.

We now have the creation of a fairness commissioner, which was not recommended by Justice Thomson, with the right to coerce. I think we have to be very careful, because the idea and model of professional governance has served this province well for decades, and we need to make sure, as I think I said before, that there's balance. We need to remove the obstacles in the way of skilled immigrants and workers, but at the same time, we need to also continue to recognize the important independent status of Ontario's 36 regulated professions. Unfortunately, as we set up this apparatus called the fairness commissioner, it will also mean that, in some respects, we're putting another barrier in the process, because it's going to take, certainly, once the passage of this bill occurs, some months to put in place this particular office.

The other thing he did not recommend was regular audits. Again, we need to take a look at this, because it could move professional bodies away from assessing competence and could actually hinder the progress of foreign-trained workers. So you've got this audit function and this fairness commissioner, both of which were not recommended by Justice Thomson, and they could become a fault-finding approach that would become adversarial. I don't think that's what we want to see. We want to expedite the process, we want to break down the barriers in order to allow the skilled workers and the professionals to get a job in their chosen fields. Again, we need to be pretty careful that we don't put more barriers in the way of what is already in place here.

The fairness commissioner has been given very broad and discretionary powers. Those certainly can be potentially problematic. Self-regulation could be threatened by

the fairness commissioner's sweeping powers to conduct audits; in here, it says that it would be at his or her discretion. I think those are things that we need to take a look at, and we certainly need to ensure that we are not putting further barriers in the way of access to the profession or trade. In fact, there are those who suggest that putting a fairness commissioner in place and introducing audits actually adds a new layer of bureaucracy that could cause delays. So we now have new reporting requirements necessary and we have costly audit processes, and we just need to make sure that nothing prevents the entry into practice for those individuals who are looking for jobs.

There are some other concerns that have already been raised, and maybe we need to take a look at those. My colleague Mr. Miller did quote from the National Post, I believe, from Saturday, July 15. When I take a look at what they say, they actually do echo some of the other concerns that I've just enunciated. They believe that Bill 124 "whittles away the autonomy of private association ... replaces self-regulation with state regulation ... adds another layer of bureaucracy ... and ... instead of reducing obtuse uptightness, it only stirs it up, spreads it around, and gives it more room to manoeuvre."

They certainly do indicate that they have some concerns. They also expressed some concerns about the fairness commissioner. So again, I think it's important that we do take a look at the role and responsibility of the individual who is going to assume responsibility. There are certainly some concerns that are being expressed.

One of the other concerns that we need to put on the record: Although we're finally seeing legislation—as I say, I support the legislation—I have over the many years, whether as an immigrant, an MPP or chair of a school board, certainly seen people come face to face with barriers that would allow them to work in their chosen field. But we also need to recognize that we probably have a better job to do in making sure that individuals, before they come to this country, are aware of what might be required. In fact, perhaps we need to do some work in the country of origin and allow them to start taking some steps towards meeting the requirements of certification that are going to be necessary. I think we do have a job to do. Yes, we can try to eliminate the barriers here, but maybe we could give them a step at home and allow them to start working towards their qualifications and their Ontario-Canadian certification in their own country. It's certainly something we need to take a look at.

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I have here a press release that was put out by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario. The reason I want to refer to it is because we know we have a doctor shortage in Ontario. We have 1.2 million people who do not have a family doctor, and unfortunately only 11% of doctors are now taking new patients. That's down from about 40% five years ago. We also know that about 57% of doctors in the next few years are going to be nearing retirement age and they're going to be retiring.

So the concerns put on the record by the College of Physicians and Surgeons is important. They are concerned that this bill will not improve access for the international medical graduates in Ontario. They say, "In fact, the legislation does nothing to address the root cause of the physician shortage in this province, and adds a new layer of bureaucracy that may in fact cause delays to college processes."

They talk about the legislation introducing new reporting requirements, costly audit processes, and reducing the flexibility of the current registration process to consider the competence of individual applicants rather than whether or not they actually have the specific credentials. Again, there is concern. Obviously, when we in this province are absolutely desperate for new doctors, we do not want to put any impediments in the way of increasing opportunities for IMGs to practise in Ontario.

They go on to say, "The legislation will not increase opportunities for IMGs to fully participate in Ontario's health care system." Instead, this is what should happen if we want those IMGs practising in the province of Ontario to deal with the doctor shortage, which has become a shortage of crisis proportions, and we now have an increase of underserved communities. It's up about 10 from the time that we left office; it's up around 136. In fact, they've just put my community of Kitchener-Waterloo back on the underserved list after taking it off about a year ago.

This is what the College of Physicians and Surgeons says we need to do if we want the doctors fully participating in our health care system:

"—Assess every IMG and if necessary, provide" him and her "with training;

"—Market Ontario as a great place to work for health professionals and encourage Ontario physicians to return." We've got over 9,000 in the United States. We've got to bring them back to this country.

"—Create a health human resource planning body; and

"—Develop and incorporate collaborative care models into our health care system."

They conclude their press release by saying:

"We believe that this legislation will have a number of unintended consequences.... At a time when we desperately need qualified physicians, we should not be adding new layers of bureaucracy, duplication and expense to the process, but looking for changes that will have a positive impact on access to licensure in Ontario and access to quality care for patients."

I wanted to put on the table some of the concerns that have been expressed. I am particularly concerned about the fact that the College of Physicians and Surgeons is suggesting that this legislation, Bill 124, will put more roadblocks in the way to making sure we have the doctors we need in Ontario. I like what they're saying about assessing every IMG and, if necessary, providing him and her with training. I think it's a great suggestion. Obviously, some people are going to need more training than others. So I am concerned that this particular piece

of legislation could do exactly the opposite and simply add new layers of bureaucracy, duplication and expense and will not expedite or facilitate the process.

I hope that the government will have more consultations. Obviously there is interest in this issue throughout the province. As I say, in my own community we've recognized that this is a problem. The business community is working together with other community groups, and certainly we in the region of Waterloo, in the cities of Kitchener and Waterloo, want to be part of the solution. We want to make sure we can move any legislation that meets the needs of newcomers and that we have these people actively participating in our workplace. In talking to people—I'll tell you, these newcomers do add a lot to the workplace. They bring their own experience. They bring their own skills. My daughter had the opportunity to work at a financial institution and she learned so much from people who had come from different parts of the world. It certainly helped her better do her job and be a better person.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Tabuns: I don't think that anyone in this chamber is interested in reducing the quality of professional service in this province. We all recognize that having self-regulating professions is to our advantage. But I think everyone in this chamber recognizes that the structure of registration, the methods by which we assess the qualifications and skills to those who come to this country, have been problematic. I know without a doubt that people come to this country who are extraordinarily well qualified, who are accomplished engineers, accomplished accountants, accomplished doctors. Yet, when they come here, all too often they run into obstacles. So I'm listening to what has been said here, the suggestion that perhaps what is proposed goes too far, brings up too much bureaucracy. I have to say that my concern is not that this bill goes too far; it's that it does not go far enough.

I think if we want to deal with the whole question of bureaucratization, we should be assisting our professional associations, our professional regulators, to develop reciprocal arrangements with regulatory bodies in other countries to recognize that an accountant in one country has the same skills as an accountant in Ontario. Signing agreements: We need to be doing that; we need to be doing a lot of that. We need, as a government, to be assisting those international professionals, those internationally educated professionals, through their associations, to develop those agreements, put them in place so that very rapidly when people come here, it can be determined that they have the skill and the background to actually practise in this province.

Mr. Ramal: I was listening carefully to the member from Kitchener-Waterloo. I will thank her for her support and understanding the importance of newcomers to this economy and how much we have to do in order to utilize their abilities and their skills. She also mentioned that we delayed this bill. I want to tell the honourable member that we appointed Judge Thomson in 2004. He reported

to us in 2005. We are here in 2006, proposing the bill to the House, and hopefully we'll get support from all the members. I have a sense that all the members from both sides are going to support it.

I met with the college of physicians many different times and listened to their concerns. But when you regulate, when you have a proposed bill, you cannot have an exemption for any regulated body. As you know, we have 21 regulated health professions and we have 13 non-health regulated professions. We cannot exempt any one of those. We have to apply fairness at all the levels of the regulatory bodies. I heard the member from Toronto—Danforth talking about the bill not going far enough, and the other, Conservative side saying the bill goes too far, putting blocks and barriers against the people who want to fit into society, integrate and get accredited in this province.

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We work on a daily basis with all the regulatory bodies in Ontario. We consult them on a daily basis to seek their opinions on how we can pass this bill, how we can work with them in order to establish a good way to utilize and have all the people who have foreign-trained skills to be accredited in Ontario without jeopardizing the standards put in, without affecting the regulatory bodies that already existed before this bill.

The intent of the bill is to apply fairness, and this is what we're all about in this province.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean—Carleton): I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this bill. I find it somewhat humbling to be able to speak to this bill, because the first time I worked in a constituency office—for the provincial member who used to hold Nepean—Carleton, John Baird—one of the first issues I dealt with was a foreign-trained doctor who was unable to work at one of our hospitals in Ottawa. So I am very happy to see that this is a great first step toward ensuring that that individual will be able to work as a doctor in our great city.

My party obviously supports foreign-trained professionals and skilled workers coming into Ontario, and we'd like to see that the unnecessary barriers are removed from their paths to success. I appreciated my colleague's comments on balance. We on this side will certainly be making sure that the bill is monitored to make sure it balances the needs: to remove obstacles that skilled immigrants and workers face and preserve the important independent roles and duties of Ontario's 36 regulated professions.

Currently in Ontario, as the honourable minister had mentioned, we are moving forward with the federal government. I'm very pleased that the federal Conservative government is working hard to ensure that foreign credentials will be recognized not only in Ontario but throughout Canada.

I just want to say, in the short period of time I have left, that there are some concerns on this bill. Balance is one. But Raymond Micah, executive director of the African Canadian Social Development Council, sees it as a glass half full and wants to see the rest of the glass

filled. So he says, “We are somewhat happy. We have for a very long time had a concern about the barriers in the registration process for all professional immigrants.” And he said that, while he likes the idea of making professional bodies more open and fair, he wonders to what degree the government will be able to do forced compliance since the bodies are independent. So I hope that that will be addressed.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I wanted to leave it until others had an opportunity, but there is a chance to be up on this, and I’m glad that we are moving in this particular direction.

You will hear from some out there who are going to express their opposition. Very often they are the same people who for years have prevented legislation of this kind from reaching the floor of the Ontario Legislature and who, when they have been in a position to make it easier for those who have received their training outside the country, have been part of the problem. I hope that they will join with those of us in this Legislature who believe that this legislation will provide the opportunity for foreign-trained professionals to integrate into our society by obtaining the kinds of jobs that their qualifications and education entitle them to if they meet all other requirements.

We are a country of immigrants, if you think of it. Each one of us—outside of those who are aboriginal people in our country—in our ancestors, are immigrants to this country. I’m sure there were people who, as each wave of people came over, said, “Those people coming in,” whoever they happened to be at that time, “really can’t fit into these upper-echelon jobs. We’ll let them do some of the other jobs even though they may be well qualified.”

I think we’re a much more enlightened world today. We recognize that people are much more mobile in the world, that we are competing for professionals, and we are privileged to have those who have joined our own country of Canada, who have chosen this country and want to practise in this country. There is another group of individuals as well that we want to encourage to participate, and that is those Canadians who have gone abroad, Canadian youngsters in particular, and have obtained their training abroad in some very good schools overseas and are also looking for the opportunity to take up professional occupations wherever they can.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time for questions and comments. I’ll return to the member for Kitchener–Waterloo for her reply.

Mrs. Witmer: Let me express my appreciation to those who participated: the member from London–Fanshawe, the member from Beaches–East York, the member from Nepean–Carleton and, of course, the Minister of Tourism and minister responsible for seniors.

I think it’s been stated that there seems to be support for the legislation on all sides of the House. I think there is a willingness and commitment to move this bill forward. As we do so, we need to make sure that the

voices of all Ontarians are put on the record. Certainly, part of the role each one of us has today is to make sure that the concerns and the support for the legislation are made apparent to our colleagues here in this House.

That’s why I said earlier that in my own community we have recognized that this is a problem for our immigrants, our foreign-trained professionals and our skilled workers. We want to be part of the solution and we want to work in order to ensure that there is equal access to opportunity for all people who decide to call Ontario and Canada home.

I’m pleased the federal government is involved in making sure we open doors for immigrants and professionals and those in skilled trades. At the end of the day, we need to continue to respect the need for balance and we need to ensure that this legislation isn’t going to add another level of bureaucracy or put another barrier in the way.

I think that this bill will move through and have debate, and I look forward to eventually seeing the opportunity for everybody in the province.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Tabuns: I want to start by thanking those who have come to Canada—people who have come a great distance, come to this country to build it, come to this country to make it more prosperous and come to this country to build their own lives. We owe them, when they come here, at least the opportunity to use their skills, their commitment and their ability in the careers in which they’ve been trained.

I am the son of immigrants. Over 50 years ago, my parents came in that great post-war wave of immigrants to Canada hoping to build a good life. My father was a skilled mechanic, and when he was in England applying to come to Canada, he’d seen a large notice in the immigration office listing the wages per hour for different skilled trades: “Auto mechanics, \$1.40 an hour.” In 1951, it was a pretty good wage.

So he and my mother came to Canada. They thought they would adjust very quickly to Canada, that they would be able to set up shop, as it were, go into the trade and have a good living. My father was right about this and my father was wrong about this. He was right in that, eventually, things did work out, and he lived a long life in this country. He loved it. He knew he’d made the right choice. But he was wrong about the kind of reception he would get in the workplaces of this country. He thought his skills and experience would be recognized and that he would be able to start working as soon as he came here.

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He was to be shocked. He was shocked that his skills and his experience as a mechanic meant almost nothing when he arrived. He didn’t have Canadian experience and he didn’t have Canadian credentials. After a fairly difficult period, he was able to find work as a mechanic. He was able to find a position where he could become an apprentice again. For three years he worked at half the wages that others were working for, doing exactly the work he had done in Europe. That experience of how his

skills were not recognized, that experience of being taken advantage of, because that's precisely what happened, stuck with him throughout his life and, I have to say, stuck with my mother all these years. And the parallels between the experience of the generation that came in the post-war period, the generation of my parents, and the struggles that are experienced by immigrants who come to Canada now, more than half a century later, are striking.

There are about 12,500 new Canadians, internationally educated professionals, who arrive in Ontario every year, with a majority of them settling in the GTA. That number reflects a change in Canada's immigration policies. In the 1990s, immigration policies were revamped. It was decided to try to attract, bring in, people who had a higher level of training, people who were not simply skilled but who had professional training. But, like my father, many of these immigrants learned that what they were told by Canadian immigration officials abroad in New Delhi, Hong Kong, Dhaka, what they were told about their value to Canadian society, was not the value they found when they came here. In too many cases, what they found when they came here was that their skills, their education, their long history of work at senior levels were of no consequence. They found that when they came here—they didn't have Canadian experience—they had difficulty being registered and recognized in their fields.

I had an opportunity in 2004 to meet with the Bangladeshi community. In 2004, I ran as a federal candidate for the NDP in Beaches–East York. It has a large Bangladeshi population—great folks, if you get to meet them: well-educated, well-spoken, politically sophisticated. In talking to them, I met people who had been senior executives in multinational firms in Africa, working as chief financial officers, who were having difficulty getting into accounting in Canada. Their credentials weren't recognized.

One of the executives I talked to, a very polished, distinguished man, said that when he went for an adjustment training program, the first thing the teacher said to him was, "We're going to talk about debits and credits," and he was scandalized. Here was a man who had operated at very senior levels, who had dealt with very large quantities of money, being asked to endure a lesson on debits and credits. That did not reflect well on this country. It did not reflect well on our preparation to integrate these people into our society, to make sure their skills were used the way they should be used.

He wasn't alone. Many professionals have talked to me about their disappointment, their frustration in dealing with the lack of recognition of their credentials and their experience with bridging programs that didn't recognize the skills and experience they already had.

This past summer, I had an opportunity to attend a community picnic. Different parts of mainland China are represented all over this city and all over the GTA. Different communities have picnics. I had an opportunity to go to one and had a chance to talk to each person in

turn. It was quite extraordinary, because in many ways it reminded me of the community I grew up in in Hamilton in the 1950s. We'd go to picnics like that, all of us—large families with the Steelworkers or the Brotherhood of Electrical Workers—and people from all over the world would be at those picnics.

This picnic was very much the same. We had people who had come recently—in one case, an engineer who was driving a truck, and his daughter, about eight or nine years old, quite precocious, quite intelligent, very much adjusted to Canadian society but in a household where her father felt he had a very large burden to carry because he could not use his skills. All his hopes, all his dreams were focused on this daughter and her ability to develop, to grow to become the person he was not able to be at this time in this country. The stories go on and on of highly skilled people whose training, whose work experience, whose commitment do not get recognized, and then these people don't get a chance to live the kind of life they need to live, do not get a chance to make the contribution to our society that they should be able to make.

According to figures from the Department of Immigration, it takes more than 10 years, on average, before a highly skilled immigrant reaches the same level of employment as a Canadian with approximately equivalent credentials. There was a book written a few decades ago called *Ten Lost Years*, about the 1930s in Canada. These are the 10 lost years in the 21st century, the 10 lost years of income, of experience, of contribution. Six out of 10 immigrants settling in Toronto are forced to make downwardly mobile shifts into a career or job other than the one they were trained for. Examples again and again illustrate the chronic underemployment of internationally educated professionals and can be found across a variety of sectors: engineers driving cabs, pharmacists bagging groceries. The driving of cabs has come to really symbolize this waste of resources because many of us in this room, I'm sure, but throughout this city, have stepped into cabs where we are being driven by people with their master's, their Ph.D., people whose skills go far beyond the ones that they're utilizing at that moment to move us around this city.

The disconnect between what we tell people abroad and what they experience when they come here is wrong. Increasingly, the word is going out that coming to Canada does not mean an open door for you. It means an open door to a low-paid, low-skill job, but it does not necessarily mean an open door to the career that people know that they're prepared to contribute to.

Recently, Stats Canada found that one in six male immigrants leaves Canada for better opportunities elsewhere within the first year of arrival, and those most likely to emigrate are skilled workers. So we are the recipients of an extraordinary gift. People come to this country ready to contribute, and we say, "No; thanks but no thanks. You can move on." I talk to settlement workers in this city, settlement workers who increasingly refer to Ontario as the training ground for the US or the

training ground for Alberta, because people come here, get some acclimatization, and they move on because we don't let them use their skills. We don't open the door to opportunities for people who want to contribute.

It isn't only these newcomers who suffer because we don't let them use their talents. It's not only those who come here who are shortchanged, it's the economy of the country itself. The Conference Board of Canada, a private think tank, calculates that the impact to the Canadian economy of failing to recognize the credentials of these internationally educated professionals is about \$3.4 billion to \$4.9 billion per year. That's a huge economic impact: 60% of those immigrants settle here in Ontario, so it's Ontario that's missing out on that income bonus. It's Ontario that's missing out on the boost that we could be getting if we treated people properly, if we made sure the doors were open. We fail to do that.

There's that economic element, but there are human elements. When I talk to settlement workers in this town, they talk about a vicious cycle that people go through when they come here and find their credentials and work experience are not recognized. The cycle looks like this. We have optimistic people, professionally trained. They come to this country. They have huge ambitions, huge confidence that their senior positions in other countries, their solid background, will take them quite a distance. They look at the job openings on the Internet, and they see that their qualifications are needed. They know that they can do those jobs, just as many of us can read want ads or look at the Internet ads and know that our qualifications match what's wanted there. People are highly educated and literate, many of them with HR backgrounds, management backgrounds. They know how organizations work; they know they can do these jobs.

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When they come here, they immediately find a variety of barriers. They don't have Canadian experience. Maybe they ran huge branches of companies. Maybe they had experience setting up national Internet systems in China. Maybe they had experience in India as engineers working on very large projects. But lack of Canadian experience means that that background is dismissed. So they find that, and they start to be a bit concerned. For those who come from countries where English isn't their first language, they find that it's difficult to get training in technical terms, that there isn't an openness, a provision of English in technical situations—business English. That's a problem. So they look to their finances. Many have spent everything that they'd ever saved; many are spending all that they have left to keep themselves afloat. They spend it on rent, they spend it on courses, they spend it to try the best they can to keep going, to keep alive that hope that they will be able to use their skills.

As the money runs out, they face a choice, and their choice is this: Should they keep looking, or should they take a survival job? That's the term: a survival job. They know that if they take that job bagging groceries or that job in the plastics factory as an assembler, their currency as a professional will decline every day, their ability to

portray themselves as someone who knows what's going on at this moment will degrade, and that after a year or two years or three years or four years, their ability to go back into that profession may well be fatally damaged. So many of them take those survival jobs, and there are consequences for themselves and for their families. There are bitter jokes that go around. There's a joke in the Russian community: What does PhD stand for? Pizza Hut delivery. That's what PhD stands for.

Many people decide to send their children back home to be raised by their grandparents because things are too tight. So families are broken up in the effort to try to hold on, to hope that things will open up, to hope that they will actually get that job, that they'll be able to keep paying the rent until they can get there. But often that hope is not realized.

If you look at statistics—and there were some, interestingly, that were provided to me today at the press conference about this bill that was held at 10 this morning in the media studio—recent arrivals have significantly lower earnings. Stats Canada, in 2001, showed average earnings of recent immigrants in the 1980s: \$40,100 per year. That's for a male aged 25 to 54. Average earnings of recent immigrants in 2000: \$33,900. Time passed, and the average earnings dropped substantially.

The next stat illustrates what that means in practical terms. The Daily Bread Food Bank, in 2002, looked back at who was using their food bank. The percentage of immigrants with at least some college or university education who were using food banks in the spring of 1995: 12%. In the spring of 2002, we were up to 59%. The number of people with a university education or higher education using food banks was up dramatically.

That says something profound about how we are failing the people who come here. We're failing to use their skills and we are putting them in desperate situations. Families are broken apart by the stresses, and those human costs are very, very profound. There's an anger that arises from that, an anger because people know what the costs are to themselves personally, to their friends, to their community, and that anger bubbles up.

In a report that was done this year by the Policy Roundtable Mobilizing Professions and Trades, PROMPT, they had some comments by internationally educated professionals about their experience coming here to Canada. One states, "I started my accreditation process well ahead of my landing to Canada and still it took me two and a half years to get through. After landing, we became disillusioned...." Another: Internationally educated professionals "are as competent and as knowledgeable as Canadian graduates. Now, if they will be given trainings to orient them to the Canadian health care system, then we would function as the rest of the working force in here. What needs to be done is for Canada to recognize" that internationally educated professionals "are already professionals in their own rights...." Another: "All in all it is easier to go elsewhere and we are actively looking at other options. A real shame as we love Canada and have

met wonderful people when visiting. We are responsible, taxpaying, upstanding citizens, respected in our employment and fulfilling valuable roles in society, yet feel rejected and worthless from our experiences so far....” Another: “The program didn’t yield my expected result”—this was a bridging program—“and what have I lost? I would say, it’s beyond money and time. It is my dignity as a professional. That would mean I would be affected in so many aspect of my being.”

People feel cheated. They feel that their skills, their abilities, are not respected and that they as individuals, as people, are not respected.

Now the bill at hand: As has been said in the election campaign in 2003, Dalton McGuinty expressed his indignation that internationally educated professionals were working at low-paying jobs because they couldn’t practise their chosen profession. And in the course of that election, he made the following election promise: If regulated professions did not open their doors to foreign-trained professionals within his first year as Premier, he would act. Well, time passes. It’s 2006, we have a bill before us, and we have to ask ourselves, is the bill before us one that will actually end this cycle of engineers driving cabs? Will it change the situation for internationally educated professionals? And the answer I give you right now is not a yes.

This legislation needs significant improvements if it is to accomplish its specific purpose of making the accreditation process open, transparent and objective. This legislation alone is not a silver bullet that will resolve the unemployment of internationally educated professionals. We will need significant improvements in this act and we will need action beyond the act to deal with systemic problems related to labour market integration.

Let’s look at the bill itself. The bill has an interesting name, an interesting title: Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, but it doesn’t do enough to incorporate the recommendations of Judge Thomson, recommendations that need to be incorporated into this bill to ensure that people do have their credentials recognized. It could in fact become simply a symbolic gesture, one that will not change the situation that we face in this province.

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I’ve spent a fair amount of time, since the bill came out, talking to people in this community who are internationally educated professionals, asking their opinion, looking at the Thomson report and trying to match things together. When you look at Judge Thomson, he made a series of recommendations to ensure fairness for applicants seeking to have their credentials recognized. Thomson asked for the establishment of independent regulatory appeal tribunals. That’s one of the first amendments that have to be made to this act. There have to be tribunals set up where they do not exist to hear appeals to rejections of registration and professional bodies. These tribunals need to be adequately resourced for high-quality reviews in a timely way.

The bill does not establish those independent regulatory appeal tribunals where they currently don’t exist.

They do exist for medical professions; they don’t exist outside of that. Thomson was quite clear about the need to establish those tribunals, the fundamental part of what he’s had to say to this government and to this Legislature. That has to be amended in this act.

Now, in the absence of an independent appeals tribunal, the recourse that professionals have when they are rejected is to go to court—a very expensive procedure, very risky for people who are already low on funds. We need to incorporate independent appeals in this act. He actually said the following: “Independent appeals constitute an accountability mechanism that fosters due diligence and promotes high-quality” internal “procedures and a concerted effort to avoid or remedy errors so that appeals will not be launched.”

Further, although access to the courts is available in all regulated professions, either through statutory appeal or judicial review, it is not a practical or affordable remedy for many parties. Not only do they need to exist, but they need to be properly resourced so that appeals can be heard quickly.

Judge Thomson commented in his report that with regard to medical appeals tribunals, there needs to be adequate funding to ensure that high-quality adjudicators were attracted to sit on the tribunals and make decisions.

The second amendment that’s needed to make this bill truly useful is the provision of legal and professional advice to new Canadians seeking recognition of credentials. This includes the provision of trained advocates, without charge to applicants, to present the cases of applicants before regulatory appeal tribunals.

Bill 124, as written, doesn’t guarantee support for new Canadians in getting their credentials recognized. The process of applying for recognition of credentials can be confusing for those who have not applied before. The process of appealing a decision when you’ve been denied can seem almost impossible. Again, Judge Thomson recommended that self-represented applicants needed support.

Given the way the cards are currently stacked, I would say that we have to go a bit further than Judge Thomson, that we have to build on his good work, and provide that the access centre that’s established by this act indeed provides legal expertise, trained advocates who will represent applicants at internal hearings about registration decisions. But also, newcomers have to have it made clear to them what kind of assistance they require. Newcomers have made it clear to me what kind of assistance they require in the accreditation process. The legislation should reflect that advice.

For most of us not born in this country, our bureaucracy, our approach to things, can be confusing, and for those who are new to it, obstacles can be daunting. I had a taste of this a number of years ago when I was in Cairo. Cairo, then and now, is quite an extraordinary city. To stay in it a bit longer, I had to have my visa extended. I went to what I seem to remember was the ministry of the interior: a very, very big building in downtown Cairo, all the signs in Arabic; there wasn’t a single sign I could

read. I had a sense, a taste of what it's like to be in a country where you have a very complex institution and you yourself can't guide or find your way through it. I did what many others did. I hired one of the guys standing around, who took me through the building, through a maze of offices, and did the rough translation that was necessary. We need to give that kind of support to new Canadians, to people confronting our bureaucracy for the first time, to people who will need the support to get through, because we need their skills. They've come a long way to help build this country. The least we can do is give them the support when they deal with the complexities of a new land.

It's my belief, and I think clear that in Judge Thomson's mind is also the belief, that appeals need to be kept to an absolute minimum. It's my hope that in the course of dealing with this act, in amending the act, in dealing with registration procedures, we will make them easier for new Canadians to get through, for internationally educated professionals to receive registration through.

The third amendment that I believe has to be incorporated into this act is the recognition and the naming in the act of the professional regulatory bodies that will be governed by the act. I don't believe we should be leaving the listing of the professions to regulations. It should be in the act itself. Judge Thomson has provided a list of those regulated bodies already. Even a politician can find them; they're in the appendix. I would say that rather than leave it to the government to decide which regulated profession they're going to include or not, we, the legislators, should put them in the act.

Mr. Speaker, you have discreetly indicated that time is coming to an end. I know I'll be able to continue at a later date. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: I'm obliged to inform the House that the member for Timmins–James Bay has withdrawn his request for an adjournment debate. As such, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 p.m. this evening.

The House adjourned at 1758.

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Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (L) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
Dufferin-Peel- Wellington-Grey	Tory, John (PC) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Matthews, Deborah (L)
Durham	O'Toole, John (PC)	London West / London-Ouest	Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (L) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Eglington-Lawrence	Colle, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (L) Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration	London-Fanshawe	Ramal, Khalil (L)
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (L) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L) Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship / ministre des Petites Entreprises et de l'Entrepreneuriat
Erie-Lincoln Essex	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Mississauga East / Mississauga-Est	Fonseca, Peter (L)
Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Crozier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Peterson, Tim (L)
Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (L) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	Mississauga West / Mississauga-Ouest	Delaney, Bob (L)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Nepean-Carleton	MacLeod, Lisa (PC)
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (L) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Guelph-Wellington	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Niagara Falls	Craitor, Kim (L)
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Sandals, Liz (L)	Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)
	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Nipissing	Smith, Monique M. (L)
		Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)

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

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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