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Thursday 12 October 2006

Jeudi 12 octobre 2006

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 12 October 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 12 octobre 2006

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

**PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS**

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT
(STABILITY FOR STUDENTS
IN TRANSITION HOUSING), 2006
LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR L'ÉDUCATION (STABILITÉ POUR
LES ÉTUDIANTS VIVANT DANS
UN LOGEMENT DE TRANSITION)

Ms. Matthews moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 133, An Act to amend the Education Act to provide stability for students in transition housing / Projet de loi 133, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation afin d'offrir une stabilité aux étudiants vivant dans un logement de transition.

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

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): This is a bill that will affect only a very small number of people, a very small number of children, in fact, but they're the kids who, perhaps more than any other kids, need to have some adults looking out for them. This is a bill about making sure this small number of young people have a little bit of stability at a time in which their home lives are anything but stable. This is a bill that respects and recognizes the importance of teachers, of friends, of routine and continuity for kids who are facing the kind of disruption that most of us would not even imagine. It's a bill that, if passed, would give kids who have to move to transition housing—temporary foster care, a homeless shelter, a women's shelter—or who become homeless the right and ability to stay in their own school until they find a permanent home.

You see, right now there's no province-wide policy for kids in that situation. It's up to each shelter, each foster home and each board of education to figure out what to do in each individual case. In many cases, the decision is that the child has to move out of their home school into a school in the neighbourhood of their shelter or temporary home, and then, when permanent housing is

found, into a third school in the neighbourhood of that home.

So at a time when these kids are facing enormous upheaval at home, when they may have been a witness to or a victim of abuse, when they've been forced out of their own home, when their clothes and toys and other prize possessions are not available to them and may never be, when their family has been torn apart, when the troubles of the adults who are supposed to be taking care of them consume all of the energy available in the household—when some or all of this is happening to a child, we deny them the security of staying in their own home school, the school where their friends are, where their teachers know them, where the custodian jokes with them, where there is some routine and some refuge from the chaos that is their life at home.

What this bill would do is give kids the right and the ability, if it's deemed to be in their best interest by their parents or guardian, to stay in their home school while they are in transition housing, to maintain the continuity that we know is so important to a child's education and social development.

This is an issue that was brought to my attention by Leaurie Noordemeer, the director of Rotholme Women's and Family Shelter, a branch of Mission Services of London, who joins us in the members' gallery today. I met Leaurie on Boxing Day, 2005. Along with my daughter, Christie, and a number of other volunteers, I was helping to serve a turkey dinner to some of London's homeless folk at a wonderful restaurant called Waldo's on King, owned and operated by Mark Kitching.

Some of those homeless people were kids from Rotholme, and I wanted to learn more about them and understand some of the challenges they face. I guess the idea of homeless kids was not one that I was very comfortable with. Leaurie was good enough to meet me, and in that conversation, I learned about the myriad of unique challenges these kids face, one of which is the instability of their educational environment. Thank you, Leaurie.

I'd like to recognize some of the others in the gallery today and thank them for their support of this bill: Virginia Rowden, the director of social policy for the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies; Andrée Cazabon, filmmaker and producer of the film *Wards of the Crown*; Amanda Rose, youth coordinator, Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies; Lynda Manser, executive director of the National Youth in Care Network; Cheryl Fullerton from the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association; and Chris Steven, the executive

director of the Oxford County Children's Aid Society. I'm not sure if Adam Diamond has made it—he will be joining us.

I'd also like to take a moment to thank those who have helped with the drafting of the bill but couldn't be here today, including: Jane Fitzgerald and Janet Laderoute of the Children's Aid Society of London and Middlesex; Carolyn Buck, executive director of the CAS of Toronto; Vivian McCaffrey and Wendy Mathews from the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario; Craig Brockwell from OSSTF; Donna Marie Kennedy, the president of OECTA; and Meghan Warby, my former legislative intern.

I'd also like to take a moment to thank all the other members of my staff who made today possible.

This bill has received strong support from across the province. Janet Laderoute from the CAS of London and Middlesex writes, "When children experience trauma in their lives and have to move into a shelter or into the care of the CAS, school stability becomes paramount. Teachers and students in their classes can provide that sense of continuity and stability that these children so desperately need while they are dealing with the trauma and significant relationship losses."

Rod Potgieter, the executive director of Family and Children's Services of St. Thomas and Elgin county, told me that they have generally good co-operation from both school boards in Thames Valley, but, "It does not always happen, and I think we will be much further ahead if the expectation is there that the child can remain in their home school and will be transported, if under 30 kilometres."

Colin Vickers, director of education at the Near North District School Board, supports the bill and tells me they've conducted research in their district which underlines the importance of stability in school for kids in transition, and that they've taken action as a result of that research.

Leaurie, of Rotholme, writes, "If each child had the option to finish out their school year with transportation guaranteed, this would eliminate a major stressor for both parents and children, and allow them to work at finding safe, affordable housing."

1010

I should tell you that not everyone is supportive of this bill. Some say it will cost money, and that is true. It will cost money to provide transportation from the transition housing to the home school and back again.

The people who are concerned about the cost of transportation should think about the cost of not providing the stability. One of those costs, clearly, is student success. Lack of continuity is widely recognized as jeopardizing a child's success at school. A study by Dr. Joy Rogers at Loyola University Department of Education found that it takes a child on average "four to six months to recover academically from a change in school." It "can destroy a child's academic progress," she wrote, and that costs money too, especially if it means the child loses their academic year.

Teachers tell me it takes considerable time and energy to integrate new students into their classroom, and that takes time away from other students. They also tell me that kids who are known to be in the school only temporarily sometimes don't get the extra attention and support they need, because everybody knows they won't be there long, and there are costs to that too.

Let's not forget that these kids are at a particularly high risk of having troubles later in life outside the school system. For example, a study by Leslie and Hare in 2000 found that almost half—48%—of the "street youth" seeking post-transition services from Covenant House in Toronto were former children in care, and there are costs to that too.

All of these costs, and many others, must be weighed against the cost of providing a stable learning environment.

So I urge those who are concerned about the costs associated with this bill to look outside the transportation line item in the budget and consider all the costs of not doing it. Let's remember that the children this bill will affect have the deck stacked against them in so many other ways. They are facing and overcoming challenges and obstacles that would overwhelm most of us. These are challenges for which they hold absolutely no responsibility; they are simply innocent bystanders to events that have unfolded in their families around them.

In closing, let me tell you a little story about a family in London. Late last spring, a family with one child became homeless and moved into Rotholme. They knew that their stay would be temporary, as they had already secured housing in their old neighbourhood so the child could return to the same school in September. There were only a few weeks left in the school year, but they were important weeks, as we all know those last few weeks are.

Transportation from the shelter to the school was refused, meaning that this child had to switch from their home school to a school in the neighbourhood of the shelter, and then back to their home school in the fall where they had to explain and face the stigma of why they had to miss the last few weeks of June.

Was this the right thing to do, the best thing for the child? Did it cost less? I don't think so.

Despite our best efforts, there are limits to what we can do to prevent the instability these kids face at home. But what happens at school is completely under our control. It is our responsibility as adults and as legislators to do whatever we can to provide stability for these kids in their schools.

Let's take that responsibility seriously. Let's pass Bill 133. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm pleased to rise to participate in today's debate on private member's Bill 133, An Act to amend the Education Act to provide stability for students in transition housing, which has been brought forward by the member for London North Centre. I commend her initiative in doing so.

I would like to say at the outset that I support the substance of this bill and anticipate that all members of the House would do so. I don't see anything in this bill that would cause anyone great concern.

The member speaks about cost. I think that rather than characterizing it as a cost that may be associated with this bill, we should be considering it as an investment in the future of our children, and that it should, in fact, be considered a priority for the Minister of Education and for the government.

I would anticipate that the member will be successful not only in having this bill passed today, here in private members' hour, but that the Minister of Education would take this forward and ensure that this is one of those private member's bills that will actually be taken seriously by cabinet and by the government and implemented as part of government legislation and for the benefit of children in this province.

In substance, this bill proposes to amend the Education Act to guarantee that a child who is a ward of a children's aid society or is in the care of a children's aid society or is in an emergency or temporary housing situation, who is homeless, may continue, at the parents' or guardians' request, to attend the school they were attending before falling into one of those aforementioned categories. How common sense is that? Children who are already subjected to upheaval in their family life would then also face the additional complications and stress, in many cases very harmful, of being denied the stability of perhaps, in many cases, the only peace and calm these children often have in the course of a day in their home school, with teachers who they have come to trust, with classmates who represent some form of stability for them. For those children, because of legislative or regulatory requirements, to be taken from that safe haven within the school system is fundamentally wrong. So from that standpoint, I say, apart from any of the other technical arguments that may come forward, perhaps even from the civil service, who say, "Well, this isn't the time. There are other implications. It's going to mean a number of amendments to the Education Act," and so on and so forth, this is the time when we truly have to put children first and ensure that that is more than a motto, that it's carried out in a very practical way through our legislation.

It's a sad commentary on our society today that we even have to be debating this; a sad commentary indeed that not only in our society but the world around, we know that children are placed into these very difficult circumstances through no control of their own. They are innocent victims and it's up to us, as legislators, to ensure that we do whatever we can to protect those innocent victims rather than have them become victims once again as a result of family circumstances. Our hearts bleed for children whose emotions are being torn, whose very enjoyment of life is being robbed. Far be it from this Legislature or government regulations to complicate that circumstance.

As educators and psychologists will agree, the experience of continuity and stability in a child's school

environment is in fact integral to her or his ability to learn and to socialize. All too often, we come across a partial understanding of the role of our education system, in that it is limited to the role of simply imparting knowledge, and it's much more than that. We know that teachers who take very seriously their calling impart much more than knowledge. It is truly about building character. It is about developing the whole person. So to ensure, at least during those very early formative years, that that is a stable environment for children is important. If we, as legislators, can do anything to support that, I believe we have a responsibility to do that.

1020

Education in this province is a challenge. We continue to see any debate or discussion relating to education often polarizing groups within our communities. It should not be that way. If anything, the discussion or debate, deliberation around education, should be something that brings us all together. If there is any issue in this province where there should be common ground that we can all find, that we can all agree to, it should be around education, but it's not. That is, unfortunately, the reality. There continue to be political debates, there continue to be partisan wars, that are launched on the battleground of education.

I believe that this issue before us today goes beyond any of that. I look forward to hearing what my colleagues have to say in this debate, but I would be very surprised if anyone here would find this particular issue one to bring forward in any kind of—how can I put it?—negative discussion.

I will, however, make this point, and I don't want the member to take this in the wrong way; in fact, I am convinced that the member will agree with me, as will most members of her party—and that is, when we talk about stability in education and every child having the right to have an education and to be given the life skills to function as citizens and as human beings within our society, that should in fact apply to all children. Members have heard me raise this issue in the House many times. The honourable member who brought this bill forward has heard me debate this issue and call on the Minister of Education as well as the Premier to meet the Premier's commitment to another group of children in this province. I speak about autistic children, who have as great a struggle, if not to a greater degree, a challenge of finding stability and finding an opportunity to develop their life skills and to get the basic educational supports that they deserve.

The Premier of this province made a commitment to autistic children and their families during the last election campaign that, if elected, he as Premier and his government would extend educational support and treatment support to autistic children beyond the age of six, and we have yet to see that promise come full circle. I continue to have calls from parents of autistic children who are struggling. On a daily basis, they're struggling to make ends meet because they have to take of their own resources to ensure that their children have the same opportunities as other children in the province.

So I would simply, in that spirit, call upon the member to use her own influence within her caucus, with her Minister of Education and the Premier, to extend that same opportunity of stability and support for educational services for autistic children.

I would conclude by saying that I will certainly be supporting this bill. We look forward to it coming to committee. There are a number of issues that I'm sure we can talk about in terms of implementation, and perhaps get some advice from stakeholders.

Once again I thank the member for bringing this bill forward, and I look forward to subsequent debate.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): The background to this bill is that of child poverty. It is set against a background of family poverty. I commend Ms. Matthews for bringing it forward. I welcome the opportunity to examine children who are at risk in this forum.

Sixteen years ago, the House of Commons unanimously resolved—and that was all parties; it was non-partisan—to eliminate poverty among children by the year 2000. Since then, the child poverty rate has been stuck at 15% to 16% in this province, despite strong economic growth. Some 443,000 children in Ontario live in poverty. That's almost half a million children. Low-income, lone-mother families are living on an average of \$9,600—below the poverty line. The percentage of children living in working families who are poor has doubled in the past 10 years, and poverty rates for children in aboriginal, visible minority and immigrant families are double the poverty rates of others. This contrasts with 10% of families who saw a 41% increase in average incomes over the past 10 years; at the same time, poor families saw their incomes decrease by 4%.

It used to be said that the best route out of poverty for families was a job. That's no longer the case. One in three poor children have parents who work full-time. Thirty-seven per cent of jobs are precarious, temporary, contract or involve self-employment. The Workers' Action Centre estimates that at least one in every three Ontario employers violates the Employment Standards Act, yet the Ministry of Labour's commitment to only 2,000 surprise inspections means Ontario's workplaces have less than a 1% chance of being inspected at all. In a 13-year time span, this has resulted in half a billion dollars in unpaid wages that employers have been ordered to pay but have not been collected by the Ministry of Labour.

I'm going to quote from a UNICEF document: "There are many demands for priority on the time and resources of government. And the case for children therefore bears repeating. It is the fundamental responsibility of government to protect the vulnerable and to protect the future. Children are both."

Growing up poor: Studies have shown that poverty is linked to poor health, poor school performance, and low pay and unemployment as adults. The vast majority of shelter users, children's aid wards and foster children come from poverty. Lest we think it is only—and I shudder when I say "only"—443,000 children who live in

poverty, know that 703,000 children experience episodic poverty. That means that they're poor for limited times of their lives, and "limited" means two to six years. So most of their childhood is spent in poverty. This means that if their parents earn less than \$10 an hour, that family is poor. Eight dollars as a minimum wage won't even be brought in until 2007, and that doesn't begin to bring a family up to the poverty line.

I know that in my own riding of Parkdale–High Park, I've had some experience with the poverty of families. We started West End Angels, which is the only 52-week-a-year drop-in for families, children and others on a Sunday. It feeds thousands of people every year, and thousands of those people every year are families and hundreds of them are children. If it weren't for that program, many of these children wouldn't eat on Sundays.

I remember well a family that lived in a car in the parking lot of our church, and we helped that family to find some temporary housing. At this moment in my constituency office, we have a woman who has five children. She lives in a townhouse where the rent is \$1,200 a month, and she gets \$1,250 a month on social services. We're still no closer to seeing that case resolved. Every year in our church we've welcomed Redwood shelter to a holiday party where the children get gifts, and then we've watched them all go back home to Redwood shelter because there are no homes, because 122,000 households live in wait for affordable housing, and they wait five to 10 years.

1030

We also witness in Parkdale–High Park the increasing gentrification of our housing stock. Now, we're excited to see that old houses are being fixed up, but we also recognize that for every old house that's fixed up, tenants lose valuable low-cost housing stock. Where do they go? We don't know, but we know they're displaced, they and their families.

In south Parkdale, some 26,000 families live—many of them refugees and recent immigrants—thousands of children, most in cramped quarters, much of it sub-standard, some of it even dangerous, all of it lacking green space. We are caught, again, between the desire to refurbish and the reality that since no government money is forthcoming, developers who want to improve the housing stock also need to raise the rents. Raising the rents then means dislocation for these fragile families and their precious children. I ask this House: to where and to what?

Families who work, most of them more than 40 hours a week, many at a minimum wage: It still does not guarantee that they'll pay the rent and feed the kids. It guarantees them a life still well below the poverty line. Many of them attend breakfast programs just so they get breakfast in our area and other areas. My assistant and I attended one of these breakfast programs. It was run by dedicated volunteers who put their own money into the program. These children sat next to people who have drug abuse problems, mental health issues, and who work in the sex trade. They sat next to them why? Because it was the only way they would have breakfast.

Education—another area that could have an enormous effect on the lives of poor children. Reading recovery programs are in danger of being curtailed in some boards. Education assistants, who can target their time to children who need the most, are being cut. ESL programs that help children new to our country are underfunded and understaffed; 40% of our children who need ESL teachers don't have ESL teachers. Again, I know this firsthand, because a community of east African immigrant women in our community are looking for just such teachers, and we're having a hard time finding them for a homework club. We shouldn't have to do this. This should be an essential service.

Child care, since Campaign 2000, has changed little in this province. We still witness nine of 10 children who need child care and go without. This means a patchy system of unlicensed child care, and in the case, again, of one of our immigrant groups, it means that, say, one mother will stay home with the other mother's children. This then cements her own impoverished state and, as we know poverty is inherited, the impoverished state of her children as well.

All of this is the background for this Bill 133. This is where I would ask for your patience and divert the conversation to the question of ethics. Because as much as I support this bill and would support any bill that supports children, I cannot help but wonder at the broader reality which necessitates just such a bill. Most children—not all, but most—who will benefit from this bill are poor children. Statistics show us that most families and children who might need this bill are poor families. The real question is, what is this House prepared to do about child poverty? Might I suggest it's a little like knowing that a crime is going to happen to a child and doing nothing about it until the crime is committed, knowing a child is about to be hurt but doing nothing until that child is hurt and then applying a Band-Aid.

Child poverty hurts children. One of the possible outcomes of child poverty is the displacement of children to temporary shelters, to guardianship or the children's aid. Then all of these hard-working staff who step in do so knowing that the situation is traumatic and knowing that there's little they can do to prevent the same kind of trauma happening again and again and again.

Undoubtedly, this bill might help. But all of us in this House get the calls, the calls from the social workers, the calls from the teachers, the calls from those who care, who inveigh upon us to change the circumstances that result in the trauma. We, as legislators, need to ensure that the trauma of not having enough money to pay for necessities in one of the wealthiest locales in the world does not continue, that this bill, however necessary now, is in the future absolutely unnecessary.

Campaign 2000, which attempted to eradicate child poverty by the year 2000 and was ambitiously embarked upon by all of our parties, absolutely failed. It is our failure, the failure of each member of this House. We carry that failure with us, and so do our parties and so does this government.

Here are the recommendations. We know how to get rid of child poverty. Why don't we do it? Here's how. This, again, comes from Campaign 2000:

- (1) Increase minimum wage to \$10 an hour.
- (2) Improve enforcement of the Employment Standards Act.
- (3) Ensure OHIP access to recent immigrant families.
- (4) Urge better coverage for employment insurance so that more than 30% of those unemployed are actually covered.
- (5) Stop the clawback of the national child care supplement.
- (6) Press the feds to honour child care agreements and allocate the \$300 million for child care promised in the 2003 election.

(7) Fully fund ESL programs and reading recovery programs in our schools and improve child care in the six-to-12-year-old sector. That is after-school programs.

(8) Build—finally—the 20,000 units of affordable housing promised in 2003, and provide 35,000 housing allowances promised in 2003.

Finally,

(9) Increase social assistance and ODSP to reflect the real cost of living for our poorest of children.

Although I support this bill, I ask everyone what their personal commitment will be—not only their party commitment but their personal commitment—to eradicating the very need for such a bill and eradicating child poverty in Ontario. We know how to do this. We have the recommendations. Do we have the will to do this? There is, I might add, no more important task in this province and in this House for anyone.

In my remaining minutes, I'd like to muse on why this House has been so slow to move on the issues of child poverty in Ontario. Perhaps it has to do with a certain lack of imagination. If that child, that one in six children who live in poverty, were one of the children in the family of a cabinet minister, maybe we would act. Perhaps if that child's birthday was known and the face of that child bore a resemblance to a government member, maybe we would act. Perhaps, and most pursuant to this Bill 133, if that child, when dislocated, didn't go to foster care or a shelter or to children's aid but to the home of our Premier, maybe we would act.

On behalf of that child, I call upon this government to finally act, not only on this bill but on the recommendations, all of them, of Campaign 2000.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It is indeed a pleasure for me to speak on behalf of Bill 133, as presented by my colleague the member from London North Centre, An Act to amend the Education Act to provide stability for students in transition housing.

In January 2002, there were two American congressmen, a Mr. McKinney and a Mr. Vento, who passed through the American Congress the Homeless Assistance Act. I would just like to read into the record today the statement of policy from this act that was approved by the United States Congress in 2002, because I think it provides a very good backdrop for this morning's

discussion on Bill 133. The statement of policy in this bill, the policy of the Congress, is as follows:

“(1) Each state educational agency shall ensure that each child of a homeless individual and each homeless youth has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including public preschool education, as provided to other children and youths.

“(2) In any state that has a compulsory residency requirement as a component of the state’s compulsory school attendance laws or other laws, regulations, practices or policies that may act as a barrier to the enrolment, attendance or success in school of homeless children and youths, the state will review and undertake steps to revise such laws, regulations, practices or policies to ensure that homeless children and youths are afforded the same free, appropriate public education as provided to other children and youths.

“(3) Homelessness alone is not sufficient reason to separate students from the mainstream school environment.

“(4) Homeless children and youths should have access to the education and other services that such children and youths need to ensure that such children and youths have an opportunity to meet the same challenging state student academic achievement standards to which all students are held.”

1040

It seems to me that that is an appropriate framework for this bill, when it goes to committee—I believe it will get unanimous support here this morning—to start a series of discussions along this very, very important matter, providing stability for students.

I note that the Ontario Association of Children’s Aid Societies is very supportive of Bill 133. I’ll just get on the record here this morning this letter to my colleague the member from London North Centre. I quote from paragraph three: “Stability in education is critical to our children. We know that children served by our member societies are at higher risk for poor educational outcomes.

“Despite efforts to provide as much stability and permanency to children at risk as possible, children in care move, on average, every 22 months, and many of their moves occur during the school year. In fact, recent data from Ontario research on children in care, Looking after Children (LAC), indicates that almost 23% of children have had over five changes of school and another 10% have had over 10 changes of school. These moves leave children months behind their peers—and cause challenges with teachers and in classrooms.”

Stability in classrooms and the opportunity for teachers to deal with their students over the long term in fact is the positive environment for learning. We know that if you disrupt a student many times over a period of their education experience, the outcome is less than satisfactory. This is why I believe Bill 133, An Act to amend the Education Act, is so vital and important, and I really commend my colleague for doing this. She’s been a constant advocate for children across the province of Ontario in her role as parliamentary assistant to the Min-

ister of Community and Social Services, and again, this shows her dynamic leadership on this very important file.

You’ll remember a number of years ago there was the famous Fram oil filter commercial. The gist of that commercial was, you can either pay me now or you can pay me later. That’s what I think this bill is all about: an opportunity to stabilize children in the classroom, to look at employing some resources within school boards across the province of Ontario, and looking to invest in our kids, who are a very precious resource.

It always seems to me that our role in public life is to take the future and bring it into the present. Providing stability for our children, for their future, and bringing it into the present by passing this bill is certainly a positive step forward for the province of Ontario.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I’m pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 133, An Act to amend the Education Act to provide stability for students in transition housing, brought forward by my colleague from London North Centre. It’s “to guarantee that a child who is a ward of a children’s aid society, is in the care of a children’s aid society, is in emergency housing or temporary housing or is homeless can continue, at the parent’s or guardian’s request, to attend the school they were attending before falling into one of those categories until the earlier of the end of the school year and the child being established in a permanent housing arrangement.”

When the member came over a couple of weeks ago to mention that this bill was coming forward—it’s amazing what you find out when you’re in this job: the holes that are in the system, how we need to make those changes. And that’s our responsibility as legislators, to protect the children to the best of our ability. So I commend the member from London North Centre for bringing this bill forward.

We need to invest in our children. These are very vulnerable children. I can tell you that since I’ve been elected as an MPP, I’ve certainly had my eyes opened greatly to the assistance that’s available for vulnerable children who are out there. In my previous career, being a nurse, I saw bits and pieces of problems that came in through our emergency systems, and since being elected, through some contact with the children’s aid society, I’ve seen how we need to make some changes, because we aren’t protecting our children enough. We can never do enough, but we can make progress in taking the steps to get this continuity for children.

I think the school system provides that—it’s a base. They have teachers whom they get to know, who get to be their friends. Their lives are troubled at home. The teachers become a constant. They know they’re safe within that classroom. I commend the teachers and the school system. I know that some of the existing boards work very hard to try to ensure that there is stability, but sometimes they need assistance from us as legislators, some laws, some regulations that can ensure that we can provide the best transition and stability for children at

this most vulnerable time. So I commend the teachers for being that constant there for them.

It's important to recognize that at the stage in life that a lot of these children are at, what happens to them now can mark the rest of their lives. I have nieces whom I spend a lot of time with and have watched grow up. It's very important that, if there isn't a home life there, there is some constant with friends, with teachers, in the school they're attending, because it can leave tremendous scars on their future, or it can make a difference that they go on to be very positive citizens within our communities. It's incumbent upon us in our communities that we do all we can to help raise the children who are most vulnerable out there. I see a lot of community organizations—Girl Guides, Boy Scouts etc.—that I've gotten to know since I've been elected, because I didn't have the opportunity when I was a child to be involved in those organizations, but they make the difference also.

So I commend the member from London North Centre for bringing this forward. She has my support.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I think I have a brief moment to make a few remarks about the bill. It's a bill that obviously is one of those pieces that the member noticed was missing that could possibly help, and I commend her for that.

I only thought of one particular issue that I'd like perhaps to be considered if the bill moves to a committee process and there's some further discussion about the details, and that is that oftentimes when we talk about child protection issues particularly, there's always a clause that we are careful to include because it speaks to the needs and the respect for the wishes and experiences of the children themselves. That clause usually says something like "where it's in the best interests of the child." That's not in this bill, and I would hope it would be a friendly amendment, if we get to that stage, to add that kind of language, because always, always, always, when we're dealing with issues around trying to make things better for children and trying to deal with children's issues in a way that moves us forward as a progressive, thoughtful society, we need to ensure that the best and most appropriate things for the child are always foremost in our mind.

1050

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I want to first congratulate the member for London North Centre for this bill. It is a good bill; I just wish I had thought of it first.

My family and I are finishing our 19th year fostering. I realize this bill covers a variety of situations, but I'm going to speak to it from the viewpoint of a foster parent heavily involved with foster children. We have millions of really good parents in Ontario, but we have some parents who simply don't have the skills to provide the care that their children need, and so it's necessary for them to be removed from their family and brought into care; sometimes for a short term, sometimes on a permanent basis.

Children's aid societies and courts don't take the decision to remove a child lightly. It is imperative that the

first priority be to keep a family together. But when the decision is made, the process that follows can be very difficult for a child.

In many cases, they are apprehended at school—this has been our experience. They have gone off to school, sometimes never to return home or sometimes not to return home for many months. I have difficulty getting my mind into their condition and the experiences they have, because invariably they love their parents. No matter what their parents have done to them, there is genuine love on the part of the child.

They are taken from the home. They've lost contact with their parents. They've left all their clothes, they've left all their toys, they've left all their possessions. It is extremely rare for the family to ever give up those possessions to follow the child.

They've left their family pets and their friends in the neighbourhood, and they're placed, from their viewpoint, with absolute, total strangers. All of this may happen over an hour or two. It's got to be absolutely mind-boggling to them.

In many cases—I'd say in the majority of cases of children we've fostered—they have struggled academically at school, not because they are not good kids. But if you're being sexually or physically abused or you're hungry, then your challenge in life, no matter what the age, is to stay alive, and learning takes a second place. So they are probably already having some challenges academically.

I'm sure it's exactly the same experience and just as difficult emotionally for a child who is in a shelter. They have no one. They have absolutely no one.

This bill provides for them to have some continuity in their life, for them to continue to have support from other students, from their friends. You know, folks, for some kids, school is the safest place they're going to today. It is the only place of safety.

We've had foster children tell us about their nurturing teachers, custodians, office staff and bus drivers who understand and appreciate the challenges that child is going through and form their own support network and support system for these children.

Where it is possible, this bill will help phenomenally, if passed, to enable these children to have some support.

We have great foster homes in Ontario—I'm fiercely proud. But I've got to acknowledge that for the first day or two, they're in an absolutely strange family. So I think this bill is wonderful.

At the same time, this bill provides for the option that there may be instances where it is not appropriate to have the child remain in that school, because of contact from the birth parents. We've had them show up at the school and make threats to the children if they disclose anything that happened, or unbelievably but all too commonly, threaten to kill their dog or cat if they talk to CAS staff. So there are instances where they should not be at school, and this bill provides for those.

The member for London North Centre acknowledged the costs involved in busing, and that may be presented

as an obstacle. But, folks, the cost of busing may reduce costs for special ed or for counselling. I will never, ever apologize for investing in children, and there isn't a better investment than this. If this bill results in one child's life improving, then it is worth it.

I applaud the bill and am thrilled to support it.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): Before I start, I'd like to acknowledge in the east gallery a friend of mine, Cheryl Hasler, originally from my riding, who is with the provincial executive team of OECTA. Welcome, Cheryl, and thank you for being here and showing your support for this piece of legislation.

I want to say a couple of things quickly before I get to the member for London North Centre's bill specifically.

To the member from Oak Ridges, thank you for your challenge. It's accepted and understood. It's probably the least partisan speech I've heard come from you at private members' time in a long time—

Ms. Scott: As always.

Mr. Levac: —and I think it's because you really do support this bill. I want to thank you for that. It's very important for us to understand—as well as Haliburton—Victoria—Brock, absolutely. Thank you.

Hamilton East, as always, a good challenge and it's probably accepted. I know the member was looking at you, saying, "That's not a bad idea," and I appreciate that.

Let me talk just for a moment to the member from Parkdale—High Park. The challenge is accepted and understood. Poverty is not acceptable; most importantly, child poverty is not acceptable. But in your homily, or your speech, what you did tell us was that you didn't know what people's backgrounds were in here. The only thing I would caution you to understand—I know you're a modern type of minister—is that to make an assumption about the minister or the Premier or whether we could get legislation or not because of somebody's personal circumstances, I believe, was a little unfair. You heard the member from Hastings, who has been a foster caregiver for 30 years or 25 years—25 years. In terms of who we are in this place, never make the assumption that people don't care about this. We may not make the progress as fast as you want and as fast as we should accept the challenges, but I've never met a person in this House who doesn't care. They care deeply about this.

That's why I'm standing in support, because I've personally had to experience exactly what she's talking about in this bill, and that is the transportation of children to the place where they should be. Unfortunately—and I say this sincerely—in the schools where I was principal, in some cases the children only connected with the teachers, the principal, the staff and the kids of the school. If that's the place where they should be, why are we moving them away from it?

She's pointed out—and every member here acknowledged this—that we have continued to find little pieces of a hole that should be filled, and this is one of them. I passionately ask all of us to understand that we cannot solve all of the problems right away, all the time, but this

is the place where we have been filling those holes. We have been filling those holes at private members' time, day after day, every Thursday, with private members coming up with ideas that individually fill those holes and make it better. That is what we're doing here in this bill, and I'm going to say into the next bill coming up. Let's not make accusations against each other as opposed to acknowledging what the value of the bill is and getting it done.

Do I accept the challenge? Do we accept the challenge? There isn't anyone in here who doesn't accept the challenge that poverty sucks, and it's not the right thing to do. What we need to do is accept those challenges and try to move forward in a smart way. This is a smart bill because it does address that. Do we get to the root causes in this bill? No, we don't. But do we accept the challenges of whether or not we should be making life better for the children of Ontario by filling this hole? Absolutely. I'm going to challenge our government to do that. In private members' time, it does end up becoming a government initiative, because private members from all parties come up and say, "This is a hole that needs to get filled," and we're doing it.

The experience I've had with individuals—I had to go to my board and literally fight and fight for some of those students to stay in my school, because I knew that was the best thing for them. These children would have been moved from place to place, not three times in some of the cases I experienced, but four and five times, because they were difficult to serve. What we need to do is understand that concept and fill those holes.

I thank the member from London. I thank her for bringing this to our attention, and I accept the challenge to receive it.

The Deputy Speaker: Ms. Matthews, you have two minutes to respond.

Ms. Matthews: I must say that I am delighted by the response of the members on all sides of the House. The member from Oak Ridges, thank you. I appreciate your support. I especially appreciate your comment that we should consider this to be an investment, not a cost, and that we not allow these kids to be victimized once again.

The member from Parkdale—High Park, I appreciate your support, and I appreciate your passion and your recognition that we have work to do to address the root causes.

The member from Peterborough brought in the experience in the United States. I think we can learn from our jurisdictions on this, and I thank him for that.

1100

The member from Haliburton—Victoria—Brock, I thank you. I agree that we as members do get to see things we might otherwise never, ever see and how every day is a learning experience for us. This certainly is not an issue I would have been aware of had I not been a member.

The member from Hamilton East, I will take that advice about including that amendment seriously. I think it's probably a very good one. I thank you for that and I thank you for your support.

To the member from Prince Edward–Hastings, you bring a wisdom only the experience of a foster parent can bring. I guess what I want to say is thank you for your support of this and for your unfailing consideration of the most vulnerable in society.

To the member from Brant, your experience as a principal, where you've actually seen this up close, just underlines the importance of this bill. I appreciate it, and I'm glad to know that you, with all of your force, are behind this bill. So, many thanks.

This is not a bill that will solve all the problems of these kids, not by a long shot—there is much, much more that needs to be done—but it will make the lives of some of these kids better and more stable. I look forward to it moving forward.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT
(USE OF PORTABLE EQUIPMENT BY
NOVICE DRIVERS), 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA
ROUTE (UTILISATION DE MATÉRIEL
PORTATIF PAR LES CONDUCTEURS
DÉBUTANTS)

Mr. Flynn moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 135, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit the use of phones and other portable equipment by novice drivers while driving on a highway / Projet de loi 135, Loi modifiant le Code de la route pour interdire aux conducteurs débutants l'utilisation de téléphones et d'autre matériel portatif pendant qu'ils conduisent sur une voie publique.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr. Flynn, you have up to 10 minutes. The floor is yours.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It certainly is a pleasure to be here today to rise in the House and speak to my private member's bill. You get very few opportunities to do this, and certainly you like to do something that's of some value to the people of Ontario. I'm hoping that all members of the House today agree that the bill I'm proposing is of some great value, especially to the younger drivers in our province or those people who are not young anymore but are just learning how to drive.

Bill 135 will amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit novice drivers—and that's novice drivers of any age, not just teenagers—from using a cellular phone, a car phone, a pager, personal data assistant or any other personal portable electronic device prescribed by the regulations while operating a motor vehicle. My private member's bill is intended to improve the safety of all drivers in Ontario, but the focus of the bill very specifically is on our newest drivers, those who are operating with a G1 or G2 licence under the graduated licensing system.

The consequences of driving while distracted are disastrous. That evidence is becoming clear. Many organizations throughout North America are starting to come

to grips with it. Each year, many accidents occur on our highways, many injuries occur and many deaths result as a result of distracted driving. According to Ontario police data here in our province, in 2002, 7.9% of all drivers involved in collisions in Ontario were not paying proper attention to the road at the time of the accident. Just one year later, that had already grown to over 8%, to 8.1%. There are obviously a variety of distractions that drivers face on the road today. That can be anything from billboards, to other people in the car talking to them, to eating. There are all sorts of things out there that could distract you while you're driving.

This bill takes aim at something that we can regulate, and that's the use of devices by those people who are just learning how to drive—novice drivers—and we can do that today. I know this bill has generated an awful lot of interest in the media. It's generated an awful lot of interest amongst people of all ages. Once all aspects of the bill are understood, this bill receives unanimous support, I believe.

It's something we can do today. There obviously is a debate that is raging out there in North America on the use of cellphones in general. That debate, I think, has yet to occur in Ontario, although it certainly has been the topic of a private member's bill by the member from Durham on a number of occasions. I think Mr. O'Toole has been after that bill since 1999.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): He's been a leader.

Mr. Flynn: That's right.

This is something we can do today. This may be the first step to further regulation, it may be something that is just stand-alone that makes sense for us to do, but it makes sense that we take some action on this issue today.

The most recent study released this past April by the US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that distractions are a contributing factor in eight out of every 10 police-reported traffic accidents.

There's a tremendous cost associated with motor vehicle accidents. For example, injuries from vehicle collisions cost Ontarians over \$1.1 billion in 1999. Think of what we could do in this province with an extra \$1.1 billion. Injury as a whole has been found to cost the Ontario economy \$5.7 billion annually. While it is sure that all of these are not related to distracted driving, distracted driving nonetheless plays a huge role in this issue. Prohibiting the use of portable devices while driving will have a definite impact and will save taxpayers money in this province. I've introduced this bill because I think we can do something to improve the safety on our roads, and especially the safety of novice drivers here in Ontario.

I'd like to take a moment to recognize an organization that has been at the forefront of the campaign to raise awareness about distracted driving and the use of portable devices by drivers. The Canadian Automobile Association, the CAA, deserves a lot of credit and our admiration for their work on this issue. They have launched an educational campaign on distracted driving with an excellent website that provides a variety of background information and resources on the use of devices

while driving. The CAA also co-hosted the first-ever International Conference on Distracted Driving in Toronto in 2005.

We have with us today in the Legislature Mr. Kris Barnier, who is a provincial affairs specialist with CAA Ontario and is sitting in the members' gallery. I'd like to welcome and thank Kris for the CAA and for all the important work they have done in highlighting this issue. It's one of the most common contributors to traffic crashes; it's a problem that affects all road users, but certainly newer drivers are at particular risk.

Using a portable device while driving places demands on drivers' attentive resources, which is dangerous. Studies have also shown that drivers who are distracted by such things as cellphones were simply unable to properly estimate correct safe stopping distances. Distracted drivers are less able to anticipate hazards and choose the appropriate time to even enter into a line of traffic. Similar legislation dealing with novice drivers does not exist anywhere in Canada today.

I believe we are uniquely positioned in Ontario as legislators to take a leadership role on this issue. Only in Newfoundland and Labrador is it illegal to use a hand-held cellphone while driving, and that applies to all drivers. I believe my bill will be effective, as it will ban portable devices for novice drivers, both hand-held and hands-free. Just because you aren't holding your phone doesn't mean that you are paying more attention. It may be more evident to another driver who is watching you on the cellphone, but certainly that does not mean, because you are using a hands-free device, that you are paying more attention to driving.

This bill targets our newest drivers, those who are just learning how to drive. If you can remember how you felt the first time you got behind the wheel of a car—not in the passenger seat, but behind the wheel—and all the instructions you were given—where to place your hands on the steering wheel, when to step on the brake, when to look in the rear-view mirror, when to look over your shoulder—we are saying to novice drivers currently in Ontario that it's okay to learn all those things and, at the same time, if the phone rings, just pick it up. That simply does not make any sense. Eleven states in the United States have already passed legislation for novice drivers using cellphones. Another 26 states are currently reviewing it.

Our graduated licensing system has been a resounding success in reducing death and injury amongst novice drivers. Currently, we place very sensible restrictions on novice drivers as they proceed through the G1 and G2 phases of earning a full G licence. Novice drivers are currently subject to limitations that we're not subject to as full holders of a driver's licence: zero tolerance for alcohol consumption—a novice driver cannot have any alcohol at all in their blood system; a novice driver is not allowed to drive on the 400 series of highways at any time and cannot drive on any street in Ontario between the hours of midnight and 5 a.m. There's a limit on the number of teenage passengers allowed at any one time,

and you've got to have an experienced driver with you. These are restrictions we already place on G1 and G2 holders because we know they're in a learning phase. Restricting the use of cellphones simply adds to that sensible list of restrictions. If a driver breaks any one of these rules, they're subject to a 30-day suspension of their licence. I would add cellphones to that list.

1110

I believe our newest drivers are important to target because preliminary research from the CAA and others has identified an enhanced risk for young people, as they are more likely to use a portable device while driving. I would like to point out, however, that this bill targets new drivers, those who are novice drivers and not simply young drivers. I believe some of the best and the most attentive drivers in Ontario are young people between the ages of 18 and 25, but during the novice years, at any age, I think we should place this restriction.

Our province and especially the greater Toronto area are among the top destinations for new Canadians. Regardless of your age, if you're learning to drive or just getting your licence, the restrictions in this bill make sense.

We've had some very favourable reaction to this bill in the media so far. I've seen polls that have been conducted by AM640 and CFRB 1010, and all the responses from the public came back very, very supportive. About 90% of the respondents agreed in the CFRB poll; over 84% agreed in the AM640 poll. We received supportive e-mails from all over the province—from the prairie provinces and from British Columbia. I'll tell them all, as I'm telling you now, that fundamentally this bill makes sense because it increases safety for our young people. That certainly should be the aim of any legislation we pass in this House.

I certainly would appreciate the support of all members on this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Leal: I want to thank the member from Oakville for giving me the opportunity to speak on Bill 135, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit the use of phones and other portable equipment by novice drivers while driving on a highway.

Safety on the roads is a great concern to us all. We often see Sergeant Cam Woolley, who has become a fixture on most of the media outlets across Ontario, during holiday weekends in Ontario. We just finished having a Thanksgiving weekend. Sergeant Woolley provides reports that are often very tragic in nature about the issue of road safety in Ontario and how we can take proactive action to improve road safety in this province.

I know a gentleman from Peterborough, Tom Robinson, who is a director of CAA. I've certainly had the opportunity to talk to Mr. Robinson in his role as director to make sure that the government of Ontario indeed is advocating for measures that do improve road safety in Ontario.

I know from my own personal experience, having an eight year old and a six year old, that one of the best

investments my wife and I made in a new vehicle was getting a video inside the van. While my kids get along very well together, from time to time there is a difference of opinion, and when that difference of opinion occurs it can be a distraction, certainly for my wife and myself, who's driving, and on long trips the video has made a great difference in that area.

There has been some data collected from the United States National Highway Traffic Safety Administration that has looked at causes of crashes throughout the United States, and they've ranked them accordingly:

- using other devices in a vehicle, such as navigational instruments, business tools, cellular telephones;
- something taking place along the side of the roadway;
- an unexpected noise;
- operating the radio, CD or cassette player;
- adjusting the climate or operational controls in a vehicle;
- eating, drinking and smoking while operating a vehicle.

Other distractions they've identified include personal grooming, conversations with passengers, disciplining or tending to children, or reading or writing while driving a vehicle.

They went on to say:

“Distracted drivers react more slowly to sudden traffic conditions or events, such as a car stopping to make a turn, or pulling out from a side road. They fail more often to recognize potential hazards such as pedestrians, bicycles or debris in the road. They decrease their ‘margin of safety’ leading them to take risks that they might not otherwise take, such as turning left in front of oncoming traffic.

“When a driver's attention is drawn away from the road and the surrounding environment, the result could be a delayed reaction to a hazard, or possibly a failure to detect it at all. All of these are common factors associated with vehicle crashes. Driver focus is critical to anticipating and avoiding collisions.”

In effect, along with our colleague the member from Durham, who is advocating a complete ban on the use of cellphones in Ontario, it seems to me my colleague from Oakville, through Bill 135, is directing it to young drivers. I will get on the record that young drivers are indeed very safe, but many distractions have been clearly identified: the issue of using radio players of various descriptions or a cellphone. I believe this bill goes a long way to help improve road safety in Ontario. Indeed, any measures that we can take to reduce the carnage on Ontario's roads are initiatives that should be taken. As Sergeant Woolley says on many occasions, many of the fatalities that occur on Ontario's roads today are preventable. Any action we can take as legislators in the province of Ontario to reduce those risks, to make our roads much safer, are actions I think we should take. So I will be supporting Bill 135.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I want to start by saying that I found it very interesting initially.

My first reaction when I heard about the member's bill being on the agenda for debate today, my gut reaction immediately was, why only young drivers? Why is it that this is about young drivers? I found it very interesting that he addressed that in his remarks, indicating that in fact it wasn't his intention to talk about young drivers per se, it wasn't an age issue, but rather an issue of novice drivers. But at the end of his remarks he closed by saying it's about safety for young people. So I think the member perhaps initially went out thinking that this was for young people, heard some of the criticism around the fact that it shouldn't be about not valuing or appreciating the sensibilities of our youth and not supporting the fact that our youth are in many cases very bright and wise and responsible people, and has perhaps backtracked a little bit and changed his course. If that is the case, that's great. I think any member would recognize that young people quite often get a shafting and are often blamed for many things that perhaps some of their peers might be doing. We tend to paint our young people with a broad brush and often don't give them the dignity and respect of acknowledging that the vast majority of young people in fact are responsible and do want to do the right thing and are not the ones who often, unfortunately, are in a position of causing some angst in communities with their behaviour.

1120

Having said that, I would say that I support the principle of the bill overall, but I really do believe that the bill that was brought forward by the member from Durham a while back spoke to everyone. It spoke to the issue of the use of electronic devices—I believe he was specifically talking about cellphones, but in fact it's the use of electronic devices—by everyone in cars. If we agree or believe that the stats that the member from Oakville was raising—in 2002, I think he said, 7.9% of accidents were the result of distractions, and in 2003 I believe he said that rose to 8.1%. If we believe that accidents are being caused in this province because we allow people or we don't restrict people or we don't regulate the use of electronic devices, I would be interested in knowing how many of those 7.9% or 8.1% stats were specifically novice drivers using electronic devices, as opposed to simply saying that these accidents were caused by distractions. So you see where I'm going. It's a matter of saying that if distractions cause accidents, if electronic devices are the things that are currently the greatest distraction within the realm of things that are causing accidents, then we should regulate the use of those in cars for everyone, not just for novice drivers.

I wanted to indicate that I think even if we do move to regulation, whether it's through the member from Durham's perspective in terms of a more broad-based regulation or the member from Oakville's perspective that it really should be focused on novice drivers, regardless, we're still going to be in a situation where we're going to have to find ways to monitor and enforce this kind of change. I would hope that the monitoring enforcement pieces are brought into consideration, so

that if we actually do get to a place where we have this new regulation in one way or another, we're acknowledging that it creates a strain, for example, on municipal budgets, because perhaps police are going to have to be a little bit more bumped up in the traffic department to try to reinforce some of these issues. For example, when seat belt legislation came in, a lot of focus was put to the traffic sections of the police departments, because they wanted to reinforce that seat belt legislation was important and thereby put more focus on that. Again, if this comes into play in a more permanent way in the province, I would hope that there's some acknowledgment of the need to pay for and support the work of enforcement agencies to make this move more effective.

A number of issues have been raised around what constitutes a distraction, and there are a couple that have come up with other members. It's interesting, because I know that a number of members of this Legislature—in fact, it happens during debates; I'm seeing it happen at this very moment. I was doing it myself a little earlier, I must admit, because I have a problem with my BlackBerry. But we all use these devices—we use BlackBerries, we use cellphones. So I'd be interested to know—I'm not going to ask for a show of hands—if any members of this Legislature use cellphones, BlackBerries and those kinds of devices in cars as they're driving, because you know what? It does happen, and it's shocking to see. When you're driving anywhere, in fact, you notice people doing things that they just shouldn't be doing. Oftentimes, you shake your head and you think, "Gee, that's an accident waiting to happen." Yes, it's BlackBerries, cellphones, novice drivers, long-time drivers, and it may even be members of this very Legislature who are—

Mr. Leal: Personal grooming in cars.

Ms. Horwath: Well, you know what? It's funny that you raise that. The member from Peterborough talks about personal grooming. But as he was listing a few of the distractions that people have, I remembered when I was in university that one of my friends, who was a little bit older than I—we had all just gotten our driver's licences, but she had been driving for a little bit longer—got into a fairly significant accident. The reason she got into the accident was because of her, dare I say it, Tim Hortons coffee. She put it on her dash, turned out of the Tim Hortons and the hot coffee spilled everywhere. It burned her and burned her passenger. They both kind of screamed, they were quite distraught, and of course she smashed into another car because of the distraction of having burning coffee on your lap when you're trying to drive.

Again, there are a number of different things that cause people to be distracted from the road, not to say that all these accidents are Tim Hortons' fault, but certainly that's one of the ones that I remember quite clearly. And you know what? When I found out about it, it taught me a lesson. I'm always very, very careful now if I'm going to have anything in the car. You see people juggling with their bottles of water, undoing their bottle

cap, trying to steer at the same time and drink their water. You see that all the time driving on the highway. I see it often when I'm in gridlock on the QEW, coming either to or from Toronto, as I have to come from Hamilton along that roadway, and there are lots of individuals, unfortunately, driving in cars. They don't have two or three passengers with them—they're not carpooling or anything like that—so they're doing these things on their own.

Personal grooming: lipstick. How many times do I see someone with their visor down looking in their mirror and putting lipstick on, or—I could say some other things that I've seen, but I don't want to go there; I don't think anybody wants to go there. It's before lunch, isn't it? We don't want to talk about that. But certainly personal grooming is one that I've noticed.

You know which one I've noticed as well? The member talked about kids in the car, and I had that down as one of mine too. I put "arguments"—you know, when you're having a domestic in the car. Usually it's your kids; sometimes it's yourself with your partner or whatever. But one of the other ones is waving politicians. How many people during election campaigns are driving along and there's the politician waving on the side of the road with their team of people and their election signs? I would suspect that most people really want to just drive those politicians over, they want to just run them over, because you know what? Waving politicians are a big distraction to people. Who the heck needs to see that when they're driving to work: some waving politician with their election sign on the side of the street? I have to say, I don't think I've ever done the waving politician thing. I think it's kind of cheesy, to be honest with you, but what it certainly does is distract drivers from what they're supposed to be doing, which is paying attention to the road. So for everyone here who's thinking of supporting John O'Toole's bill or thinking of supporting Mr. Flynn's bill, let's remember that we have to do our part as politicians and stop that waving on the side of the road, because it's something that distracts drivers.

To be a little bit more serious, there are real challenges we have as technology changes and as the technology becomes smaller, more compact, more convenient, more easy to be transported and carried on the person. There are challenges we have about educating ourselves as the people who are long-time drivers and experienced drivers, but also building in to all the drivers' training courses and all the driving processes to make sure that people understand very clearly that in a split second of taking your attention off the road, you can change your life or someone else's life forever, and not in a positive way. One of the most powerful weapons that everyone has access to is a motor vehicle. The problem is that unless we start educating and raising awareness about this issue—we can do all the regulating in the world, just like the seat belt regulation. It took a heck of a lot of what's called social marketing—getting that message out there, trying to change people's attitudes and behaviours—before the use of seat belts became as widespread

as it is now. People resisted. They didn't want government to tell them what to do.

Similarly, if we're going to move forward with anything, whether it be a more broad or widespread ban, whether it be something more focused on novice drivers, we really need to put the effort and the initiative into the education portion, into the awareness portion of this kind of effort. I think it would behoove the government—I wish the Minister of Transportation was here right now, because I think there are some good ideas around how we can encourage existing bodies, existing departments of government, to come up with some of these education campaigns at this point in time, not even having to wait for legislation or regulating the use, but taking the fact that this issue keeps coming up and starting to internalize that within the day-to-day business of the Ministry of Transportation as it stands now—perhaps developing and producing some educational pieces for billboards, for television, for radio. Okay, so advertising is a bit of a sensitive issue right now for government. I acknowledge that, I recognize that. In fact, my party has been criticizing it nonetheless. But there is a good example of something that would be useful and helpful and would begin that process of raising awareness around the use of these kinds of devices so that it's not a matter of targeting this kind of driver or that kind of driver, but to say that it's our collective responsibility not only to not do this ourselves, but to be clearly vocal about it when we see someone else doing it, to discourage the behaviour if others are doing it and make it become something that's not acceptable, something that people frown upon. Again, that will reduce the incidence of people undertaking that kind of behaviour, I believe.

It's interesting, because one of the other things that came to mind very quickly for me when this bill was coming forward, when I knew we were going to be debating it, is a particular example of a person in my community who, again, had some frustration in using our current drivers' test system.

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What happened to this particular person is that she logged on to the computer to book her driver's test at the privatized driving centre in our city and, unfortunately, when she paid her credit card amount of \$70 and she chose the date on which she wanted her driver's test to take place, she received an e-mail back indicating that she was booked for that very day.

She immediately sent something back to them saying, "You've made a mistake. I've paid my \$70 by credit card. I can't come today. I'm booking for the 20th"—basically, about three weeks later.

She was told, "That's too bad. We don't rebook. You've booked the wrong date. It's not our fault; it's not our problem. Go on your way, and if you want to rebook, it will cost you another \$70. We're not refunding your fee."

We, of course, worked with that person and with the minister's office and tried to change the outcome for this woman, but it was quite interesting to see the resistance

in that private company to trying to do the right thing for this person—the resistance. They simply thought they were above the law, that they had no accountability whatsoever. They couldn't give two hoots if we were calling the minister's office or not. They didn't care that this woman, through no fault of her own, because of a glitch in their computer program, ended up with the wrong date, and they were very stubborn about it.

I raise this because I really don't think we're going to get anywhere with these kinds of new initiatives if we're not making it clear to the various bodies that are charged with carrying out some of the government duties.

In my opinion, it is unfortunate that this is the way another government in this province went: privatizing a lot of these facilities. When you privatize them, you just don't get the accountability. You don't get the opportunity to really make them accountable as policies change and as priorities change, in the way that I firmly believe you can when you have those kinds of direct relationships of in-house service provision. That is another issue I think is looming, and we have to take it seriously, around getting other agencies to do our work if they're privatized.

I have run out of time and I still have a couple of points left, but I thank the member for bringing the bill forward, and look forward to other people's remarks.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): I appreciate the opportunity to address this bill, Bill 135, the Highway Traffic Amendment Act to prohibit the use of portable equipment by novice drivers.

The member for Hamilton East gives us, again, some more challenges that I think are valid that we need to take a look at in education.

I have a couple of ideas I want to share that I know the member for Oakville has heard before, and I know he'll hear again.

The research: We shouldn't be rejecting the research, because it is scientific and it is pointing us in the direction of the most important impact we can have on this particular event inside of this bill. I continually remind us that we're talking about small pieces, small steps to improve the holes that are found in each.

I offered a private member's bill quite some time ago about safe school zones, where we finally adapted somewhat of the idea—where we were not slowing traffic down in front of schools when kids were going to and from school. When Florida did it, they reduced their accident rate by 82%, and it became a culture.

Here's how the culture changed that the member for Oakville is talking about: The culture change came when they made it part of the driver education program and the testing to get your licence in the first place. They had to show that they knew they had to slow down in front of a school.

In this case, I would highly recommend that we work with the MTO to say that, if and when this bill should pass, or something like it, we should be making sure that in the regulation this is part of the education process that makes it clear, to help us change the culture of what's

going on in front of that car, inside of that car, around that car and in front of schools.

Here's the other piece: Message boards on the highway have been researched. They have an impact on the driver's performance. When the sign across the road says, "Traffic slow between such-and-such an exit and such-and-such an exit," people begin to slow down already. Using the message boards does change driving habits, so that would be another area where we could improve the circumstances behind that. We could use the message boards right on the highway to explain—and they do use them now.

I've driven and I've said, "Keep your mind on the road. Don't use your cellphone." I'm going to tell you that it does have an impact.

The last piece that I want to talk about quickly is: Go to the source of knowledge. You know where the source of knowledge on this one is? Truck drivers. I've talked to an awful lot of truck drivers, and they've informed me of the things they've seen happening in cars. I don't want to tell you what some of the stories are. Some of them were: bare feet in front of the windshield, putting on makeup, eating breakfast, drinking coffee. These guys were telling me stories and I was sitting there going, "No, that's not going on on the roads in the middle of a 2,000-pound weapon." And the answer was, "And more." I am sensitive to this Legislature. I respect it so I won't get called out of order. I won't tell you what the other things were that they were telling me they were seeing.

But having said that, we need to change a culture, and inside of changing that culture, we need to take examples from other areas. There are other examples of other areas. This one is pretty good because, I'll tell you what: We have done the research on the graduated licensing introduced by the previous government. What they found was that drivers improved. It wasn't the best, but young drivers actually improved their skills on the highway, their skills on the road, by having this graduated licence. The expectations of some of the things, as they get their full-fledged licence, have improved. Does it need to be better? Absolutely. This is one of those bills that I believe fills that hole, where we can make that improvement.

There was research done on this. The CAA is another example. They're supportive of this bill. What they're saying is that the research shows that young people inside the graduated licence system do change the culture of how they perform in those cars. This is another example of how that could happen. I recommend that we support the bill, and I support the bill fully.

I thank the member from Oakville for plugging this hole, as we do often in this Legislature during private members' time. Thank you very much, member.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak on Bill 135. How did we ever get to this situation? How did we ever exist without cellphones and BlackBerries? Police cruisers have computers in the cars; imagine that. Once upon a time we put radios in cars, and from what I understand, the same debate took place: "You can't put a radio in a car because

you're going to be distracting people, and look what's going to happen. They're going to be driving all over the place and they'll be dancing in the cars," and on and on and on. Guess what? We did.

Then the truckers got CBs, and we got, "How can those truckers be paying attention?" and "Come on, good buddy," and all that kind of stuff; "We got a convoy going on," etc. And the truckers made it through. Now the truckers have GPS that will tell their companies exactly where they are, the speed they're going etc. How we've advanced from there.

One of the members mentioned the things we see in cars. When I'm driving in on the 401, I see people shaving, putting on makeup, lipstick, eating breakfast, drinking coffee. Just as the member from Brant mentioned, there are so many things going on there that we hear about on a regular basis. You have to look at all these things and take them into consideration.

I want to tell you, as a father of two boys—Josh is now 11 and Garrett is nine—there was a time where the biggest distraction going was somebody arguing in the backseat; try and watch what you're doing at that time.

Mr. Levac: "Don't make me pull over."

Mr. Ouellette: Yeah, pull over, all the time when you're on the 401 or wherever you're going, everywhere. You try to do the best you can. Yes, there are certain things that take place in our community, and the HTA, the Highway Traffic Act, does address a lot of these; we'll get into those. But there are so many other things that are mentioned.

You drive on Simcoe Street in Oshawa, you're looking up and down the road, and they've got Little Caesars. They're running out shaking these signs in front of you, and Quiznos Sub is doing the same thing. They're shaking their sign. It was also mentioned to read the sign "Pay attention to the road." Well, I'm looking at the sign saying, "Pay attention to the road," the information sign. What are they saying that for? I was watching the road in the first place. All these distractions are taking place on a regular basis, and it's all part of the learning process and what takes place.

What these new technologies have done is, effectively, in the case of MPPs or others who utilize them, expanded the work day for us. Communication is now instant and right there, and when people want to talk to us or we need to get back to individuals, we take that opportunity to be in touch with people, to be in constant communication. I can remember one of the deputy chiefs of the Durham Regional Police who said, "They didn't quite figure it out when we gave all our senior officers cellphones, because we got an extra hour and a half a day out of them because they were doing work and they were accessible all those times."

At a quarter to 7 this morning, I and a retired chief of police sat down and discussed this very bill. His comments were, "I realize this deals with GIs and newly licensed drivers. Realistically, I'd like to see some stats that pertain to that." I'm going to get into that a little bit. Are insurance companies offering reduction rates for

non-cellphone users? They used to have abstainers who used to receive—and I don't drink at all; it has been six years or so over that. But I don't even know if they have those reduction rates anymore. Do they have reduced rates? If they don't, then it's not an issue with the insurance companies.

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Anyway, the issue that came up this morning with the retired chief of police was: Look at police officers. They've got on-board computers, cellphones, walkie-talkies, direct communication. They've also got communication between officers—dispatch communication. I know that conservation officers have about four different pieces of communication in their vehicle at all times that are going all the time where they are. But how do we get by? How does it happen?

What are you going to do with the new GPS systems that are out there? I happened to be driving to an event with a friend, and he had a new GPS. He plugged in where we were going. It says, "Turn right, 200 metres. Turn right, 50 metres. Turn right now." Is that a distraction or not? What's taking place there is, the GPS is now taking the function away from the driver of watching and knowing where they're going. The GPS is making that decision, and guess what the driver is doing? They're talking about other things and not focusing on those things. So is that a distraction or not? Is it an aid? I know that one of the car companies produced a vehicle that projects on the windshield in low-light conditions and poor visibility to see what's going on along the side of the vehicle. So you can now see the sides of the road on your windshield, which is supposed to be a great aid, but is it or not? I don't know. Those are some of the things that have to be decided.

I have an old form of GPS which is great. It shows all the roads, the maps and all those sorts of things, and it tells me effectively where I'm going. As the members know here, when you're dealing with the province of Ontario, you're in a lot of different jurisdictions. If you've got something that says, "This is where you're going; that's how you're getting there. That's a one-way street: Don't go down there," it's a great aid and a great benefit. But it's like anything else. It's those aids and benefits that you have to make sure you're using in a proper fashion.

I don't know if there's any data, as I mentioned before, that specifically states that new drivers in the province of Ontario are the ones. I don't see reductions by insurance companies for those non-cellphone users or if there are any agreements that they sign. I don't see any indications by the insurance industry to say that this is a main problem we need to have. Mr. O'Toole will maybe tell us a little differently later on, because I know he's done a lot of research on that, but I do want to tell you that I had students from John XXIII Catholic School in Oshawa here today and I asked them, and they were quite openly in support of the bill.

I intend to listen to a lot of the debate on it and make a decision at that time. I would like to see more stats, spe-

cifically as relate to new drivers. Are there any insurance stats or claims coming forward?

It was also mentioned about Sergeant Cam Woolley. Cam Woolley also realizes and knows that there is a component within the Highway Traffic Act that specifically states that you must always maintain proper care and control of your vehicle. When you are not, you are in breach of that law, the Highway Traffic Act, and the policing authorities have the authority currently to lay charges to those individuals who are not in proper care and control.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to debate. I look forward to listening to more.

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): It's my great pleasure to rise in this House today to speak in support of Bill 135, the Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Use of Portable Equipment by Novice Drivers), 2006.

I was listening to many speakers in this House talking about the importance of this bill. First, I want to commend the member from Oakville for bringing such a very important piece of legislation, because it's about safety: how we can create safety in the province of Ontario, how we can enforce that safety without passing such important bills, like this one here before us, in order to maintain safety. I listened to many speakers. It's important. Whatever is being said in this House is correct.

I used to work in Woodstock. I used to commute with a friend when our shift used to be the same time. On our way to Woodstock, my friend used to put on her makeup, drink coffee and talk to me. It was frightening. I was polite. I guess I didn't say much, because she was giving me a ride to Woodstock.

Interjection.

Mr. Ramal: Well, I don't know, but she was trying to put her makeup on, drinking coffee and at the same time talking to me. So I was, I think, polite. Maybe because she was giving me a ride I didn't say much. I should have said back then, "Come on, my friend, it's not the time to do it."

Anyway, many people talk on the phone, use a BlackBerry, you know, socialize, do a lot of things, as the member from Brant and many other members in this House mentioned. But the very important thing is, we have to start somewhere. I think the member from Oakville started in the right spot: the novice drivers who are the newest drivers in the province of Ontario, who happen to be young, just got their licence, or they came from a different province or they came from a different country altogether.

You know, we have a way to drive in Ontario. We have certain circumstances, rules and regulations. You have to learn those regulations. It doesn't come very fast and quick. We have to get trained. Then, when you get comfortable, maybe you are able to use a phone, maybe you are able to use different electronic devices. But the most important thing is, we have to make sure that safety is in place, because it's our responsibility as a government, our responsibility as citizens of this province to make sure that safety is in place, and to create the safety

of the people who are driving and using the phone or electronic devices; also for the people who are on the road, walking or driving. So this causes a lot of accidents.

While the member from Hamilton East was speaking, somebody in London, I think he's named Peter Foy—my friend Peter Foy e-mailed me. He's a former police officer in London and originally he was from England. He sent me an attachment talking about how important it is to ban the cellphone while you're driving. Unfortunately, I couldn't open that attachment on my BlackBerry, but he said it shouldn't be only for the novice driver; it should be for everyone. But we have to start somewhere.

I think it's a very important step which the member from Oakville brings to us today, and I heard all the members from every side of the House—from the Conservative, from the NDP, from our caucus—supporting this initiative, supporting this bill and talking about how important it is. Because if we create safety, it would mean less pressure on the hospitals, less pressure on the police system, less pressure on the fire departments, less pressure on the ambulance service and also less pressure on our budget, instead of wasting more than \$5 billion to \$6 billion on a yearly basis, and I urge our people that in relation to collisions or accidents, I think it will save us a lot of money.

I also want to commend many private companies who enforce a ban on using cellphones while working, like the member from Oakville mentioned. The company name—I believe one of them is Union Gas and another company—I don't remember the name. Anyway, it's important; they have about 20,000 members—AMEC. They are banning their employees' use of electronic devices while they are at work. It's very important to create safety for their employees, and also for the people around them who are driving or walking on the road.

Sometimes we go—especially like myself; I drive two, three times from London to Toronto. I see a lot of accidents on a daily basis. I see a lot of accidents on my trips. So I wonder, are those people who are paying attention to the road, who are paying attention while they're driving, or were they speaking on the phone, using their BlackBerry? We can use a lot of simple things to protect our community, to protect the people who commute on a daily basis, and also to create safety in this province of Ontario.

I'm honoured to have the privilege to stand up and speak and support the bill. I think I'm going to support it and vote for it as a first step toward eliminating the use of cellphones or electronic devices while we are driving, for safety, for the sake of the province of Ontario.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to take a minute and respond to Mr. Flynn's Bill 135, which was introduced on September 25, 2006. I would say at the outset that the best form of flattery is imitation. That being said, he must agree with my bill substantively. I know that Kris Barnier from the CAA, in the audience, substantially agrees that my bill should go for public hearings. In that respect, I think Mr. Flynn and I are

really trying to provide a public service, and in that respect, I'll be supporting the bill.

I hope that, quite frankly, the simplest solution is my bill, referred to as Bill 68. It's sitting on the order paper for the estimates committee at the moment because it has passed second reading. That bill, of course, would be amended probably in the committee process and it could be implemented, as Mr. Flynn and I could work together, which would be quite novel in this House, to see two people from different parties working together.

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Most of the comments germane to the debate are important. I want to draw to your attention that there are many academics outside of here who are doing a lot of research. I want to mention Professor David Wiesenthal, who is in the department of psychology at York University, and his partner, Dwight Hennessy, who are editors of *Contemporary Issues in Road User Behavior and Traffic Safety*. I'm looking at a specific edition here issued by them. I'll just read a few comments, because there are more academics than just those two. There's been research done by the government itself, governments in other jurisdictions, and there's the famous Redelmeier and Tibshirani study that was done in 1997.

I think what's important here is to look at other jurisdictions, and the research that has been done. Specific to Mr. Flynn's Bill 135, it says here, and I'm reading from the Wiesenthal study: "Canada's Traffic Injury Research Foundation (TIRF) conducted a nationwide survey and found that 40% of Canadians believed that driver distraction constituted a serious problem, with two thirds of respondents describing cellular telephone use by drivers to be a 'serious' or 'extremely serious' problem." They're quoting a research paper by Beirness, Simpson and Pak in 2002.

They go on to say, "The TIRF survey estimated that 4.3 million drivers placed cellular telephone calls while driving over a one-week period and found that cellular telephone users tend to have the following characteristics:"—this is the important part, the characteristics of typical cellphone users. "They are male, younger drivers, have a job requiring driving, live in urban areas, consume alcohol and then drive, and have received a traffic ticket."

There is evidence in some jurisdictions that they're profiling young people today. In fact, the Ministry of Transportation just last year, under Minister Takhar at that time, passed a bill that pushed restrictions on young drivers. Our government, many years ago, introduced the graduated driver's licence system, which indicated that inexperienced and novice drivers, as you would call them, needed to have some restrictions or special consideration or help or assistance while they learned to drive. So in that respect, Mr. Flynn is on the right case here. My bill did exactly the same thing; it extended it in other areas.

But the point being made here is that young drivers tend to have a greater degree of risk. That's why they pay high insurance rates. Today, they can't drive after

midnight, until 5 in the morning; they can't drive on 400 series highways. So there are restrictions on graduated drivers today. The evidence proves that that is the case. This isn't politics.

It goes on. I could quote this paper. There's the epidemiological report done by Redelmeier, and in it they compared drivers, and they're more likely to be engaged in an accident.

What this is trying to do is make our roads safer. In that respect, I would say that the Ford Motor Co. has just conducted a study on driver behaviour as well. So there's much interest and much research. Some of it needs to be confirmed.

One of the things that my bill, Bill 68, does—Bill 135 is similar to it—is actually to require accident investigation reports to account for whether or not technology played a contributing role. I think it's very important to have certainty around the data we collect as we move forward to make our roads safer.

Multi-tasking has been described as simply unsafe. Driver education itself should be modified to address driver distraction in all its forms, whether it's having a coffee or whether it's using your BlackBerry or text messaging while driving—or using GPS, as Mr. Ouellette has said.

I'm impressed with some of the good citizenry that's occurring throughout society, because AMEC, a private company with 3,000 or 4,000 employees, now prohibits its employees from using a cellphone while driving while at work. Several other companies have now taken it upon themselves to eliminate using a cellphone while driving.

This bill and the discussion around it are important. I think it serves to educate the public on the important first and primary responsibilities of driving, whether you're a novice driver or an experienced driver, and using a cellphone appropriately. If roads are icy, don't use it, but if you're stuck at the side of the road in the snow, it's a good time to use your cellphone. It's like any tool: Using it appropriately at the right time and place is important. The Ministry of Transportation could produce guidelines for appropriate use of cellphones.

Etiquette on the phone would be good. Keep your conversations short. There's no need to talk to your stockbroker while driving at 120 kilometres an hour. It's okay to call and say, "I'm going to be late for a meeting. I'm stuck in traffic." That would be an appropriate phone call.

Enforcement of this is a big issue with the police. How do they enforce it? With tinted windows, late at night, how are you going to enforce it? Then there are privacy issues in terms of enforcement. My idea would be to educate the driver by stopping, interfering and saying, "You're on the phone. You're driving erratically. I could give you a careless driving, but what I'm going to do is require you to take a driver education course, which deals with driver distraction or multi-tasking."

I think there are ways that either this bill or my bill, Bill 68—I think Mr. Flynn would probably agree, and I hope in his summary remarks he'll give me full credit. I

also give him full credit for supporting my bill by bringing this one section forward. So I will be supporting it. But the solution here is for Mr. Flynn and I to work together, along with Ms. Cansfield, the Minister of Transportation, to try and get Dalton McGuinty to do one thing that makes sense that we all agree on. He could help Mr. Flynn's career, because in the next election he may be at some risk. You never know. I might, as well, so I shouldn't say that.

But we are trying to do the right thing by working together and, in that respect, I compliment Mr. Flynn. I hope he'll do as much with respect to my Bill 68, which is far more comprehensive. In fact, it's been introduced three times.

Mr. Leal: Three times.

Mr. O'Toole: Three times. Exactly. I intend to introduce it a fourth time to keep the debate alive. This debate, including this debate this morning by all the members, is about educating the public, not just our young people. But all drivers should not put themselves or others at risk. They should work with the CAA and other responsible organizations to do the right thing. As well, the wireless association of Canada should be paying attention to this debate. I'm sure they are, because they often contact me. The media also serves a role here. It simply isn't safe to multi-task while driving.

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

Mr. Flynn: It certainly is a pleasure to hear from all the speakers today from Peterborough, Brant, London—Fanshawe, Hamilton East, Durham and Oshawa. I want to give credit to the member from Oshawa. He's fought very hard. He should—

Mr. O'Toole: Durham.

Mr. Flynn: Oh, from Durham. I'm sorry. He's fought very, very hard. The member from Oshawa had good remarks too.

The member from Durham actually owes me. I've got the member from Durham more press in the last two weeks than he's had in all the time he's been in this House.

Driving is a new skill. I think we all understand that. We'd all like to change the world with one private member's bill, but that's simply not going to happen. If you agree that cellphone use while driving for all people is unsafe, then by default you agree with this bill. What we're saying is that during the period where you're acquiring a skill—and the most encouraging support has come from young people. The member from Oshawa talked about people in Oshawa. I have heard from people from Windsor. I think if we asked the young people in the audience today, "Could you talk on the phone and learn how to drive a car at the same time?"—one guy said yes, the rest said no.

Interjection: He's the guy with the cellphone.

Mr. Flynn: That's right. He's the young one on the cellphone, Mr. Speaker.

I think we've presented the evidence, and I think we've presented it in a very serious way. It may be a first

step for some people, it may be just a baby step for some people, but it goes a long way toward ensuring that Ontario's roads, which are amongst the safest in all of North America as they are, would become even safer.

There are companies like AMEC that have banned cellphone use amongst their employees. Union Gas has travelled the same route. I think when you're learning a skill, whether it be horseback riding, snowboarding or truck driving—and certainly including driving a car—you don't need to be on the phone at the same time. It just makes sense.

The debate on cellphone use in general is perhaps for another day. Today we can do something very specific to make Ontario's roads safer. I ask for your support.

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

We shall deal first with ballot item 51, standing in the name of Ms. Matthews.

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT
(STABILITY FOR STUDENTS
IN TRANSITION HOUSING), 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR L'ÉDUCATION (STABILITÉ POUR
LES ÉTUDIANTS VIVANT DANS
UN LOGEMENT DE TRANSITION)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Ms. Matthews has moved second reading of Bill 133.

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

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will call in the members after dealing with the next ballot item.

We'll now deal with ballot item 52, standing in the name of Mr. Flynn.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT
(USE OF PORTABLE EQUIPMENT BY
NOVICE DRIVERS), 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA
ROUTE (UTILISATION DE MATÉRIEL
PORTATIF PAR LES CONDUCTEURS
DÉBUTANTS)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Flynn has moved second reading of Bill 135.

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

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will call in the members for this as well. Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1201 to 1206.

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT
(STABILITY FOR STUDENTS
IN TRANSITION HOUSING), 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR L'ÉDUCATION (STABILITÉ POUR
LES ÉTUDIANTS VIVANT DANS
UN LOGEMENT DE TRANSITION)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Ms. Matthews has moved second reading of Bill 133, An Act to amend the Education Act to provide stability for students in transition housing. All those in favour, please stand.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm
Balkissoon, Bas	Horwath, Andrea	Milloy, John
Barrett, Toby	Hoy, Pat	Mitchell, Carol
Bradley, James J.	Klees, Frank	O'Toole, John
Brownell, Jim	Kormos, Peter	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Delaney, Bob	Leal, Jeff	Parsons, Ernie
Dhillon, Vic	Levac, Dave	Patten, Richard
DiNovo, Cheri	Marsales, Judy	Ramal, Khalil
Duguid, Brad	Matthews, Deborah	Rinaldi, Lou
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McMeekin, Ted	Ruprecht, Tony
Fonseca, Peter	McNeely, Phil	Scott, Laurie

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please stand.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 33; the nays are 0.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to standing order 96, this bill is—Ms. Matthews?

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I request that this bill be referred to the standing committee on general government.

The Deputy Speaker: Shall the bill be referred to the standing committee on general government? Agreed.

The doors will now be open for 30 seconds, before we take the next vote.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT
(USE OF PORTABLE EQUIPMENT BY
NOVICE DRIVERS), 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA
ROUTE (UTILISATION DE MATÉRIEL
PORTATIF PAR LES CONDUCTEURS
DÉBUTANTS)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Flynn has moved second reading of Bill 135, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit the use of phones and other portable equipment by novice drivers while driving on a highway. All those members in favour, please stand.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hoy, Pat	Mitchell, Carol
Balkissoon, Bas	Klees, Frank	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Leal, Jeff	Parsons, Ernie
Brownell, Jim	Levac, Dave	Patten, Richard
Delaney, Bob	Marsales, Judy	Ramal, Khalil
Dhillon, Vic	Matthews, Deborah	Rinaldi, Lou
Duguid, Brad	McMeekin, Ted	Ruprecht, Tony
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McNeely, Phil	Scott, Laurie
Fonseca, Peter	Miller, Norm	
Hardeman, Ernie	Milloy, John	

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please stand.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 28; the nays are 0.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd ask that this bill be sent to the standing committee on general government.

The Deputy Speaker: Shall the bill be referred to the standing committee on general government? Agreed.

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

The House recessed from 1211 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**MOHAMMED JAMIL DAR**

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): It is with great sadness that I rise in the House to inform all members of the recent passing of my constituent and friend Dr. Mohammed Jamil Dar. As a true pioneer of the Islamic-Canadian community, he became the president of the Islamic Foundation of Toronto, which is today the largest mosque in Canada. His tremendous organizational abilities were a testament to his unique leadership in the Muslim-Canadian community.

Dr. Dar also dedicated his professional life as a physician to serving his community in his two medical practices in Scarborough and Woodbridge.

He is survived by his wife, Dr. Shahnaz Dar, his daughters Salma, Seema and Heerah, and his son, Imran.

Yesterday, I had the privilege of joining Dr. Dar's family and the community he loved so dearly at his funeral held at the Islamic Foundation of Toronto, which he helped to establish.

On behalf of all members of the House, I wish to express my deepest sympathy and most heartfelt condolences to Dr. Mohammed Jamil Dar's family and his entire community at this very sad and difficult time.

Salaam Alekum.

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): Ontario's heritage is an essential part of our

identity; it is therefore important to recognize those who work to conserve and preserve it.

One such individual is Mrs. Margaret Kurtin, known as Peggy to her friends. Peggy will be presented with the Lieutenant Governor's award at the Heritage Canada Foundation's gala award ceremony reception on October 13, in recognition of her more than 40 years of service for heritage conservation. Her passion has been the region of Toronto known as Cabbagetown. Peggy has produced a book about the region as well as a video entitled I Love Cabbagetown. Her love of Cabbagetown has seen her and other volunteers research over 1,500 buildings. She also participated in the founding of the Toronto Historical Association.

Peggy isn't afraid to roll up her sleeves and do the hands-on work of conservation; for the last five years, she has volunteered at the 1830 tollkeeper's house at the corner of Bathurst and Davenport. From the organizational level to painting and scraping, Peggy has been a role model in the heritage community and is most deserving of this honour. She is not afraid to roll up her sleeves and work on heritage projects.

Peggy, on behalf of this Legislature, thank you for your tireless work and dedication to the preservation of heritage in Toronto and Cabbagetown.

LIBERAL CAMPAIGN PROMISES

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): In Waterloo-Wellington, the McGuinty Liberal government is best known for its record of broken promises. It's no wonder this is their hallmark, since Dalton McGuinty campaigned on a promise not to raise taxes and then brought in the biggest tax increase in the province's history in his first budget. We in Waterloo-Wellington have not forgotten, and in response to my recent questionnaire, which was included in my annual newsletter this past spring, my constituents have spoken loud and clear.

I asked them a question on the issue of lost manufacturing jobs in Ontario. In reply, an overwhelming 81% of respondents said that the McGuinty Liberal government is not doing enough to protect factory jobs. They also expressed an astounding 90% support for the resolution that I first tabled in the Legislature some 16 months ago, when I called upon the House to immediately begin a study of the competitiveness of Ontario industry, with a view to protecting these good-paying jobs.

I asked them a question about balanced budgets; 80% said the McGuinty government should balance its budget this year. In spite of this, last spring the Treasurer made a conscious, irresponsible decision to plan for yet another deficit this year, again breaking another election promise.

I asked my constituents if they believed the provincial government is doing enough to respond to the crime problem. Again, 80% of the respondents criticized the government, saying no, they are not doing enough.

Overall, my constituents in Waterloo-Wellington have given the government a failing grade on key issues like

jobs and the economy, the province's finances, and crime, and the vast majority of my constituents are rightly skeptical of whatever statements the McGuinty Liberals make, because we know they will say anything to try and get themselves re-elected.

SUKKOT

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): On Monday night, I had the pleasure of attending an event in my riding of Thornhill to celebrate the Jewish holiday of Sukkot. For those who do not know, Sukkot is the holiday that occurs on the fifth day of Yom Kippur, usually in early October. Sukkot is a Jewish holiday that traditionally marks the end of a long harvest, the time of year when farmers finish their work.

The event took place at the Chabad Lubavitch Community Centre in Thornhill. It was a festive occasion, attended by community members not only from Thornhill but from the GTA. There was truly something for everyone at the festival. There was a band playing outdoors, singing and dancing, games for kids and, at the end of the event, an impressive display of artwork.

I would like to thank Rabbi Grossbaum and all the members from the Chabad Lubavitch community for hosting such a wonderful event and allowing me to take part in the celebration.

In addition to Sukkot, several other religious holidays are taking place at this time of the year, including Ramadan and Diwali. These holidays will be observed by thousands of people throughout Ontario, reminding us of the diversity that exists within our communities, a diversity that is to be treasured and respected.

Again, I would like to thank Rabbi Grossbaum and the members of the Chabad Lubavitch community for their hospitality and generosity.

US COAST GUARD INITIATIVE

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): I rise to express the concerns of Ontario residents living in the Wolfe Island and Kingston areas of Lake Ontario with regard to the US Coast Guard's intentions to use an area of the lake near Wolfe Island for target practice with machine guns and other armaments. We're advised that the weapons are mounted on boats ranging in size from 25 feet to 240 feet.

This week, a spokesperson for the coast guard was quoted in the Kingston Whig-Standard indicating that this was solely a US issue, implying that Canadians who share these waters are not entitled to consultation, let alone input. The coast guard, apparently in response to rising US public concerns, has announced a series of public consultations, but none north of the border. We're excluded.

I believe that the Ontario government could, and should, play a role here by formally requesting consultation prior to this planned proceeding and by asking for the support of the federal government in their efforts.

In my view, this initiative is dumb, unnecessary and potentially dangerous, and the US failure to treat us as full partners is worrisome and could portend future unilateral actions on issues such as water-taking. We should fight for involvement, and fight vigorously.

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I recently had the privilege of participating in a round table discussion that took place in my city of Hamilton.

My colleague MP David Christopherson called together community leaders to address the needs of new Canadians and immigrant groups that call Hamilton home. The group was reflective of the mosaic of which Hamilton can currently boast. There were representatives from the Somali, Turkish, African, Afghanistani, Pakistani, Chadian, Sudanese and Bangladeshi communities; youth from McMaster representing the voices of student visa holders; the Afro-Canadian Caribbean association members; Muslim association members—many, many people.

As clear and pointed as their message was, it was equally frustrating to acknowledge that not only has not much changed in the way new Canadians fare in our city, in some ways things are even worse.

In Hamilton, we all know too well the struggle that immigrant families face and the woefully inadequate response of governments to their needs. Study after study tells us that emerging communities face greater economic challenges from poverty, unemployment and lack of opportunities. We're committed to changing that, first through dialogue and then through action.

We must listen—really listen—to what these communities are telling us. Their skills, talents and insights have not been utilized to their full advantage, nor to ours. Fifty-two per cent of recent immigrants in Hamilton live below the poverty line. It's shocking and shameful that a province as affluent as Ontario has done so little to improve things. Immigrant women continue to be isolated and continue to represent the largest numbers of the face of poverty in our city. Employers in Hamilton are often unaware of their skills.

There is much work to do. It's not just a matter of immigrant policies; it's a matter of all of our policies.

1340

ROSE THEATRE

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I'd like to take this opportunity to brag about the newest addition to my community. Recently, Brampton officially unveiled the Rose Theatre, which is part of Brampton's vision and sets in motion its five-year strategic plan and revitalization program in our historic downtown core.

The Rose Theatre is a state-of-the-art, \$55-million facility that will provide a new venue for local performing arts in the community. The main space consists of 64,000 square feet and seats 880 people. The Rose

Theatre reflects the city's commitment to redeveloping the core of our historical downtown with outstanding architecture. The building features a tall, domed rotunda entrance with high, arching windows. The interior of the building has a warm ambience with sandstone blocks, African wood trim and expensive marble granite floors.

The Rose is designed for live and musical theatre, dance performances and concerts. It's one of the few broadcast-ready venues in the greater Toronto area. It's equipped for TV and video broadcasts, making it an excellent location for business events as well as social functions. The Rose Theatre has been deemed the most acoustically sound facility in North America, surpassing and replacing the Dallas Theater Center, Texas, as the number one theatre for sound quality.

The Rose is expected to create approximately 300 permanent jobs and attract more than 55,000 visitors annually. We estimate that the Rose will generate \$2.7 million in economic activity the first year.

The signature of a great city is a vibrant downtown. I'm very proud of this cultural centre and I would like to congratulate the city of Brampton on showing the vision and determination to create this beautiful facility.

JEANS FOR GENES DAY

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): I would like to take this opportunity to remind all members of this House that today is Jeans for Genes Day.

If you're not aware of what this means, let me tell you. Three out of five Canadians will experience a disease that has a genetic component in their lifetime, including diseases like muscular dystrophy, juvenile diabetes, multiple sclerosis, epilepsy, cystic fibrosis and haemophilia.

Many of these diseases touch the lives of children and many of these children suffer from rare genetic diseases that have no cure or adequate treatment.

Our Canadian scientists are considered to be some of the top genetic disease researchers in the world. This is something that we should be proud of, and I commend them for their efforts.

Jeans for Genes is a national campaign put together by a number of companies to raise funds for research into genetic diseases. The good news is that 100% of the funds raised go directly to research and development of cures.

This denim button is a reminder to those families affected by these diseases that there is hope for them.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask for unanimous consent for members of this House today to wear these denim buttons.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Rinaldi has asked for unanimous consent to wear the denim buttons. Agreed? Agreed.

GREENFIELD ETHANOL

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): This past summer, GreenField Ethanol, Canada's leading ethanol producer, made the announcement that an ethanol plant

will be coming to the town of Hensall. This was obviously not only great news for Hensall but for the riding of Huron-Bruce. This means the creation of many new jobs in the area.

Just last week, we received even more good news regarding this endeavour. GreenField Ethanol has announced that they will be partaking in a first-of-its-kind corn purchasing program that will allow Ontario's corn producers to sell their corn directly to one of GreenField's plants. In the past, the corn procurement process took place through brokers and plant operators.

This new system, entitled the Ontario buy direct program, will allow Ontario's corn producers more options in the process and will offer them such benefits as stable corn pricing to adequately assist them with their cash flow and risk management for their products. GreenField is also offering marketing contracts and they will also begin province-wide sessions where they will work with the producers to answer all the questions regarding the program.

But that's not the only good news in the riding of Huron-Bruce. The McGuinty government supplied \$12.5 million in capital assistance to make this ethanol site possible in Hensall. This is proof, evidence, that the government is committed to moving forward with renewable energy in the province of Ontario.

VISITORS

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I hope that all members of the House might join me in welcoming members in various galleries from the Ontario Women's Liberal Commission, including former senator Marian Maloney; Martha Hall Findlay, a candidate for the leadership of our party; Mavis Wilson, a former member of the Legislature; and many other esteemed guests.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

TRANSPORTATION

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation): I rise in the House today with an update on the McGuinty government's progress in easing traffic congestion in Ontario. We are creating a seamless and integrated transportation system, taking into account road, rail and public transit. We have made the biggest investment in public transit in the last decade—a record \$1.3 billion this year alone. We have also made a record investment in all our highways—\$1.4 billion this year alone.

We are taking a sustainable and strategic approach that balances investment in highways and in public transit. We are balancing the needs of rural communities, where roads and highways are a literal lifeline, with large urban

centres, where traffic congestion threatens our prosperity. We are balancing the needs of the thriving Ontario businesses that ship \$1.2 trillion worth of goods on our highways every year, and of the commuters who simply want to get home to their families at the end of the day. For example, the 400-series highways that pass through the greater Toronto area are some of the busiest highways in North America. Much of the \$900 million in two-way trade that crosses the Ontario-US border every day travels on these roads. Delays threaten our prosperity. It is in the interests of all Ontarians to tackle traffic congestion in the greater Toronto area.

The greater Toronto area occupies less than 1% of Ontario's landmass, but nearly half of the province's 12.5 million residents live in the region. The Greater Toronto Transportation Authority, or GTTA, is bringing a region-wide approach to transit and transportation in the region, one that meets the growing number and growing needs of our commuters. We have laid the foundation and have brought together the province, municipalities and local transit agencies to create a seamless and more convenient transportation system.

Earlier today I announced that our government has nominated Robert MacIsaac and Peter Smith as appointees to the GTTA board of directors. These appointments are subject to review by the standing committee on government agencies. Once approved, I intend to designate Mr. MacIsaac as chair of the GTTA board and Mr. Smith as vice-chair.

Mr. MacIsaac brings a wealth of experience to his new role. He has been described as a champion of sustainable planning. He played a leading role in projects that will shape Burlington and the province, including the green-belt, Burlington's downtown waterfront and a new Burlington campus for McMaster University.

Mr. Smith will be able to call on his experience as chair of GO Transit. He knows well the issues involved in running a region-wide public transit agency. Under his leadership, GO ridership has grown steadily from 2.5 million in the year it was founded to over 48 million who ride on GO Transit every year.

Yesterday, Chair Smith and I congratulated GO Transit's billionth rider. I would like again to congratulate GO Transit on this significant milestone and to congratulate everyone who chooses to take public transit.

1350

The experience of Mr. Smith and Mr. MacIsaac makes them excellent choices to launch the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority. Mr. MacIsaac will lead a board that includes representatives from Durham, Halton, Peel and York region, the cities of Hamilton and Toronto, and the province.

The GTTA is responsible for developing its own business plan and defining its own needs, and we have allocated \$10 million to ensure that the GTTA has the adequate operational resources to develop this plan. The GTA fare card system, once implemented, will be the responsibility of the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority and will allow commuters to travel from Oshawa

to Hamilton using a single card. We are moving forward with the GTA fare card, which will be introduced on four Mississauga bus routes, two stations at the GO Transit Milton line, and Union Station for both GO Transit and the TTC by mid-2007. Implementation will begin in 2008 and be in use across the greater Toronto area and Hamilton by 2010.

I want to emphasize that these improvements are being made in conjunction with key infrastructure improvements; for example, the development of the first-ever southern Ontario highways program. The program is a five-year, \$3.4-billion plan to build 130 kilometres of highway, 64 new bridges, repair 1,600 kilometres of highway and repair 200 bridges across southern Ontario. Under the program, we are planning for future high-occupancy vehicle lanes on the Queen Elizabeth Way through Oakville and Burlington.

Other key construction projects include widening Highway 401 from four to six lanes from Windsor to Tilbury and Woodstock to Cambridge; widening the QEW from four to six lanes through St. Catharines in Niagara Falls; and widening Highway 7 from two to four lanes from Highway 417 to Carleton Place.

Convenient, sustainable and safe transportation is vital to our economic success and the quality of our life. The McGuinty government's infrastructure investments have delivered results for the people of Ontario. We have delivered better hospitals, better schools, better transit systems, better borders, better roads and better bridges across the province, all necessary for future growth and future prosperity. I know the honourable members will want to continue to support the McGuinty government's balanced and aggressive plan to ease traffic congestion with the seamless, integrated and sustainable transportation network.

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

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): Yet another Liberal photo op. What would you expect but more words and very little action?

With respect to the announcement of the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority board chair and vice-chair, Rob MacIsaac and Peter Smith, this side and John Tory, the opposition government, say that we support those two individuals as competent individuals.

Applause.

Mr. O'Toole: Thank you for that recognition. It should be recognized that it was under our government that Rob MacIsaac did serve on the Greater Toronto Services Board. In fact, at the announcement this morning, which I attended—another Liberal photo op; I'm getting tired of traveling around and doing them—he said that there was a lot of good work done by the services board. So in that respect I think he's fair and fair-minded.

But what's lacking here—it's a dysfunctional organization, right from the organization. If you look at the structure of the governance, there are four members from Toronto—one each for Durham, Halton, York and Peel, and one from Hamilton, so that's five, and a chair and vice-chair who are appointed by the government. The McGuinty government has complete control of these

minions, these five people who are going to be representing—and they're going to be rubber-stamping the business.

The other part of this is that there's no governance authority here by these two individuals, whom we support. They have no money. In fact, even at the press release this morning they said it could be 2008 or 2010 before the plan will actually come together. They talk about seamless, integrated transit. This is anything but seamless because you still, at the end of the day—even as I speak, the transit authority in Durham unfortunately and regrettably is on strike. Even if it was seamless and integrated, it doesn't work. Last year, we saw the city of Toronto transit on strike.

Clearly, at the end of the debate here—I can see that the minister is struggling—they have no plan. This authority has no money, and the previous minister himself is actually laughing at this announcement. I can see that. He knows it was announced in three budgets. They had announced it prior to the election as a promise.

I think I would like to file this report here. It's by the Toronto Board of Trade, issued in February 2003. That board of trade challenged the McGuinty government. They promised anything, of course; we're all aware of that. They promised that they would do something about it. Here we are, almost through the mandate, and nothing has happened.

This is a serious challenge. In fact, our leader, John Tory, and myself set up some serious consultations with stakeholders this summer and the real people of Ontario to deal with gridlock and transportation issues. The board of trade said that this is costing the Ontario economy \$3 billion a year. What has Dalton McGuinty done about it? Absolutely nothing. He has had a couple of photo ops and announcements. I'm disappointed, and yet I remain hopeful.

I, along with the constituents of Durham region, am stuck in gridlock. We know that on Fridays now they have these gridlock transportation days on the radio and TV shows. It's about two hours each way to commute from Durham and from all over the GTA. This offers them no quick relief, and it is a disappointment, another photo op. It's like all the promises I've heard over the last three years: more promises, more photo ops, and no action. But I was there to support the minister; I didn't criticize. We voted for Bill 104. We want to get on with doing the job. But they have given them no power, no money and a dysfunctional governance model from a government that has no plan to solve the gridlock issues of the province of Ontario.

The minister, in her remarks just now, went on to suggest all the great things they're doing. I have here a list of some 200 promises, and I have a complete list. On opposition day last week, we enunciated 51 of those promises that have been broken, absolutely—I can't use some of the words to describe it because they're not parliamentary, but it's telling people one thing and doing another. In my family, we call it a broken promise. Don't

trust someone who keeps breaking their promises to you, and that's what I found this morning: a lot of promises.

These are two very, very impressive leaders, Rob MacIsaac as well as Peter Smith, competent people, but they have no governance authority, no mandate, and you won't see anything delivered until about 2008, 2010.

So, Minister, get on with the job of solving the gridlock problem to help the people of Ontario.

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): I want to start off by wishing all the best to Mr. MacIsaac and Mr. Smith. They have great responsibility, and frankly, they have many hopes pinned to their efforts. Unfortunately, no matter how talented these gentlemen are, no matter how committed and energetic they are, they've been given an impossible task. They've been given a job without resources; they've been given a mandate without authority. The reality is that when all is done, when these gentlemen have served out their terms, the context within which they operate will have meant that their efforts will be for naught. I shouldn't say entirely for naught; maybe it will be, to some small extent, useful. But you can't deal with congestion and gridlock in the GTA by setting up an authority like this, without money, without power, and then tell it to make sense out of the irrational sprawl that this government is allowing to go on, unbridled.

Today the David Suzuki Foundation released its report on climate change plans put forward by provincial governments. They reviewed them from one end of the country to the other. They looked at Ontario. It's pretty clear. What we've been saying in this House for some time—and frankly what the minister has had to dance around—they've said pretty baldly: that there is no climate change plan coming from this government. No surprise there.

1400

But they did have some interesting comments on sprawl. I'll read:

“Last year”—in the Suzuki report—“All Over the Map discussed an Ontario plan to combat urban sprawl. The strategy has become more concrete with the release of the Golden Horseshoe's growth plan but, unfortunately, the plan only stipulates a 40% intensification target. This means that 60% of new development will be sprawl, which is in line with historic growth patterns, eating up more agricultural land and increasing the cost of and emissions from infrastructure and transportation options.”

The simple reality is that allowing Los Angeles-type sprawl in the greater Toronto area gives you Los Angeles-type conditions. It gives you gridlock, it gives you congestion, it gives you massive expenditure on expressways, but it does not get people home when they want to be home. It does not deal with smog, it does not deal with air pollution. Frankly, no transit system, even if it was given the resources it needed, would be able to deal with the underlying irrational system that is being put in place by this government.

When we discussed this bill initially, the Minister of Transportation at the time talked about the costs of congestion. He talked about the increasing time people

will spend in their cars because of that congestion, and then put forward a plan, a solution, a scheme that will have no impact, no effect. Today, the current Minister of Transportation continues that tradition.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I heard the Minister of Transportation's comments about gridlock. I want to talk about another kind of gridlock that's happening that I'm surprised she hasn't mentioned today. We found out that yesterday Highway 11 north of Nipigon was shut down for eight hours. Today, Highway 17, the Trans-Canada Highway north and west of Sault Ste. Marie, is shut down. Yet when you call the MTO hotline, what you're told is, "No road closures at this time." And when you go to the MTO website, they say, "No road closures at this time." I'm sure that people in northeastern and northwestern Ontario will be very surprised that this government says there are no roads closed.

But what's really interesting is why they're closed: because the McGuinty government that was opposed to the Harris-Eves strategy of privatizing highway maintenance has now found great favour in the privatization of highway maintenance. Today, if you're around Sault Ste. Marie and on the highway, or if you're around Nipigon or Kenora or Dryden and on the highway, you can hardly find a snowplow or a sander or a salter anywhere, because the private sector operators aren't on the job. So I just want to say a few words of sympathy to all those people who are trying to commute out of Sault Ste. Marie or Thunder Bay or trying to get from the Manitoba border to Thunder Bay: Obviously the McGuinty government doesn't consider your plight to be important at all.

VISITORS

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I want to introduce members of a delegation from Fiji. They are in your gallery: The Honourable George Shiu Raj, the Minister for Women, Social Welfare and Housing; Mr. Emosi Rakai, assistant director, corporate services; and Mr. Prabhakaran Nair, the president of the local Fiji Hindu Sabha.

TONY GRANDE

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent for all parties to speak for up to five minutes to recognize the passing of Tony Grande, former member of the Ontario Legislature.

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

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): On behalf of the New Democrats, I want to say a few words about the contributions of Tony Grande to the Legislature, to Ontario's education system and to Ontario as a whole. I didn't have the privilege of being a member of

the Legislature when Tony Grande was the member for Oakwood, but I did have the privilege of working here sometimes as a volunteer, of working in election campaigns with him and of knowing his infectious enthusiasm, his humour and his devotion to the task. It is difficult—actually, it's impossible—to condense 12 years in the Legislature and a lifetime of passion for politics and commitment to public service into a brief five minutes.

Tony Grande was known locally as "Mr. Tony," and he combined the best in politics. He genuinely cared about and liked people. He saw the best in everyone, and I think people who served with him from all sides of the House would recognize that. And he believed in the potential of politics and the job of a compassionate government to improve the lives of people and to make things better. He was in politics for all the right reasons: to create a better world. More specifically, he got into it to fix the education system, so that all kids, regardless of their background, the language spoken at home or their special needs, would have an equal opportunity to excel while maintaining pride in their heritage.

Tony came into politics as a pioneer in heritage languages, having introduced the original heritage language program in his mid-west-end Toronto school. Tony took a major role in moving forward the public debate around how we teach languages in Ontario. His Bill 80 would have been the fulfillment of his dream to expand heritage or international language and cultural instruction in the province, and as part of the school day. It set the agenda for public hearings and received agreement in principle from all sides of this Legislature.

He played a key role in the passage of Bill 82 in 1980, the special education law, because those were the days when an individual MPP could make a real difference, hammering out language, policy changes, organizing for public hearings and amending key legislation to make it better. Heritage language, English as a second language, special education, a bill to ban corporal punishment in our schools: Tony Grande left his mark on the education system of Ontario.

He loved the Legislature. He loved being here. He loved the debate. And he genuinely enjoyed the company of members from all sides of the House. But he will always be best known as a solid constituency worker. On the streets of Oakwood, he was known simply as "Mr. Tony," and he was loved from one end of Oakwood to the other. That's because he always took the time to listen to people, whether across the desk in his little constituency office or in a tenants' meeting. Tenants in Oakwood can thank Tony for lower rents and better-maintained buildings. Residents remember Tony Grande fighting toxic air pollution. Dozens of men and women injured on the job had Tony Grande to thank for better workers' compensation pensions and better workers' compensation legislation. And the list goes on. Tony Grande made a huge difference in the lives of the people in his part of the city.

In the words of one of Tony's constituents, a woman who lived in a bungalow on Lauder Avenue in the heart

of Oakwood, "Any time I need help, Tony is there. When I became a widow, Tony fought to defer my property taxes for two years. When I had a problem with my pension, Tony solved it. There's no one like him."

Tony Grande was first elected in September 1975, and re-elected in 1977, 1981 and 1985. And even in elections where New Democrats may have lost seats, Tony Grande always increased his plurality. In 1975, when he was first elected, it was a very ready time for New Democrats. Tony and his fellow travellers in the Sezione Italiana helped turn the NDP upside down—or, rather, left side up—in the west end of Toronto. The Sezione, at St. Clair and Dufferin, was part social club and part hub for political organizing, and Tony took that political organizing to heart. And in the 1975 election under leader Stephen Lewis, the NDP swept all 10 electoral seats in Toronto's west end, including Tony Grande in Oakwood.

1410

Cheerful but quiet, charismatic in his own way, Tony inspired intense loyalty and repaid it in spades. He was always loyal to his staff, his friends and his constituents. He loved talking about politics, sitting around the dinner table at home or at a local café, gossiping about the latest news, who was saying what about whom, hearing the latest gossip that was being said about him. All these things were part and parcel of what he enjoyed every day, and he spent hours at it.

But as important as they were to him, they paled in comparison to the importance of his family: Helen, Aaron, Daniel, Laura, his parents, sister and brothers, many cousins. Politics was fun, but what made his face really light up was his family. We all know that politics can be all-consuming and often demands a choice of work, meetings, obligations over family, but for Tony it was never a choice; the family always came first. Meetings and question period duty had to end in time to pick up the kids from child care, and being home for dinner was a requirement. Even if dinner was put off until quite late at night, Tony had to be home for dinner.

On behalf of New Democrats and a New Democratic Party that Tony Grande loved and fought hard for, I want to thank his family—Helen, Aaron, Daniel and Laura—for having shared Tony with all of us and having shared Tony with the province of Ontario. His infectious laugh, his cheerfulness, his wisdom, his dedication to the job will live on, and we who knew him and worked with him will admire him forever.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): On behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus and our leader, John Tory, I want to acknowledge and join with the remarks of the leader of the third party in paying tribute to Tony Grande, MPP for Oakwood. I understand that he died after a long battle with cancer. My condolences and our condolences go to his family, his wife and his three children.

I was elected in 1977, two years after Tony was elected to this Legislature, so I did know Tony and his involvement in the Legislative Assembly from 1977 to 1987. I was impressed that while Tony was born in Italy and came to Canada, I understand about 20 or 22 years

before he was elected to the Legislature, I always admired him for his efforts with regard to the push for heritage language education in his area and in the province. He truly did represent a number of new Italian Canadians who came to our country during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Tony took up his citizenship, his new country, his public duty to his province and country in a very admirable way.

As the leader of the third party has pointed out, he not only focused on certain issues in this Legislature, he was able in a number of ways to alter legislation that was presented in this Legislature and acted as a leader on educational and multicultural issues. He was a very charming gentleman to talk to and to deal with. I had a great deal of respect for him, as did other members of my party at the time.

I would like, on behalf of my party, along with the leader of the third party and other members of this Legislature, to express our condolences to Helen and her family. I want to again thank you for sharing Tony with us. He did a great deal of work for this Legislative Assembly, he believed in our democratic system, and he acted as an exemplary parliamentarian. I just want to thank you for all the time you lent Tony to us and to the people of Ontario. Ontario is the better for it.

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): It is a great honour to stand here today on behalf of Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal Party to recognize Tony Grande and his very, very exemplary contributions to Ontario, to his community and to many of us who were not born in this country and were given a welcome in this great country.

I knew Tony as a result of my being the local councillor in the same area at the city of York. I knew him also when I was at Metro council. I knew him because we represented some of the same area. In fact, we even lived on the same street: He lived at the top of Rushton and I lived at the bottom of Rushton. So over the years, even before I was here, we would frequently see each other.

Although we were in different parties, Tony had a great deal of respect and was always willing to pass on a compliment. If something that he thought was well served was being done in a manner that he thought was to the benefit of the people, he would say so. He was more than willing to be complimentary, to give advice—always very humble, always very intelligent in his advice and very deep in his understanding.

One of the things that I remember most about Tony was his incredible advocacy on behalf of injured workers. I can remember being in his office up on Eglinton and Northcliffe, where his office seemed like Minister Bradley's office, you know, with paper files that were piled feet high, with all the files of all the residents that would come to him, not only from his own riding but from all over Toronto, asking for support, for representation, as they tried to make their way through the compensation system at the time. I know a lot of the work that Tony was involved in—and a lot of MPPs at that time were deeply engrossed in workers' compen-

sation issues. It was complex, daunting work that, really, a team of lawyers sometimes couldn't do. But Tony did that day after day, seven days a week. He was willing to have people come into his office, he would go to their homes—because people would tell me, and I would see him do this myself. He was always willing to try and help people, again, with these very, very daunting issues of compensation. He certainly did an incredible amount of good work for people who, because of language, because of complexity, could not speak for themselves. But Tony was their advocate and spokesperson. It's the kind of work that goes on behind the scenes that many people watching on TV or the general public would never appreciate that an MPP does. But Tony, as I said, was really exemplary in that kind of work, in helping people that really had nowhere else to turn. I think that's one of the great memories I have of Tony's dedication above and beyond the call of duty.

Also, he was a great champion for heritage and international language before it was popular, before it was the thing to do. It wasn't easy to advocate that time be taken during the day so that children could have a little bit of appreciation of their roots and their culture in our school system. Tony was relentless in ensuring that all children felt included in the neighbourhood schools that they went to, because in many cases they didn't feel included. We've all heard the stories. Children would even be criticized for the food they brought at lunch. They would be laughed at for their sandwiches, never mind their accent or the fact that their parents couldn't come on parent-teacher night. But Tony insisted, in his work as MPP, that all the schools, our elementary schools especially, and government programs that were involved respected the fact that no matter where the students or their parents or grandparents came from, they had to be respected as citizens and full participants in our schools.

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That's what his advocacy on behalf of international language and heritage language was all about. It was about inclusion, it was about fairness and it was about respecting people and where they came from. So he was a real pathfinder in that area of inclusion, of respect and of ensuring that our traditional roots and our heritage were not forgotten.

In many ways Tony was the model MPP. I'm a member of the Liberal Party, but if you look at what he did, he did a lot of model things and got very little credit sometimes because this was the day-to-day grunge work that Tony did. But he did them with great impact on ordinary people's lives. He really made a difference in a lot of people's lives. As the leader of the third party said, if you talk to people in that part of Toronto, they still have great honour and respect for the contributions that Tony made to their parents, their grandparents, their uncles. They still remember Tony for that wonderful, wonderful generosity that he had.

As an MPP and as an immigrant myself, having represented that same riding afterwards and representing some of the same people, I have the utmost respect and

the utmost goodness in my heart for Tony Grande, his wife, Helen, his brother Gregorio, and everyone that came before him.

The Speaker: I'd like to thank the members and express all of our condolences and sympathy to the family. We will see that the Hansard of the comments made today is forwarded to you.

DEFERRED VOTES

PLANNING AND CONSERVATION LAND STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI A TRAIT À L'AMÉNAGEMENT DU TERRITOIRE ET AUX TERRES PROTÉGÉES

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 51, An Act to amend the Planning Act and the Conservation Land Act and to make related amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 51, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire et la Loi sur les terres protégées et apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1423 to 1428.

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

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Qaadri, Shafiq
Balkissoon, Bas	Gerretsen, John	Racco, Mario G.
Bartolucci, Rick	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramsay, David
Bountrogianni, Marie	Kular, Kuldip	Rinaldi, Lou
Bradley, James J.	Levac, Dave	Ruprecht, Tony
Brownell, Jim	Marsales, Judy	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Matthews, Deborah	Sergio, Mario
Caplan, David	McGuinty, Dalton	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike	McMeekin, Ted	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Delaney, Bob	Milloy, John	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dhillon, Vic	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Watson, Jim
Dombrowsky, Leona	Peters, Steve	Wilkinson, John
Duguid, Brad	Phillips, Gerry	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Pupatello, Sandra	Zimmer, David

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Barrett, Toby	MacLeod, Lisa	Runciman, Robert W.
DiNovo, Cheri	Marchese, Rosario	Scott, Laurie
Dunlop, Garfield	Martel, Shelley	Sterling, Norman W.
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Tabuns, Peter
Horwath, Andrea	Munro, Julia	Tascona, Joseph N.
Hudak, Tim	O'Toole, John	Witmer, Elizabeth
Klees, Frank	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 42; the nays are 23.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

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

MINISTERS' ATTENDANCE

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm referencing standing order 36, which deals with oral questions. The current government has been, as you know, long on rhetoric dealing with government accountability. I believe all members would agree that one of the key avenues for opposition to require accountability is through question period.

Standing order 36 speaks to matters of public importance being addressed by ministers of the crown during oral question period. I believe it's incumbent for the official opposition to point out that nine cabinet ministers are missing today, and that speaks volumes with respect to the government's sincerity surrounding accountability and their respect for this assembly and our standing orders.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Runciman: I'm finished.

The Speaker: Thank you.

It is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Premier. In the west gallery are Mr. and Mrs. Goldstein. Not able to be here today is their daughter Lori, who, according to her specialist Dr. Blake Woodside, could die at any time.

At the age of 30, Lori weighs less than 60 pounds. She has a severe case of anorexia/bulimia. According to Dr. Woodside, the search for a hospital bed to enable her to have a live-saving operation started more than three weeks ago. Lori and her parents are still waiting.

Premier, according to her doctor, Lori Goldstein is dying. Why, given Lori's life-threatening condition, is she still waiting for a life-saving operation, notwithstanding your propaganda about empty waiting rooms and claims of reduced wait times?

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

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I want to say to the honourable member, and particularly to the

parents who are mentioned, that we sympathize with the circumstances they're facing.

I would say to the honourable member that it's of course a challenging circumstance anytime to speak about one individual case, particularly relating to the laws in Ontario related to security of personal information. I can say that we've dramatically enhanced re-sourcing for the clinics that assist people who are in those circumstances. As I've personally commented before, these include members of my family, and I'm very, very aware of this extraordinary hardship.

I undertake to work with the honourable member to seek a resolution to the circumstance, and if the honourable member would like to see any data with respect to the level of acute care beds in Ontario now versus when he first came into government, I'd be very pleased to provide that as well.

Mr. Klees: The minister's response is shameful.

In a conversation this morning with the doctor, he made it very clear that in his medical opinion Lori could die at any time without the intervention of a simple operation. Despite his every effort, he could only tell Lori that the soonest possible time this operation could take place is October 20. He's been trying for three weeks.

Minister, I ask you in the presence of Lori's parents and family, will you stand by yet one more day, giving us rhetoric about what you have done better than the previous government, while a life hangs in the balance, or will you stand in your place now and say that you will do everything necessary to ensure that Lori will not have to wait one more day for this life-saving operation?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: On the point about waiting times, I think the most crucial one is made obvious to all who are here today. The honourable member waited. I was here at 1:30 of the clock. The honourable member did not cross the aisle at that time. He did not approach me for the one hour that has occurred since then. He did not phone me in my office this morning. He did not approach me in such a fashion so as to deal with all the time available.

To the heart of the honourable member's question—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order, member for Erie–Lincoln.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: —I will work with him. And I would only suggest to all honourable members that in a circumstance where we have a quarter of a million people working every single day on the front lines of health care, where most of the decisions are of course made, if you expect and wish for assistance, which, as I've said, we're very happy and will work very hard to provide, timeliness is—and the honourable member has made the point well—very, very crucial in these circumstances. I would encourage all members to take advantage of the opportunities, including this one of course, to raise matters like this with me personally.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr. Klees: Minister, I will take you up on your offer to meet with the Goldsteins following question period. I will take you up on your commitment.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: You didn't ask me that question.

Mr. Klees: In that case, I will ask you the question now: Will you meet with me and the Goldsteins following question period so that you can give them the assurance that you suggested you would, by working with us?

I would simply like the minister to hear from Mr. Goldstein, when he wrote me about this matter: "At this point it is a matter of life and death ... there are no beds available in any of the hospitals to do it. It is quite ironic that the present government has decreased waiting times for treatment of hip replacements, heart bypass surgery ... but a procedure that affects so many of our young women gets pushed to the back of the line."

I will take you up, Mr. Minister, on your offer to meet with us following question period so that we can ensure that Lori gets the lifeline that she needs.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: There is no question as to my willingness to meet with these individuals. But I will not take the hour that will go through between now and when that meeting is possible. I will act and take advantage of the time that is available. All I would suggest to the honourable member—he now references a letter that he received. The point of the matter is, if the member wishes to bring a matter to the floor of the Legislature, to use the word "urgency" and to speak about the dire circumstances, as he addresses them, then I do believe it's incumbent upon him to act in a more timely way in these circumstances. I repeat to all members again: There are circumstances like this—

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: You know, we've seen you shoot your finger to the House before, but maybe on this one you should just pipe down a little.

This fundamental disregard—

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The point is, the honourable—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. This is a serious matter. We need to take it seriously, as we do all matters before the Legislature. We need to have respect for each other, for the House and for our traditions.

The Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I want to say to the honourable member, yes, I will meet. If you would be willing to pass along the information you have to my desk, we will get on top of this. And again, I encourage all members in such circumstances: The more time that is available to assist is obviously helpful.

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GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): My question is for the Premier. Premier, we've just heard about a patient in a life-and-death situation who, despite all the claims of your government, can't get a hospital bed, can't get surgery on which her life depends. At the

same time, your government is spending millions of dollars on advertisements that make wildly inaccurate claims.

Your ad for your wait-times phone line claims that people can find out how to reduce their wait times by phoning the number. We know that no such information is provided.

Premier, at a time when people in life-and-death situations can't get the medical care they require so urgently without the intervention of their MPP, will you pull this misleading ad off the air?

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I need the member to withdraw that last statement.

Mrs. Witmer: I'll withdraw if you request it.

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

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The ad that the honourable member speaks about makes three statements of fact, and these are statements of fact that have been presented to and verified by the Provincial Auditor of Ontario.

It says that as a result of the work that we're doing to produce more nurses and doctors, we've reduced wait times. There's plenty of evidence of the increase in the production of doctors; just as one example, there are 750 foreign-trained doctors now in production to Ontario communities.

We said that there are more MRI technologists. The evidence is clear in communities all across the province of Ontario that MRI machines are up and running through the night, when the honourable member's party used to close them down at 5 o'clock. That much is clear.

The reality is that the honourable member doesn't believe that people should be empowered to take advantage of a tool like the Web, where more than 1.6 million people have gained access to information previously locked away or not even known.

This is our record; we're very proud of it.

The statements in the commercial are tremendously accurate and are an example of what can be created in the province of Ontario when everybody works together. This is a credit to all of those in health care who are delivering better results for patients. Of course, there are many—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Mrs. Witmer: Premier, the ad claim is clear. It says, "Find out how to reduce your wait times." Well, we called, and people did not get an answer. In fact, they were told, as you heard from our leader yesterday, "Nothing can be done. There are no guarantees." What's billed in the ad as a sure thing—that is, "reduce your wait time"—turns out to be nothing more than government propaganda, and we saw that in your answers yesterday.

Again, I ask you, Premier: At a time when the ERs are in crisis, when patients can't get the care they need, when there is a shortage of doctors and nurses, will you pull this terribly inaccurate ad and use the money to help the

individuals like the individual who was here today asking for your help?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: No. The ad, as I've had the privilege of saying on several occasions now, is one that is accurate, that offers to the people of the province of Ontario information about progress that has been made on their behalf and with their resources and gives them further opportunities to gain access to much more information; information, in the case of a website, that is available on a hospital-by-hospital basis, that feeds into the information that is necessary for patients to make a more informed choice.

The honourable member does not have respect for the fact that more than 1.6 million people have gained access to information that was previously unknown, that was locked away.

We believe, through our wait-times information system, that we've made tremendous progress at bringing more information. Information is powerful. It unlocks the recipe for patients to be able to gain faster access.

The results are there for all to see. Wait times have been reduced significantly in many, many areas. We have more work to do, of course, and this will include gaining more information for people about what wait times are in various areas.

Mrs. Witmer: Premier, the responses are unbelievable.

Your ad raises hopes, it raises expectations, and then it dashes them. It says that by calling the number in the ad, 1-888-779-7767, they can reduce their wait times. But if you ask how to reduce a wait time in an emergency room, you get no answer. If you ask how to reduce a wait time for shoulder surgery, you're told by the person on the other end of the phone, "That's not a priority." If you ask how to reduce a wait time for an MRI, you're told, "Talk to somebody else."

Premier, your ad is inaccurate. It creates false hope and expectations. Will you do the right thing and pull the ad today?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: A couple of things that we know for sure: One of them is that taking \$2.5 billion out of health care ain't exactly going to help wait times too much.

The second thing we know is, the honourable member mentioned MRIs, and the evidence is there for all to see. MRI wait times are down in the province of Ontario, saving people, on average, at least 26 days of waiting, and that's a lot of assurance for people.

Let me put this in the words of an individual Ontarian. This is from an e-mail that was sent to my ministry: "I may be facing total knee replacement of one of my knees and have been extremely hesitant to go back to my doctor as, having been blessed with good health most of my life, I'm quite frightened. I've been doing research online on the surgery itself, and that, along with your website, has provided me with considerable information. I'm now ready to face the surgery because I am more informed and feel less powerless going into this. Thank you for the

website. It really is a great tool for the public to be able to access—helps us to be able to make plans."

The evidence is clear. People are flocking to these websites because they know it unlocks the recipe for shorter wait times.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): To the Premier: The Premier tries to project a certain image when it comes to education, so surely he must know his multiplication tables, and surely he can tell us the answer to this simple question. Premier, what is 1,500 multiplied by 500?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I look very much forward to receiving the supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: I thought it was a very simple question. The answer is 750,000. That's \$1,500 a day, which is what the McGuinty government is going to pay your school board supervisor, times 500 days, the total number of days, we are told, that your school board supervisor will be on the job over the next two years, so a grand total of \$750,000 just so the McGuinty government can appoint a Harris-style school board supervisor to force classroom cuts on the Dufferin-Peel separate school board.

Premier, how do you justify taking \$1,500 a day for your school board supervisor when we could invest that money in effective classroom programs like reading recovery?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I have no idea where the leader of the NDP is coming up with the 500-day figure. He is nothing if not creative.

We have put in place an individual with impeccable credentials, and we're bringing a new approach to dealing with this particular challenge. It is collaborative as opposed to being combative. This individual is going to work with two trustees from the board. Together, they are going to do what is necessary to ensure that they manage the increased resources they've received in a responsible way and in a way that does not compromise the quality of the learning environment.

Again, I say to the leader of the NDP, he is nothing if not creative. I have no idea where he's coming up with the 500 days. I know that the leader of the NDP would want to join me in wishing the very best to all of those who are pursuing this and that they complete this work as soon as possible.

Mr. Hampton: Here's the reality: He's being sent there to cut \$16 million, and much of that money is going to come out of the classroom. Your Minister of Education says he's going to be there for two years, and that works out to about 500 working days at \$1,500 a day.

Working families want the \$750,000 to be put into the school funding formula, the school funding formula you promised you were going to fix and that you admit is flawed. The sad reality is that the supervisor you're going to pay for will also bring along assistants and more

assistants and more assistants, and then there will be travel costs, benefit costs and other expenses, and all of those will have to be paid for too.

Premier, people in the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board deserve to know: How much is all of this, at the end of the day, going to take out of the classroom when you add in your supervisor and every other—

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

1450

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I think it's always helpful to inject a few facts into these kinds of discussions. We have provided funding to the tune of almost \$800 million to the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board. We've increased per pupil funding by 18%, notwithstanding the fact that enrolment only went up 3%. We think that's a substantial investment.

Working together with the school board administrators, they have been able to reduce the deficit from \$15 million to about \$2 million. What remains by way of work is to find a way to resolve this \$2-million issue.

Unlike what the NDP did with respect to the Ottawa-Carleton school board in 1989, where they sent in a traditional supervisor, we've sent in an individual to work in a collaborative fashion with the trustees and with the board. I am confident that together we can resolve this outstanding issue in a way that does not compromise the quality of the learning environment that we want for all our children.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): To the Premier: In case you missed it, the democratically elected trustees said no to collaborating with your supervisor.

Yesterday, at just about the time your Minister of Natural Resources declared that northern Ontario's forest industry crisis was over, Domtar announced that it was shutting down its Nairn Centre sawmill and eliminating another 140 jobs.

The reality is that the forest crisis is not over. The reality is that thousands of good-paying jobs have been destroyed as a result of your wrong-headed policy of driving hydro rates through the roof, and more are going to be destroyed as a result of your support for the flawed Harper softwood lumber deal.

But I have a simple question. You told mayors, municipal leaders, union leaders and industry leaders eight months ago that you thought there was some room for regional hydro rates for northern Ontario forest industry communities. That was eight months ago. Thousands more jobs have disappeared. When are you going to implement those regional hydro rates of four and a half cents a kilowatt hour, all fees and charges included?

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): The leader of the NDP

raises an important issue, and he will know of course that I made no such commitment to landing on four and a half cents per kilowatt hour, all in. He will know that there's a petition campaign that's being put together. He knows that's what they ask, but he also knows that we made no such commitment.

But we did say that we were going to take a look at the particular challenges faced by northern Ontario, particularly those presented by electricity prices and particularly those being faced by the forestry sector. We understand that. That work has begun. The Minister of Natural Resources has the responsibility now to help us better understand exactly what the forestry sector needs, and he's taken on that responsibility. We look forward to completing that work.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, it was you who went to the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association meeting in Thunder Bay with your then-energy minister, it was you who said that the McGuinty government was going to take a look at the issue of reducing hydro rates for the forest industry sector in northern Ontario, and for eight months union leaders, industry leaders and municipal leaders have been waiting for some action. In the meantime, literally hundreds of jobs disappear every week: 140 jobs this week at Nairn Centre; 425 jobs last week—Dryden, Red Rock and Espanola; before that, more jobs in Longlac; before that, more jobs in Thunder Bay.

Premier, how many jobs in the forest sector is the McGuinty government going to destroy before you heed the advice of those municipal leaders, union leaders and forest sector leaders?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, we've given a commitment to the people of northern Ontario, and the forestry sector in particular, that we're going to take a look at electricity prices and see what we can do by way of providing additional assistance.

I want to remind the leader of the NDP of something he said in June 2002, when this kind of thing was contemplated, which was looking at finding a way to provide assistance regarding electricity prices to northern Ontario. He said, "This essentially means that the one-price system we've always had, the system that says we're all equal citizens of Ontario, would be gone. It means some consumers should be prepared to get whacked over the head."

It may be that the leader of the NDP does not believe that there's some way we can provide additional assistance to the forestry sector in Ontario, but we on this side of the House believe that we can provide that support and we're looking to ensure that we provide it in the best possible way.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, I don't think that regional hydro rates are going to be the be-all and end-all either. But this is a specific request from the union leaders, the municipal leaders, the industry leaders across northern Ontario. They know that their mills are surrounded by hydro dams that produce electricity for one cent a kilowatt hour or two cents a kilowatt hour. But it's McGuinty government policy that now forces those mills to pay

seven cents a kilowatt hour, something they can't afford, especially when mills in British Columbia, Manitoba, Quebec, Minnesota, Wisconsin or Michigan are paying far less.

This is their specific request, Premier. You're the one who gave the speech in Thunder Bay. You're the one who said you were going to look at it. The question is: Before hundreds more jobs are destroyed, when is Dalton McGuinty going to step up to the plate and do something in terms of the regional hydro rates that they have requested? Four and a half cents a kilowatt hour, all fees—

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I don't know how the leader of the NDP does it. He's telling me to do something that he doesn't believe in. I don't know how he can do that. He made reference to Quebec. I know the leader of the NDP is cognizant of the pressures faced by the North American forestry sector. He will know that Quebec, even with its four and a half cents a kilowatt hour electricity price, lost I believe seven mills this week alone—this week alone. That's with four and a half cents a kilowatt hour electricity.

What we've done is we already have in place a \$900-million plan, including \$350 million in loan guarantees. We have \$150 million over three years to the forest sector prosperity fund to leverage new capital investments. We have \$75 million annually now that we're making available for the construction and maintenance costs of primary and secondary forest access roads.

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I made the assumption that the leader of the NDP would be interested in the answer, but maybe I was mistaken in that regard, Mr. Speaker. But I say it again to the people of northern Ontario and the forestry sector in particular: We will continue to work with them.

CASINO EMPLOYEES

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie—Lincoln): I have a question to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. Yesterday, Minister, employees of Niagara's casinos learned the devastating news that 104 of them are losing their jobs. One of those affected employees is quoted in the Niagara Falls Review, saying that "grown men were 'brought to tears.

"There are people already talking about having to sell their homes and downsizing," he said."

Less than three months ago, in response to the news of 329 employees laid off at Casino Windsor, Niagara management said, "Things are going well. Fallsview Casino Resort and Casino Niagara have no plans to lay off staff"—less than three months ago. Obviously, and sadly, this has dramatically changed.

Minister, how far off are your casino revenue projections, and how many more layoffs do you expect to happen in the time ahead?

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I want this member and the entire House to know that it is always unfortunate when staff are laid off. I want you to know that I'm concerned and our government is concerned about those affected and their families. That's why the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities has already been in touch with not only the casinos, but the unions as well, to advise them about the adjustment advisory program that we have in place for the affected employees. This program is a wide range of services which includes job search assistance, vocational and business counselling and training information.

The member would know, and it was very clear in the media reports as well as in the information from Fallsview, that the layoffs are resulting from the automation which is taking place within Fallsview Casino, the implementation of a ticket in, ticket out system for the slot machines and touch tables for the table games. There are no, as far as I'm aware, further layoffs that are contemplated.

1500

Mr. Hudak: Minister, I'm sure the impacted employees appreciate your concern. They're more interested, however, in getting those jobs back again. These are 104 real, hard-working families that are now forced to contemplate life without that salary. When they see the 300-plus layoffs at Windsor, the notion that these layoffs are caused by automation they're as likely to believe as another Dalton McGuinty campaign promise.

Minister, if you have an average salary of \$60,000 per year for these employees, that's about \$6 million. That happens to be the same sum that you spent dropping the "C" from the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. You've endorsed that. You said that is a good idea. Will you please tell the House that that was a tragic waste of money and that that money should be better invested in attracting tourists to the area and helping these people get their jobs back.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: In fact, we didn't wait until this adjustment or others. We've invested in the Niagara casino: the implementation of a new sports lounge. I would note as well that in Windsor the member and his party have been very vocal criticizing an investment made in a convention centre and an entertainment complex in order to enhance and to protect the jobs and the economic investment that the people of Ontario have in Windsor and in Niagara Falls.

I want this member to understand that under the watch of the previous government, these kinds of investments were simply not made and there was no gaming strategy that we were able to discern. That has changed. We are, of course, concerned, and have offered the assistance of the adjustment advisory program. We are making the appropriate investments in order to not only retain but to expand the operations in the casinos to be able to ensure that the treasury of the province of Ontario has the funds to be able to, again, invest in health care, in education, and most particularly in my case, in infrastructure.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a question to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. Minister, you invested, all right. You invested in technology that took away hundreds of jobs in the Fallsview Casino site: 104 people yesterday, gone, terminated, laid off, out the door; another 300 positions that are going to be eliminated. Minister, don't talk about retraining. You see, most of these people were people who had lost their jobs when factories in St. Catharines, Thorold, Welland, Port Colborne and Fort Erie shut down. They've already retrained so they can get a job at the casino. What do you say to those people? You're going to train them to do what? You've already trained them to be blackjack dealers. What's next?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I note to the member that during his tenure in government a thousand jobs per week were lost in Ontario. That's a sorry legacy. That's why we're making these kinds of investments not only in Niagara Falls but in Windsor and in other places in this province: in order to promote stronger job growth. There is no doubt that automation is something that is occurring and will continue to occur as we take advantage of the kinds of opportunities for the gaming experience that we believe will draw the clientele and allow us to be able to expand operations. But as I said, we have made available to not only the casino but to the employee unions as well the assistance of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the adjustment advisory program to help to transition those particular employees into other work opportunities.

Mr. Kormos: Minister, Ferranti-Packard in St. Catharines: shut down; your government did nothing. Atlas Steels in Welland: shut down; your government did nothing. E.G. Marsh in Port Colborne: shut down; your government did nothing. Fleet Manufacturing in Fort Erie: jobs gone; your government did nothing. And now your casino—because you're the sole shareholder, making huge profits, millions of dollars of profits—is turning away workers for whom that casino was the last hope. You're talking about breaking up marriages. You're talking about people losing their homes. You're talking about kids having to drop out of college and university. That's what it means when people lose their jobs in places like where I come from. What have you got to say to those people besides the feeble, feeble observation that they're going to be retrained, and, I repeat, retrained for what?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I don't agree with the characterization by the member opposite nor the doom-and-gloom sentiments that he expresses, because that was the experience between 1990 and 1995 in this province, and we have turned that sorry situation around, I say to the member and I say to this House.

We are making the kinds of investments in the Fallsview and the Windsor casino in order to promote more traffic and more job opportunities. The full services of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities are

available to help the affected families, whom we are very concerned about, so that they should be able to find a wide range of job-searching assistance, vocational and business counselling, and training information.

That is not only an appropriate response, but there is much more that we are doing to invest in the Niagara region and Niagara Falls, to be able to enhance the quality of life of all residents and to ensure the economic competitiveness of the region. It makes me very proud to say that I've been a part of the rebuilding of much of the infrastructure in the region.

CANCER PREVENTION

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge): My question today is to the Minister of Health Promotion. Many of our families have been touched by cancer. In fact, last year alone, an estimated 60,000 Ontarians were diagnosed with the disease and 26,000 people died from it. As a matter of fact, today in this House we paid tribute from all parties to a former member who recently succumbed to cancer.

Studies have shown that over 50% of all cancer cases are preventable. Today, the Canadian Cancer Society and Cancer Care Ontario released an update on where they envision cancer prevention and treatment in 2020. This update in particular focuses on the need for more efforts on prevention and cancer screening.

Minister, I'm interested to know how the programs you have developed with the Ministry of Health Promotion directly address the concerns outlined in this report.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): I want to thank the member from Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge for his question. It's very timely. As he did point out, the report on Cancer 2020 was released today.

In the report, it indicates that 30% of cancers are related to smoking. I am very pleased that our government, under the leadership of my friend and colleague Minister Smitherman and Premier McGuinty, brought forward the Smoke-Free Ontario Act on May 31, because what the report told us is that only two thirds of municipalities in the province were covered by some form of anti-smoking bylaw. We have now witnessed, between 2003 and 2005, a reduction by almost 19% in tobacco consumption.

Let me quote the report. It says, "The Smoke-Free Ontario Act and its accompanying strategy will have a greater impact on reducing cancer rates than any policy in Ontario's history."

While the McGuinty government is standing up and supporting these anti-tobacco, anti-smoking initiatives, the Harper government just two weeks ago, sadly—and I say this with great sincerity—cut \$10 million from aboriginal smoking cessation programs, from some of the people most adversely affected by smoking. I encourage the members of the Conservative Party to stand up—

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

Mr. Arthurs: Minister, I know we all have high hopes for the cancer-reducing potential of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. Clearly, the efforts even of municipalities prior to that are showing trending in the right way.

But the report also notes that physical activity and a nutritious diet are two key ways to prevent the onset of various types of cancer: in particular, breast, lung, colon and prostate cancer. Some 30% to 40% of breast and lung cancers, 40% to 50% of colon cancers and 10% to 30% of prostate cancers have been related to a lack of exercise.

This being Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and following Prostate Cancer Awareness Month, I think the report has relevance. Minister, how is our government working to enhance these two powerful tools in cancer prevention: physical activity and nutrition?

Hon. Mr. Watson: Just a few months ago we launched the healthy eating, active living strategy. It's a \$10-million strategy designed to encourage healthy eating and active living in the province.

I was pleased to be in Timmins a few weeks ago, where we launched a pilot project for a fruit-and-vegetable school program, where almost 25 schools in the Porcupine area will receive a fresh piece of fruit or vegetable, in most cases Ontario produce, helping our farmers and encouraging young people to start early in eating healthy.

We also have our Active 2010 program, which encourages people to participate in daily physical activity, and our very popular communities in action fund, from which members' constituents have benefited to the tune of \$5 million this year alone.

I want to take an opportunity to thank Cancer Care Ontario and the Canadian Cancer Society for this very valuable report, and also to commend our Minister of Health and the Premier, who announced the doubling of the regional cancer centre in Ottawa, my hometown, including a satellite operation at the Queensway Carleton Hospital, which is going to reduce by half wait times for chemotherapy and radiation. These are the kinds of investments I'm very proud of.

1510

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. It's been almost 10 years since the last provincial-municipal services review. Since then, the costs of municipal services have increased dramatically, as I'm sure you are aware. Two months ago at AMO, the Premier announced a provincial-municipal review to be completed in 18 months, following the next provincial election, but there has been no progress in two months, not even the appointment of the committee. It looks like another McGuinty broken promise to the taxpayers of Ontario. Minister, can you tell me why you think the municipalities of Ontario should wait for assistance just so you can avoid a difficult election issue?

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): It's hard to know where to start on a question like this. Number one, it was your government that caused all of the downloading to take place in the first place, which literally came close to severely damaging the financial situation in some of the municipalities. When you look at what we have actually done as a government when you look at the provincial gas tax money that's flowing, and will flow again later on this month, when you look at the federal gas tax money that we've included to flow straight through to municipalities, when you look at the fact that ambulance costs are going to be based on a true 50-50 basis that's going to provide municipalities with an additional \$300 million, when you look at some of the housing programs that we've started over the last number of years, and when you look at the rent bank we've started, thereby helping municipalities, we have started undoing some of the damage that that government has done. And yes, it's going to take some time to get a good handle on everything. We're working on it—

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

Mr. Hardeman: Minister, it was your government, your Premier, that announced that this review was going to take place. The question is really, why does it have to take 18 months? While we're waiting for the review, municipalities are being forced to reduce services or increase taxes. I know you told us in estimates that you have no idea what the average property tax increase is, so let me tell you: They are increasing dramatically and seniors are being forced to sell their homes because they can't afford the property taxes.

Two weeks ago, the Liberals voted against my resolution to complete the review expediently, so I guess they are admitting that they are dragging out the review for political gain. Despite Liberal opposition, the Legislature made it clear that we want that study completed expediently. Why is the Liberal government against completing the project expediently? Why do you have to set an arbitrary 18 months on it when you can do it as quickly as possible and help municipalities?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: First of all, let me just point out that I'm very pleased our Premier made that announcement at the AMO conference in August, because for the first time, a committee will be set up that will include municipal representatives, representatives from the city of Toronto, representatives from the Ministry of Finance and my own ministry, to finally try to make some sense of all the various programs that are out there, to make sure that certain programs are paid for by the municipalities, where the municipalities are the best service providers, and others are paid for by the province. It's going to take time. We've put it into place. Work is already happening on it right now. A number of tables are in the process of being set up. As we know, there are municipal elections coming up on November 13 and I'm sure the politicians in this province who will be elected after that date will become truly engaged in this process

with us so we can finally come to a conclusion and solve the problems that that government over there created over the last 10 years when they were in power.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): My question is to the Minister of Health. In the first week of October, the emergency department at the Sudbury Regional Hospital was at a level 3 crisis every day. That's because 13 or more patients were lying on stretchers in the ER, unable to get a bed in the hospital. The beds aren't opening up because there are record numbers of alternate-level-of-care patients who are being forced to stay in the hospital because there aren't permanent long-term-care beds and other services that they need available in the community. Minister, this crisis has gone on in Sudbury for two and a half long years. When are you going to finally fix this mess?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Efforts are underway to address the circumstance in Sudbury, which has been a complicated one, for sure. In the three years since our government's been in office, the number of long-term-care beds in the Sudbury community has grown by almost 33%. In addition to that, there's been enhanced funding for the community care access centre for the provision of home care and also, as an example, opening of a recent Alzheimer day program at Pioneer Manor. We're also in the midst of opening additional interim long-term-care beds.

I take this matter very seriously. Obviously the challenge is serious and is causing real constraint at the Sudbury hospital. We have more work to do on this file. As I indicated on a recent visit to the people in Sudbury, we will be there and will continue to add capacity to the system to address these underlying circumstances. Keeping in mind that there are many communities in Ontario that have a lower ratio of long-term-care beds than Sudbury does make our situation there a very challenging one indeed. We're working with the people of Sudbury to address this.

Ms. Martel: This is a crisis that isn't going away. It's been going on for two and a half years now. We know that alternate-level-of-care patients need permanent long-term-care beds, rehabilitation, mental health beds, supportive living and home care services, and these are not available in our communities. As a result, alternate-level-of-care patients are forced to stay at the hospital, and that has meant cancellation of 65 surgeries, an ER that operates at a level 3 crisis 50% of the time and patients lying on stretchers in the ER because there's no hospital bed for them to get into. This has gone on and on, and now it's happening in Hamilton, Windsor and Kingston too.

I say to the minister, when will you finally put the community services in place so that alternate-level-of-care patients can get the care they need and we can get rid of the problem in the ER?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: First the honourable member talks about adding beds, and then the honourable member

talks about community response. I think this does reflect at least an understanding that it's necessary, as it relates to the alternate-level-of-care challenge, to make investments across the breadth of health care. Indeed, this is what we've done, and our record on this stands in pretty stark contrast to the honourable member's record.

The reality, of course, is very clear: The underlying circumstances in Sudbury are very challenging for sure. We have a population there that is tending to be more vulnerable in terms of needing greater access to long-term care. That's why we've already increased it by 33%.

The member will know that I've recently added 10 more beds to the interim allocation for Sudbury. Those are beds we are moving there on an expedited basis to be able to enhance support. As I said to the people in Sudbury, we will continue to grow the number of beds that are there and also to enhance the community supports that are necessary to support the people of Sudbury.

We know it's a trying circumstance, and we appreciate the patience that is required on the part of all those who are directly affected. Resources are flowing there in greater numbers and we're working with the local community to enhance the circumstances.

BRANTFORD COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): My question is for the Minister of Education. First, I want the minister to be advised that my riding of Brant is filled with a very rich and long history and, as you are aware, that history comes with the ravages of time. One of the issues facing the Grand Erie District School Board is the decision as to whether to replace the original Brantford Collegiate Institute, BCI, or rehabilitate and retrofit the school to bring it into the 21st century to ensure the safety of students and staff and to provide the best learning opportunities, with state-of-the-art equipment and structure for the students attending this 1910 structure.

In the past, I know your ministry has already funded schools with the prohibitive-to-repair component of the grant for new pupil places, something that I fully support. Unfortunately, BCI did not get any of that money. I want to know if the minister can explain to me and my constituents how the school in my riding may have been overlooked for this funding that helps us with these older schools.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): Thank you to the member for the question and for his advocacy in his riding on education issues.

I have to go back a bit in time, certainly before my time, but actually before we were in office. In 2002-03, the ministry appointed inspectors to review schools and nominate them as prohibitive-to-repair, PTR, candidates. Boards became eligible for funding to replace those schools. Under that plan, 43 schools were deemed prohibitive to repair.

Although BCI was nominated by the Grand Erie board as a school to be inspected in 2002-03, the school, as it turned out, had a facilities condition index, or FCI, that

was not among the worst. In other words, it was deemed not to be one in need of urgent repair, relative to other schools, so it did not make it on to that list.

Since that time, the condition of the school may have deteriorated. Under the new program we have put in place, \$50 million will leverage \$700 million for new construction, and this is an issue that is going to address many problems around the province.

1520

Mr. Levac: I appreciate the clarity that has been given to us in terms of why BCI may not have received the funds, and it sounds to me like that's an equitable program across the province.

I understand that it is the responsibility of the school board trustees to make sure that the distinction is made with the ministry which schools need the most attention, particularly the ones in my riding. I understand that it's not the role of the ministry to make those decisions, but rather the board, and the ministry to facilitate that.

If BCI was not eligible on the prohibitive-to-repair schools for the first round, was BCI included among the 200 schools identified in its preliminary list? You've mentioned the 43, but there was a preliminary list. We need to know that. Does this mean that the board, after the reviews and consultations it has gone through with the community and with the stakeholders—have we missed out on any of the funding that's available that we could help BCI with?

Hon. Ms. Wynne: BCI was not included in the preliminary list of 200 schools that have been identified. However, boards are going to have the opportunity to identify schools that they believe should be on the prohibitive-to-repair list. That process is ongoing now, and we expect that there will be other schools that will be identified.

I think there has to be a realization that, over the past decade, there has been a severe backlog of issues that were not attended to under the previous government. So we are trying, as in so many sectors, to clean up the mess. We're trying to do it with a plan. We're putting a good plan and process in place for boards to identify these schools, and we're following that up with money. Under stage one of the Good Places to Learn initiative, Grand Erie District School Board receives \$1.4 million annually to drive \$20 million worth of high and urgent repairs. So they're in that process.

SMALL BUSINESS TAX RELIEF

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): My question is to the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship. Minister, small businesses in Ontario are currently faced with an onerous and unfair burden when it comes to overhead costs. During the last election, your Premier promised members of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business that he would uphold the hard cap on property tax. As the Minister of Small Business in Ontario, do you support a hard cap on small business property tax?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship): Let me tell you, I think

that small businesses are a very important component of our economic prosperity. So we want to support small businesses in any way, shape and form we can. The CFIB has raised that issue with me, and they're prepared to meet with me. We'll listen to what they have to say, and we'll take it from there.

Mr. Chudleigh: That was a promise that your Premier made in the last campaign, and future meetings may or may not solve that.

Ontario is rapidly becoming a non-competitive jurisdiction. When we look at Blue Mountain Pottery, Trent Rubber, Glenoit, Glis, Bazaar and Novelty, Harrowsmith cheese, Winpack Technologies, Curwood Packaging in Georgetown, Prescott Shirt Co., World's Finest Chocolate Factory, all of these companies have closed in Ontario because Ontario is rapidly becoming a non-competitive jurisdiction because of our overhead costs. What programs does your ministry have to help small businesses be competitive in Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: Let me just tell you, I think it's not a doom and gloom in the small business sector. The TD Bank released an economic report on October 11, 2006, and they found out that the small and medium-sized enterprises are well positioned for continuing growth next year. Scotiabank just released a report. Their economist released their report, and they said that 77% of all small business owners believe that the general economic conditions for the small business are pretty good. That is despite the fact that there's a looming slowdown of the economy in the US.

So our businesses are doing quite well, and I'm very proud of our businesses. They create 65% to 70% of all new jobs, and the environment is pretty good for small businesses at this point.

WINDSOR ECONOMY

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches—East York): My question is for the Minister of Economic Development. Madam Minister, you have failed to stand up for Windsor, yet again, in its fight to keep its casino and the \$3 million that that city uses in revenues. Windsor council takes and uses at least \$200,000 of that money every year for food and clothing for poor children. They do that because your government has abysmally failed to increase welfare rates to at least the cost of living. They do that because you have reneged on your promise to end the clawback and they do that because you now refuse to be involved in the only program that actually delivers food to poor children in Windsor. If you won't stand up for Windsor and its council, what will you do to ensure that these children are actually fed?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues): I very much appreciate this opportunity to once again say very loudly and clearly that this Ontario Liberal government has spent an inordinate amount of time working for the citizens of the city of Windsor, and we will continue to do that like no government before.

If you should choose to ask another question, I will start giving you the litany, not just of announcements, but actual construction. I welcome this member to come to my riding and count the number of cranes that are up and working in my city right now; the number of new lanes down highways because we have invested like never before in basic infrastructure in my city. No other Ontario government has come to shore up the work that is desperately needed in my city—none—except for this one under the leadership of Premier Dalton McGuinty.

Mr. Prue: I don't think I can give a better retort than did the Windsor Star in the article by Gord Henderson today, when he writes, "I wonder how our Liberal cabinet ministers, Dwight Duncan and Sandra Pupatello, can look themselves in the mirror after green-lighting this outrage perpetrated on their most defenceless constituents."

Minister, you were a former Minister of Community and Social Services. You must know there are 7,359 active cases in your city. You must know that a great many of those involve poor children in the thousands who don't have enough food and decent clothing. You failed to stand up for your most vulnerable citizens formerly as the Minister of Community and Social Services, and now you're failing to stand up for the Windsor economy as Minister of Economic Development.

Madam Minister, why can't you stand up for Windsor and its most vulnerable constituents: the children of your community, the kids who will lose their breakfast program because of your inaction?

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: Only the NDP would characterize that kind of action going on in my city right now as inaction. There has never been so much action between our government and the city of Windsor.

Perhaps this member opposite would like to call the mayor of the city of Windsor and ask him how he feels the provincial government has worked with the city of Windsor; about the idea that for the first time in many years the city residents have seen a property tax decrease because of our investments in that city.

Perhaps you would like to call the mayor of my city and ask what kind of support that we, the cabinet ministers and our member from Essex, have been to our city residents, for the first time in 12 years investing in children's services. The last time they had any action on funding, it was your government that cut money to those same agencies, followed by the last government once again cutting funding to those agencies. Instead, this government, for the city of Windsor alone, a \$1.2-billion investment—

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

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): My question is to the Minister of Labour. On one of my trips in the subway this summer, I saw the

Workplace Safety and Insurance Board poster showing a young man who had lost two fingers in a work-related accident. The message on this poster, aimed at young workers, was "It could happen to you."

This is absolutely true. I taught design and technology for many years and I know the risk that machines, chemicals and other work-related tools pose to their users if not used carefully. It is important that all workers, but especially our young and new workers, know their rights and responsibilities in the workplace. Young workers in particular may not feel comfortable addressing these issues directly with their supervisors. As a result, they needlessly risk their health and safety.

Minister, last June your ministry released an updated version of the Employment Standards Act poster. This poster is mandatory in most Ontario workplaces and highlights key components of the act. Can you tell us how this change is benefiting young workers?

1530

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): I think it's important to note that that change was inspired by the CBC project Making the Grade, and I think it clearly demonstrates how our young people in our province are committed to making things better for their peers. It's an example, as well, of our commitment to young worker health and safety in this province. Yes, that inspiration for change came from the CBC program Making the Grade. Those students brought forward to us the fact that we needed to do a better job of making young people aware of what their rights are under the Employment Standards Act. As a result of their hard work in coming forward with that initiative, the Employment Standards Act poster now contains a section directing young workers to a new portal on the Ministry of Labour website. These young workers are able to find out better information about how they can protect their health and safety but, most importantly, understand their employment rights.

While the ministry had excellent resources in place, we realized that we could do a better job. We thank those students—

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

Mr. Brownell: Thank you, Minister, for reminding us of the significance of students' achievement. By participating in the CBC project, these students strengthened our democracy. They have proven that our young people do care about issues and ideas and that they are interested in the political process. They have also demonstrated that young people can influence public policy and effect positive change.

Minister, Ontario's young people begin building skills they need to succeed in the workplace while working at various student jobs. It is our duty to ensure that they are safe while they are working at these jobs by providing easy-to-access information about their workplace rights and responsibilities. Knowledge is power. Knowledge empowers. What else is your ministry doing to ensure

that when our young people go off to work, especially for the first time, they come home safely?

Hon. Mr. Peters: I think one of the most important new initiatives that we brought forward in September of this year was a minister's action group on vulnerable workers under the age of 25. This is a group that I chair. I look forward to the recommendations that they'll bring forward, because we want to look at how we can better reduce injuries and deaths amongst young workers as they leave high school and enter into the workforce.

The Ministry of Labour has some excellent resources in place, and I would encourage every member in this House to take advantage of those resources, because young worker health and safety is not a partisan issue; it is a non-partisan issue that we should all be looking towards. I would encourage everybody to visit our website, to click on the Young Workers button.

As well, we need to recognize that in Ontario, our efforts are paying off. Ontario—and we should all be proud of this—leads the country in improving workplaces for young worker health and safety. I encourage everybody—

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. New question.

POACHING

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, thousands of men and women are enjoying the great Ontario out of doors to participate in the sporting season.

This morning, I read in the Timmins Daily Press that the Timmins MNR office says the area “continues to be plagued by poachers this hunting season...”

“Wawa, Kirkland Lake and Timmins are the worst in the northeast region for poaching.”

The MNR office is asking anyone who witnesses poaching to contact the TIPS line, which is entirely appropriate. What isn't appropriate is that because your ministry has been gutted, conservation officers—the ones who are left—can't get out of the office to take care of the enforcement. Budget allocations for fuel, repairs, cellphones and uniforms are about half what they were last year.

Minister, you promised to restore funding for fish and wildlife programs during the last election campaign. When will your government keep this promise?

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): I'd like to assure the member that compliance and enforcement of our fish and game laws is a core function of the Ministry of Natural Resources and it will remain so in the future. For him to suggest that there have been any large cuts in that particular department is wrong. Our budget for our conservation officers is very similar to what it has been over the last few years. We are spending a little more time on our intelligence, and that's why we know and can report where the bad areas are in northeastern Ontario. There is a high degree of poaching in those centres that

he has cited. We are on top of that, and we have our maximum amount of officers out enforcing the hunting season this fall.

VISITOR

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): On a point of order, I hope that all members might join me in welcoming the Honourable Dr. Carolyn Bennett, Member of Parliament for St. Paul's, to the Legislature.

PETITIONS

WATER QUALITY

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): “Amend the Clean Water Act

“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.”

It's signed by many people in rural Ontario.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads:

“Whereas, in June 2003, Dalton McGuinty said, ‘Ontario Liberals are committed to ensuring that nursing home residents receive more personal care each day and will reinstate minimum standards, and inspectors will be required to audit the staff-to-resident ratios’; and

“Whereas Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman, in October 2004, said that the Ontario government will not set a specified number of care hours nursing home residents are to receive each day; and

“Whereas Ontario nursing home residents still receive the lowest number of care hours in the Western world; and

“Whereas studies have indicated nursing home residents should receive at least 4.1 hours of nursing care per day; and

“Whereas a coroner’s jury in April 2005 recommended the Ontario government establish a minimum number of care hours nursing home residents must receive each day;

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

“That the government of Ontario immediately enact a minimum standard of 3.5 hours of nursing care for each nursing home resident per day.”

Mr. Speaker, I agree with this petition, have signed it and will send it to the table by way of Jasmine, the page.

GO TRANSIT TUNNEL

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I receive petitions continuously about this dilapidated bridge at Old Weston Road.

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Oh, not again.

Mr. Ruprecht: That’s right. I would expect that I would get some more support from my own members in the back here. The petition reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

I agree with this petition and I’m delighted to sign it.

PROPERTY RIGHTS

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): “Protection of property rights

“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.”

It’s signed by many people from my riding.

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CHILD PROTECTION

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I have a petition asking for the granting of Ombudsman oversight of children’s aid societies. It’s to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it says:

“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”—I’m sorry, it’s not quite right, but it basically says that all provincial Ombudsmen have identified this as an issue, and it was first identified as a child protection 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 agree with the petition, I’ve got my name on it and send it by Shaké to the table.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

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

“Access to Trades and Professions in Ontario

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

“Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent, arbitrary and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

“Whereas action by Ontario’s trades and professions could remove many such barriers, but Ontario’s trades and professions have failed to recognize that such structural barriers exist, much less to take action to remove them, and to provide fair, timely, transparent and cost-effective access to trades and professions for new Canadians trained outside Canada;

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

“That the Ontario Legislative Assembly urge the members of all parties to swiftly pass Bill 124, the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, and to require Ontario’s regulated professions and trades to review and modify their procedures and qualification requirements to swiftly meet the needs of Ontario’s employers, Ontario’s newcomers and their own membership, all of whom desperately need the very skills new Canadians bring working for their organizations, for their trades and professions, and for their families.”

I agree with the petitioners, so I put my signature on this petition as well.

LONG-TERM CARE

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

I’m pleased to give this to page Patrick, who comes from Elora.

FAIR ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): This petition is in support of skilled immigrants. It’s in regard to Bill 124. It’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“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 delighted to sign this petition because I agree with it 100%.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): Petitions keep coming in to protect homeowners from skyrocketing property assessments. These, from Keswick and Pefferlaw, Ontario, read as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas working families, seniors and young people are facing higher taxes, higher home heating costs, higher hydro rates and higher user fees in Dalton McGuinty’s Ontario; and

“Whereas skyrocketing property assessments and the resultant property tax increases are simply unaffordable and are forcing some homeowners, particularly seniors on fixed incomes, to sell their home; and

“Whereas Bill 75, the Homestead Act, 2006, would preserve the Canadian value of home ownership by:

“—Capping assessment increases at 5% per year,

“—Allowing homeowners to make up to \$25,000 per year in home improvements without triggering an assessment increase, and

“—Providing a property tax break for seniors and the disabled by ensuring that the first \$10,000 of their home’s value would not be taxed;

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

The McGuinty Liberal government should adopt the assessment reforms in Bill 75, the Homestead Act.”

Of course, I affix my signature in support.

IDENTITY THEFT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): As the previous member said, petitions are coming in, and we, of course, are delighted to read them. This one is addressed to the

Parliament of Ontario, and especially the Minister of Government Services:

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

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

“Whereas the cost of this crime exceeds billions of dollars” a year;

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

“Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that Bill 38, which passed unanimously” in November 2005, “be brought before committee and that the following issues be included for consideration and debate:

“(1) All consumer reports should be provided in a truncated (masked-out) form, protecting our vital private information, such as SIN and loan account numbers.

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

“(3) The consumer reporting agency shall only report credit-inquiry records resulting from actual applications for credit or increase of credit, except in a report given to the consumer.

“(4) The consumer reporting agency shall investigate disputed information within 30 days and correct, supplement or automatically delete any information found unconfirmed, incomplete or inaccurate.”

I’m delighted to sign this petition because I’m in real agreement with this.

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): Another petition has now come in. This one says, “Help Tim Fight the McGuinty Tax Hikes.” It’s signed by people across Fort Erie. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the McGuinty government’s 2004 budget could increase taxes on working families by an average of \$1,200; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised he would not ‘raise taxes by one penny’ on working families in Ontario;

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

“The Dalton McGuinty Liberals should cancel any plans to increase taxes, and if they still plan on raising taxes, hold a referendum according to the law that Premier McGuinty himself voted for.”

And in support, my signature.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): Pursuant to standing order 55, I rise to give the Legislature the business of the House for next week.

On Monday, October 16, 2006, in the afternoon, second reading of Bill 103, Independent Police Review Act, and in the evening, third reading of Bill 14, Access to Justice Act.

On Tuesday, October 17, 2006, in the afternoon, second reading of Bill 140, Long-Term Care Homes Act, and in the evening, third reading of Bill 43, Clean Water Act.

On Wednesday, October 18, 2006, in the afternoon, second reading of Bill 103, Independent Police Review Act, and in the evening, third reading of Bill 14, Access to Justice Act.

On Thursday, October 19, 2006, in the afternoon, second reading of Bill 50, Traditional Chinese Medicine Act, and second reading of Bill 124, Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MUNICIPAL STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT DES LOIS CONCERNANT LES MUNICIPALITÉS

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 26, 2006, on the motion for second reading of Bill 130, An Act to amend various Acts in relation to municipalities / Projet de loi 130, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne les municipalités.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Debate? The Chair recognizes the member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot.

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): I’m really pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 130. Like so many other members of this assembly, I arrived here vis-à-vis the municipal public service, having served a number of years on Hamilton city council and then having the privilege of being the longest-serving mayor in the town of Flamborough, for two terms. Some members may recall that my arrival here was quite unusual. Unlike most members, I arrived vis-à-vis a by-election, and the by-election was caused because one of the government members resigned over what I think would be fair to say was at least a misunderstood if not broken promise related to amalgamation.

When I came, in September 2000, it would be fair to say that the people in my great riding of Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot were quite disappointed in what was going on. In fact, they were darn angry, if the truth be known. We had amalgamation and downloading and market value assessment changes all inflicted on our municipality at the same time. In fact, I can remember, as mayor of the town of Flamborough, arguing with some other mayors and other councillors, begging the Minister of Municipal Affairs of the day not to

do amalgamation, downloading and market value assessment all at the same time and making the point that the reason you wouldn't want to do that all at the same time was that people wouldn't understand who to blame when all heck broke loose. And the bureaucrats just smiled. That should have been good enough for any reasonably intelligent person to understand that that was exactly what they wanted to hear.

Those were the days—I didn't discover this until I arrived here—when there were actually—

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I apologize for interrupting my colleague from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot, but I bring a point of order regarding standing order 97. As you know, Mr. Speaker, 97(d) requires the government to respond to written questions within 24 sitting days. We have the following questions currently outstanding: number 189, in the name of the member for Haliburton–Victoria–Brock; 190, in the name of the member for Haliburton–Victoria–Brock; 191, in the name of the member for Haliburton–Victoria–Brock; 194, in the name of the member for Durham; 195, in the name of the member for Haliburton–Victoria–Brock; 196, in the name of the member for Haliburton–Victoria–Brock; and 198, in the name of the member for Haliburton–Victoria–Brock.

As part of my point of order, I want to point out that this is the second day in a row that we've had to raise overdue responses to questions 189, 190, 191 and 194, again with regret and apologies for interrupting my colleague, whom I know is not at fault in the circumstance; the ministers are at fault. But given the grave importance of this issue and the lack of response to this many questions, Mr. Speaker, I'd ask for your intercession to get prompt answers on those outstanding order paper questions.

The Acting Speaker: House leader, I want to remind you that you are required, under standing order 97(d), to provide answers to written questions within 24 sitting days. The responses are now overdue, and I would ask that you give the House some indication as to when the answers will be forthcoming.

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): I will undertake to treat it seriously, as you've indicated, and ensure that we get the answers as quickly as possible. I will determine which ones are not answered and begin the process this afternoon to get those answers for the House.

The Acting Speaker: I'd just like to remind the member from Erie–Lincoln that the appropriate time to raise this as a point of order is not in the middle of a debate but at a time when we have a break in the proceedings.

I've stopped the clock. The member may continue.

Mr. McMeekin: I appreciate that, Mr. Speaker. I wasn't surprised at the intervention. The people in Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot are still waiting for some answers too, to some of the commitments they thought had been made.

Notwithstanding that, I was going to footnote that I didn't discover until I got here that there were in fact weekly reports recording in columns—it was very neatly done—how many fewer municipal politicians there were this week over last week. I understand that promotions within the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing were predicated on how well you did in terms of reducing excess democracy out there that used to go under the guise of independent communities.

I can tell you, quite frankly, as the longest-serving mayor of the town of Flamborough, that we were the only municipality in all of Ontario, when I checked, to actually reduce taxes six years in a row. The threefold promise of better government, more accountable government and lower costs—we still have some questions pending about that as well, as I'm sure certain members opposite might have about municipalities that they have the privilege of representing.

But all of that said, there comes a time when we simply have to acknowledge that we need to deal with the cards we've been dealt and not the cards we wish we had been dealt, and that we need to move forward. In fact, the best political advice I ever received was from the late, great Sterling Hunt, who said to me when I was first running for mayor, "Ted, if you want to get elected, tell them what's broke and how you're going to fix it." I've always remembered that. That was always good advice.

Now, I can assure the House that the better part of the last 12 years of my life have, in fact, been invested in identifying—and it wasn't hard to do because there were so many things broken—the things that were broken and trying to find some creative, entrepreneurial ways to fix those things. That's why, over the last three years in government, we've taken a number of important initiatives.

We've attempted to curb urban sprawl by finally defining sacred green space, so that we can protect in a formal way our environmental heritage.

We tried to end surprises with our municipal partners and return some stability and civility through the memorandum of understanding agreement.

We've tried to tackle public health, not only by uploading certain public health provisions, but by bringing in the Clean Water Act.

We've moved to eliminate planning process abuses by, in fact, bringing in Planning Act amendments that we just passed earlier today.

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We've talked about OMB reform—we were debating that last night, and that will continue—where there will be more mediations and fewer references to the OMB. We've even taken the step of freezing assessments. You may recall, in the previous government, there were eight different attempts to get it right, and it never was right. The Ombudsman brought in 22 recommendations, which our government is committed to implementing. We're taking the time to do that.

We've got a full environmental assessment of the mid-peninsula corridor project rather than the illegal, rushed, focused assessment that was there.

We've come to the table with some \$55 million in social services relief to help with the \$3.2-billion debilitating impact of the so-called revenue-neutral down-loading.

We're into Who Does What 2. We remember that Who Does What 1 was done perhaps in a hurry. The previous government got the best advice they could before they completely ignored it. That has cost us a lot of heartache in municipalities.

I want to focus specifically on Bill 130, the Municipal Act changes, because I think what it does is it goes a long way to restoring to our municipal partners the respect they deserve and to providing the tools they need to get the job done. These tools include the authority to appoint an ombudsman and an integrity commissioner. My colleague from Hamilton East knows there has been some concern about election finance issues, the need for election finance reform, which could be facilitated, assuming this bill is passed.

I want to focus very specifically on something I've been pushing for that needs to be shared, something that might get lost in the debate, and that's with respect to section 23, namely the delegation of powers option. In the presence of a checkered past and perhaps a lack of a clear consensus as to how to proceed, there seems to be a fairly clear consensus that people in communities, particularly former chartered, historic, independent communities, want some assurance that they can have some planning controls, that they can review planning applications, have more say with respect to community issues, some influence around service levels, particularly with the capacity we now have around area rating. I've been pushing very hard to rewrite the rule book in this regard and get us into a situation where municipalities can, based on the best input they get from communities, delegate specific powers to mandated community councils.

We have a series—and I've helped create a couple of these in my own constituency—of advisory community councils. They work pretty well but they're just that: They're advisory. This act, if passed in its current form, will allow municipalities to mandate specific powers. Aside from taxing authority and changing an official plan, they could virtually delegate anything back to the communities. We could restore the community that in many significant respects has been lost, and I'm optimistic and very confident that that's going to happen. We have a mayor, Larry Di Ianni, who has been participating quite willingly in supporting the community council concept. Councillor Art Samson, who isn't running again, who created a community council in Dundas, has been proposed by the mayor, should he be re-elected, to head a blue ribbon task force to look at the powers and how community councils could work.

There has been some incredible interest in this concept all across the municipality, and as I say, I'm confident, for the first time in a long time, that we can grasp a way to restore some of that very much missed sense of formal community. With that, I want to urge all members of this assembly to support Bill 130.

The Acting Speaker: Time for questions and comments. The Chair recognizes the member from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I'm pleased to comment on my colleague from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot and his wise years of municipal experience that he's bringing to the House. He made some comments, and one was on the Clean Water Act, which we've been having quite a healthy debate about in the Legislature. That is a tremendous download to municipalities, and I think that when we were out on the Clean Water Act you heard from the municipalities their concerns that some of them won't be able to be financially viable with the Clean Water Act going through. So I appreciate that he would take that into consideration, that under the McGuinty government there continues to be more downloading to municipalities.

I know it was brought up earlier today in question period by our municipal affairs critic, the member from Oxford. He had brought forward a motion last week during private members' time to ask why the Premier announced at AMO that it's going to be an 18-month-long study to assess the imbalance with municipalities and the province. I agree totally. It has been looked at for many years. There are always changes that need to be made. I think we're all relatively, I hope, forward-thinking people in the Legislature. Changes do need to be made along the way. It has been ongoing.

So 18 months to study it is a very long time, and municipalities want faster action. That's why the member from Oxford brought forward his private member's bill earlier this month: to say to the government, "Let's do it now. We've got the right people in place. We've got the data in. What we don't want are more studies, more studies, more inaction by the present Liberal government."

We have some concerns with this bill that I know our critic has brought forward and that we will probably highlight later on.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It's my pleasure to make a few comments on the speech from my friend and former colleague from regional council back in the good old days of regional council. I'm sure the member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot would agree, his constituents would agree, that it was the gold old days of the regional municipality at the time.

I have to say, although I understand his perspective and what he brings to the table in terms of representing the issues that this bill may speak to in regard to his particular constituents, I'm looking forward to having the opportunity to put a few things on the record from my own perspective, having worked at both the regional municipality level and then, after amalgamation, at the city of Hamilton, at the amalgamated city, because, although this bill is a package of bills that the government had put forward to deal with a number of outstanding municipal issues and concerns, there are a number of things that have come out as a result of some of these pieces that do not sit well with me personally

and that I think the people of Hamilton will have some concerns about.

So I think it's appropriate for, of course, the government side to bring the things that they're supportive of. However, I do believe that there are some really important issues that need to be put on the table, things that are problematic, if you want to put it that way, with what the government is purporting to achieve in this bill, even so far as to say that the idea of giving municipalities a greater amount of autonomy can be looked at a bit askance when you think particularly about certain powers or certain projects that municipalities are not going to be able to have any say over, which is what's included in this bill. So I look forward to making those remarks a little later on.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I appreciate the opportunity to make a few remarks on the comments made by my colleague from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot, which is at the other end of the GTA, I guess, from where I come from, out in Scarborough.

I just wanted to say that Mr. McMeekin, the member, is a real champion of local democracy and spoke well today on the key points regarding this bill. I think the delegation of powers to local community councils and the decentralization of a lot of these powers is something that local municipalities want to see. It's something that is important for proper functioning of local municipalities. I know, as a former councillor myself, the frustration that we often felt in the ways our powers were limited.

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But this act today doesn't say, with a broad stroke, that municipalities are given all these brand new powers. It does provide safe checks and balances to make sure that procedural rules are followed. It gives broad powers to municipalities so that they can enact proper bylaws and they can overlook the governance structure of their municipality. There's also accountability and, of course, transparency. That's extremely important, especially when you get to the closed-door meetings. Financial management of municipalities and local boards are looked over more by the local municipalities, as well as business licensing.

All these areas are important, and I know that the member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot, having had his previous experiences, can appreciate this bill, as I do today. I congratulate him for championing it and speaking to it so well today.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): This is an interesting piece of legislation. My immediate neighbour to the west of me thinks it's a great piece of legislation. I think it needs a little bit of work. With a little bit of time in committee, with a lot of knowledgeable people coming in and making presentations to the committee, if the government of the day is listening to those presentations, I think they can make this a pretty good piece of legislation. But as it stands now, I have a lot of concern about it, and I'll express a few of them in a few minutes.

Certainly, I don't think letting a piece of legislation go through like this is going to do the people of Ontario or, in the long term, the municipalities of Ontario any great favours. I don't think this hands-off approach is going to enhance the quality of municipal politics. I have a great respect for people who run in municipal elections, in municipal politics, because they are right there. They live in their communities; they are right there every day. They've lived there; they've worked there. They are seen on the streets, in the towns and the villages or the boroughs that they represent. I have a great deal of respect for those politicians who have to be up on every issue, every day, for their constituents—not that we at the provincial level aren't, but I think they have a much more immediate response time. So I have a great deal of respect for municipal politicians. But I don't think this piece of legislation is going to enhance their lot over the long term. I think it could, and I look forward to this bill going to committee, where the people coming in to make presentations and the questions and answers in committee can make this a viable piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker: Time for oral reply.

Mr. McMeekin: I want to thank the members from Halton, Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, my good colleague from Hamilton East—on any day, I look forward to working with her as we try to build stronger, healthier, more caring and compassionate communities—and of course my good colleague from Scarborough Southwest as well.

Yes, the bill probably does need a little bit of work. We would concede that. That's why we have committee hearings, and we look forward to that very much. I just want to emphasize, in the minute or so that I have, that what this bill primarily does is it restores respect to our historic municipal partners and it does provide—and we can have some debate about what those powers ought to be—some of the tools that they need in order to be all they can be and need to be and should be.

I should just note that the concern about Walkerton and the water issue is a legitimate one. We need to find some ways to assist municipalities that may have difficulty. That's always been the approach of this government.

Two quick things I would mention: first, that this bill also provides for the creation of service boards. I'm quite convinced that, had the provision for a service board been there when we had the amalgamation discussion back in 1999, that amalgamation never would have taken place. But alas, that's history. The other thing I want to say is just how pleased I am that the minister, when he was asked if these community councils could consist of people elected in their own local communities, came out and indicated that that was quite possible, should the municipal council deem that to be appropriate.

Art Samson is a great choice to head up the task force. He's respected by everybody, and there's a relationship of trust and motive and about 30 years of experience there. So I look forward to his work in the community with various community groups and coming back in with

a recommendation about how this could best work to build the stronger, healthier, more sustainable communities we all want.

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

Mr. Chudleigh: This bill has a number of clauses to it, one of which is the municipal review act. This is an interesting one because basically the Liberal government here is going to study the funding problem that the municipalities have for 18 months, which will put the time for their response to that study well past the next provincial election. So they won't have to deal with what might very well be a very unpopular result of that study before the next election. I would guess, just being a bit cynical about it, that if they thought the result was going to be a good one, the study would come in prior to the next provincial election. But it being a difficult decision, one that may raise taxes either municipally or provincially, they're going to put that off until after the next election. The taxpayers in this province, whether they're municipal, provincial or federal, for that matter, understand very well that there's only one taxpayer in Ontario, and that taxpayer funds all levels of government.

There's a section in this act that deals with the city of Toronto—schedule B, I guess it is—and that amends the City of Toronto Act. It's rather passing strange that they would amend this act, since this particular bill was introduced only three days after the City of Toronto Act was passed. So obviously this clause that's in here, the offensive clause that corrects the City of Toronto Act, is an error that needs correcting prior to this bill being passed.

It's also interesting that this bill, which reflects a lot of the schedules that were introduced in the City of Toronto Act, doesn't give the same taxing powers to other cities in Ontario that the City of Toronto Act gave to the city of Toronto. The city of Toronto can have additional tax revenue from entertainment, tobacco and alcohol. However, other cities in Ontario—such as Ottawa, Hamilton, London, Windsor, Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Chatham, indeed Milton, Georgetown, Oakville, Burlington and Mississauga—don't get the same benefits out of this act that Toronto got out of the City of Toronto Act. They don't get the additional revenue. They get the additional expenses, they get the additional costs, but they don't get the additional revenues that this government gave to the city of Toronto. This would lead one to ask the question, why is it that some municipalities should have these powers and some shouldn't? If the Liberals believe that the extra taxing powers are right for Toronto, why aren't they right for these other cities in Ontario? Why is this policy not consistent across the board when dealing with municipalities?

The other schedule in this act deals with an ombudsman. It's very strange that they would actually institute a system whereby an ombudsman could be replaced by a municipal appointee. The idea of an ombudsman, the tenets of an ombudsman, is that a totally independent person would come to look at a problem and bring his independence to the situation so that a just and sincere

solution to the problem can be found or can be talked about. The Ombudsman for Ontario, André Marin, is very concerned about this particular schedule.

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In the municipalities of Ontario, as I said earlier, there is a great respect for municipal politicians. However, we all know that there are good councils in Ontario, there are excellent municipal governments in Ontario, and there are a few that perhaps struggle a little from time to time with certain decisions. Well, I ask you, which one of these two types of councils is most likely to appoint their own ombudsman? Would it be the council that is doing excellent work and performing in a legitimate and excellent way and would have, if they're doing that kind of a job, very few concerns and very few problems, or would it be a council that was struggling? I would suggest that the council that is struggling may not bring itself to appoint an ombudsman who would then turn around and investigate it when it was doing something that perhaps was untoward or not in the best interests or wishes of the taxpayers it represents. This places this government, I think, in a difficult position, because one of the tenets of an ombudsman is that independence, and that independence looks to me to be overlooked in this particular schedule.

There is also a schedule in this bill that talks about closed meetings, and the closed meetings of council. If there's one issue that comes up time and time again in local municipalities, it's when local municipal councils go into in camera or closed sessions. The wording in this bill is very interesting. It allows councils to close meetings to the public; that is, they can go in camera "if at the meeting no member of the city council ... discusses or otherwise deals with any matter in a way that materially advances the business or decision-making of the council."

Well, if those are the criteria that you're setting for going into in camera sessions, what is the purpose of going into an in camera session? Is it to discuss last night's television show, last night's baseball game or hockey game, or other things that may or may not—well, they certainly cannot—advance the business that is under discussion at their council meeting? There is nothing about this that serves the needs of the taxpayers of the municipality that I can discern.

Another schedule in this bill delegates authority. It gives the council the ability to delegate authority, and that delegation of authority is, in my view, far too sweeping and far too wide. We elect municipal councillors, in fact, all politicians within our system, so that they can be responsible for administration, for the raising of tax dollars and for the expenditure of those tax dollars. If we delegate that authority to a third party, it gives a politician an opportunity to say, "That wasn't my decision. That was a decision of someone outside our responsibility." That takes responsibility away from a politician, and I think any piece of legislation that does that is headed in the wrong direction.

Another schedule in this bill talks about business licences. Again, I have the same concern with this sched-

ule as I did with the former one, that it's far too broad and far too wide. It allows municipalities to develop business licences for everything under the sun. For instance, if you're having a bake sale at the local church, you may need a business licence to conduct that bake sale. That's far too broad a power, I think. At the very best, it's a tax grab and, at the very worst, it's an additional level of bureaucracy which I think will come to haunt municipalities in Ontario.

I don't think this bill does as much for municipalities as we would like to think. Perhaps a good time in committee with lots of representations from people around the province will do a world of good in putting through some amendments that will make this a truly much better piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker: Time for questions and comments.

Seeing none, further debate?

Ms. Horwath: It's my pleasure to have a few minutes to speak to this bill this afternoon. I wanted to first comment that this bill—I mentioned it in my earlier remarks—is a bit of a package. It's a bit of a piece of a package of bills and initiatives that the government has brought forward over the last little while to deal with what they consider to be moving in the direction of positive municipal reform. I say they consider that to be the case, because I need to put on the record this afternoon some serious concerns that I have as a representative of my community and that my critic has raised as well when he was bringing these issues forward in his opportunity for his leadoff speech.

What I first wanted to indicate is that although people, I think, would agree around these chambers that there is some considerable work that needs to be done at the municipal level, there's some real change that needs to happen. The bunch of bills that has come forward has been a bit of a lunch bag letdown from my perspective, and I'm going to tell you why—just a bit of a rolling out of what's happened from a perspective of the process.

The first one that we had a chance to really review and look at was the City of Toronto Act. Of course, the City of Toronto Act is something that, having not been a representative of the city of Toronto, having been on city of Hamilton council for many moons but not on the city of Toronto council, I turned to my city of Toronto New Democrat colleagues who represent ridings in the city of Toronto, some of whom had been councillors on city of Toronto council over the years. I looked to their leadership. I looked to their analysis of what was in that City of Toronto Act to get a sense of whether or not as a New Democrat I should be supporting the City of Toronto Act.

I raise it because at the time when the City of Toronto Act was being voted on in this House, there were people who supported that bill from the New Democratic caucus, and I stood with them, knowing that they were the ones who had the most information about the City of Toronto Act and the most insight into the effect of the City of Toronto Act. Of course, I first touched base with

my mayor, Mayor Larry Di Ianni, in the city of Hamilton. I spoke to him and said, "Look, the City of Toronto Act is coming. It's coming down the pike. What is your position? How do you feel about it? Are you supportive? Are you not supportive? What have you been hearing and doing from the perspective of the leadership of my community?" At that point he told me that in fact he had been working with other mayors in Ontario; had been, I guess, promised—gosh, I hate that word around here these days. I guess you guys hate it more, since it's something that you're tarred with all the time in terms of the breaking of promises. Nonetheless, he said that he had been assured—there's another word—by the government that in fact once the City of Toronto Act had been passed and had gone forward, the government would get down to the business of dealing with similar legislation for the other cities in Ontario.

When I was dealing with the City of Toronto Act from the perspective of a person from the city of Hamilton, one of the things that came up in my mind was, "Great for Toronto; what about the rest of us?" Again, as my mayor indicated, he wasn't really too concerned about that, having had the commitment, the assurance of the government that they were going to move on to these other pieces, some of which are before us today, and in fact I supported that bill. It was passed after third reading and became the law of the land, if you want to call it that.

1630

Interestingly enough, though, the ink was barely dry on the City of Toronto Act when, about six weeks later, the next piece of municipal reform came forward, and lo and behold, we just voted on that piece this morning—for final reading, as a matter of fact. We just did the third reading vote on the next plank in the municipal reform package, bundle, that the government has been bringing forward, and that was Bill 51. And you noticed that every single one of my colleagues and I stood up against Bill 51? Why is that? Because Bill 51, six weeks after the City of Toronto Act was approved, included amendments that removed from the City of Toronto Act the opportunity for the city of Toronto to have anything to say about the siting of power plants in its community.

So now we all know what we're talking about here, because the big, controversial power plant that we're talking about, the big controversial power plant that was on the agenda, in fact, when my colleague from Toronto—Danforth was on the hustings, was the port lands power plant. And what happened? Oh, no problem; it was covered off. It was in the City of Toronto Act. The city of Toronto would have the opportunity to deal with siting the energy facilities within its own boundaries. Six weeks later, ink not even dry, Bill 51, and the government takes away the right of the city of Toronto to site power plants or have anything at all to say about the siting of power plants.

You can't on the one hand say you're giving the municipalities the respect, you're giving them the ability to make decisions on their own, that they've grown up, they're now an order of government that can do their

own thing and you're giving them free rein and you respect their ability to make the right decisions for their communities—how the heck do you say that one day, and then, six weeks later, pull the rug from underneath them on a major issue like the siting of a power plant? It was huge slap in the face. It was a bit of a bait-and-switch process, and unfortunately the government decided to turn its back in a very mendacious way against the city of Toronto.

Now, here again we have a similar problem, because in Hamilton we have the same issues facing us: the siting, in our city, of a sewage incinerator—just waiting for a company to get approvals for sewage incineration. Well, guess what? This bill before us does the same thing. Sure, it gives powers similar to what were given to and then taken away from the city of Toronto. In other words, other cities will not have the ability to ensure that they have any say at all over the siting of power plants.

That's a big, big problem. You can't on the one hand say you believe in these principles, and then on the other hand turn around and say, "But not when it comes to our agenda. When it comes to our agenda of the province of Ontario, the McGuinty Liberal agenda, cities really don't have anything to say about it. That's something we decide. We are going to keep that power and we're not going to allow you to have anything to say about it"—notwithstanding the fact that it's going to significantly affect the quality of life in the neighbourhoods of the people you represent at the municipal level.

There you go. That was a big, big problem for not only what happened with the City of Toronto Act but what's before us today. It's a huge issue.

Another thing that has come up in regard to this bill is the whole issue of whether or not municipalities are able to expand their scope or their reasons for going in camera. I know my friend from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot was speaking a little bit earlier about some of the sensitivities in the city of Hamilton.

Applause.

Ms. Horwath: I've been to all of those communities, so I thank you for that applause.

He was talking earlier about some sensitivities in my community about, for example, transparency issues—election financing—and I think he was speaking about the ombudsperson or the ombudsman's position, which I'll be speaking to in a few minutes.

One thing he didn't speak about is the other big issue that always comes up in my community, and I know it comes up in other communities too, and that is the issue of in camera meetings and the extent to which municipal councils have a tendency to abuse their power to go in camera.

All the years I was on council, there was a very restricted number of reasons that you could go in camera. You could go in camera to deal with a personnel issue, obviously, you could go in camera to deal with the sale or purchase of land, obviously, and you could go in camera to receive legal advice—three reasons. Bill 130, which is before us today, allows for—I just need to find

it in the words spoken by my friend from Beaches–East York, who's the main critic on this file. Basically, what they now can do, if this bill passes in its current form, which is the reason why it needs to go to serious committee work—it now allows municipal councils to go into camera—get this—as long as they're not going to materially advance decision-making. Well, what the heck does that mean?

I know in my own city it's gotten huge amounts of criticism. People complain that they don't even get agendas on time. Sometimes agendas aren't even published. There are special meetings held, and nobody knows what they are until the day the meeting takes place. Then, interested parties can't even show up because nobody knew what was going to be on the agenda. Now we're going to have the councillors being able to go into an in-camera session to talk about whatever they want to talk about as long as it doesn't "materially advance decision-making."

I've got to tell you, this is going backwards from what I hear in my municipality about what people want. People want more accountability. In fact, one of those commitments, one of those promises, one of those assurances that this government said it stood for was greater transparency. We know that they're not achieving that at the provincial level, but now they're providing an opportunity for it not to be achieved or they're making sure it's not going to be achieved at the municipal level in Bill 130, because it's encouraging councils to do something that is boisterously being opposed by so many individuals within these municipalities, and that is the willy-nilly going into camera of the municipal councils. It certainly doesn't serve the goal of transparency.

When the bill was first tabled, one of the columnists in my local newspaper had an article in the opinion column where he had some interesting things to say about the legislation. One was that the idea of appointing an Ombudsman was perhaps a good idea and one that would help citizens in their quest for achieving an understanding of whether or not the complaints that they have against the councils have merit, and providing an independent or at least an unbiased view to addressing some of those problems.

I guess what the problem that I see with that is, and it's something that our provincial Ombudsman, André Marin, actually raised as well, is that in fact there's nothing in this bill that really sets out the requirement for the absolute independent and arm's-length nature of the position that is contemplated in the bill, kind of a quasi-Ombudsman type of position.

Anybody who's got anything to do with the municipal council will know that the senior staff and council relationship is one that is sometimes quite rocky but often-times quite co-operative, and so it should be. The council wants to further its political agenda; the staff have to implement the vision that the council puts forward or the mayor puts forward, so you need to work as a bit of a team to come out with, at the end of a term, some of the things that you had hoped were achievable when you first set your agenda up.

Unfortunately, what this bill doesn't really provide is the opportunity for somebody outside of that structure, somebody who is not reporting to, not beholden to, whose budget is not reliant upon the existing municipal structure—and therein lies the rub in terms of finding an appropriate place or voice for people to take their complaints or concerns to.

The other thing is, Mr. Speaker, and you'll know this: The bill doesn't require this to happen; it enables it to happen. It enables municipalities, if they so wish, to put these positions into place—well, it's not a matter of wishing.

First of all, if you actually are going to have an effective Office of Ombudsman at the municipal level, it's a matter of ensuring that that's totally independent and separately budgeted, with separate oversight completely to the existing structures within the municipality. So the issue becomes, who can afford it? Who can afford that? Who can afford to fund all of the investigative tools, for example, that our current provincial Ombudsman has? It's simply not going to translate in the same way as our current Ombudsman has here in Ontario.

What Mr. Marin said is that “The citizens of Ontario deserve to have a strong, credible and independent oversight body with full investigative powers to ensure compliance with public meeting requirements, as well as to deal with general complaints about municipal matters affecting them.”

1640

The bill, as currently drafted, would act solely as a default for investigation of complaints. The current Ombudsman's office would be a default to any structure the municipality puts in place, and that's simply not strong enough, especially when you consider that the issues of in camera meetings—whether or not they are legitimate and whether or not they were called for appropriate reasons under the current restrictions—are a major bone of contention in many municipalities, and now adding this nebulous fourth opportunity, as long as it's not furthering the decision-making process, is nonetheless a bit rich, but it will also cause more and more problems.

There are a few other minor issues—not minor issues but just small ones that I wanted to raise. One is that the bill is not equal to some of the powers that were provided to the city of Toronto, and so that remains an outstanding problem.

The final one—I was actually kind of shocked because I had my basic items that I thought were important that I needed to touch on in my speech, particularly as they relate to my experience in my own municipality. But I turned and asked my colleague from Beaches–East York, the NDP critic on this file, specifically what he saw, other than the ones I was already going to talk about. What did I miss? What is out there that I missed?

I know there's one major issue that my friend Peter Kormos, who will be up very shortly—for all those Peter Kormos fans who are out there waiting to hear Peter speak, he's coming to a station near you any moment

now. The member for Niagara Centre has some particular issues he's going to be raising

However, one that actually floored me when the member from Beaches–East York raised it with me is that apparently the bill—and I didn't have a chance to look up the section—allows for electronic voting. I thought, well, what's the big deal there? I can remember going to a couple of different municipalities across Canada—Edmonton comes to mind. They have beautiful, relatively new council chambers, and they have electronic devices at their seats. They don't vote by voice and they don't vote by hand. All of their votes are recorded votes, and they're all recorded by way of electronic devices at their seats.

So I said to my friend, “I don't understand what the problem is with electronic voting. Many municipalities are going that way.” He informed me that the way the legislation before us is written, members of council can actually register their votes and not be inside the council chamber at the time. Apparently there's no requirement for members of council to be present for the debate, to listen to the discussion, to be informed by the points being brought forward by their fellow councillors and/or staff, as these discussions usually occur at a council table. None of that is required. In fact, you can be on vacation on the other side of the world, and as long as you have your device with you, your BlackBerry or whatever it is, you can vote for for a totally different location, certainly whether it's in the council chamber or not, whether it's in the city or not, whether it's in the province or not, whether it's in the country or not.

Maybe that's a drafting oversight. I certainly hope it is, because for anybody to think that it's right, that it's appropriate for a municipal councillor—for anybody—to be able to vote on an issue and not be present, not even be there, not even be privy to the discussion, not even be engaged in the debate, not in any way be able to reflect upon the issue before the council, and they can simply register an electronic vote, I've got to say, doesn't sound like a democratic process to me. It doesn't sound like we would want to enshrine in legislation allowing councillors to vote electronically and not even participate in council meetings.

Those are some of the issues that I think are important and that we need to reflect on. I know this bill is going to take some time in committee, and I'm looking forward to how some of these issues are addressed. We are only at second reading of this bill, so there's some work to be done. I'm very hopeful that not only municipalities, because that's who often come—municipalities and staff and people who are kind of in that realm—but citizens of Ontario, as they watch these debates here on the parliamentary channel, are considering putting their names forward to come and deal with some of these issues at the committee level, because we really need to hear the voice of the people. The changes are going to affect them more than any other changes, because we all know that the municipal level of government is the closest level of government to the people, it's the most accountable insofar

as—unfortunately, I myself spend a great deal of time in this city and not so much in my own city. When I was a city councillor, day in and day out, you're accountable to the people who put you there. If these changes are going to go forward, the people of Ontario need to know what's happening in terms of the legislation that's going to affect them and the nature of local government in their area. It's extremely important, and anybody who's interested, from neighbourhood associations to potential candidates to people who are simply engaged in local issues, I would encourage them to have something to say about this bill, because certainly the bill is problematic and needs to be fixed up in a big way.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Seeing none, further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I appreciate the input today of my colleague from Hamilton East, Andrea Horwath. I especially want to thank Michael Prue, our critic, the member for Beaches—East York, for his work on behalf of New Democrats in the analysis and critique of this oh, most interesting bit of legislation, isn't it? To suggest that it has to go to committee is a gross understatement, Ms. Horwath. If anything cried out for scrutiny, it's Bill 130.

I also want to mention Colin Chambers. He's one of our research staff who worked a whole lot in going through this bill—and I've gone through it too. We've only got 20 minutes. Let me just highlight for you some of the wackier, more noteworthy and downright disturbing parts of the bill.

Section 6 of schedule D, the bylaw extending hours of sale: What that does is give municipalities the power to extend closing time. You know the Leonard Cohen song *Closing Time*? Well, the fact is, closing time in the province of Ontario is now 2 a.m. There were many of us who had concerns about that, because the reality is that the longer the bar is open, or the tavern or the pub or the club, the more people are going to drink, and if you serve until 2 instead of just 1, that's time for a few more under your belt, and all you've got is drunker people out on the streets at 2 a.m. than they would have been at 1.

It's a serious public safety issue, because the unfortunate reality—witness the very impressive six-part, seven-part series in the *Toronto Star* on drunk driving. It seems folks still haven't learned. But this section gives municipalities the power to extend the closing time beyond 2 a.m. What's going on? Till what time in the morning do we want drunks pouring out of saloons, peeing in alleyways, vomiting on street corners and causing a ruckus and racket—3 a.m., 4 a.m., 5 a.m., 6 a.m.?

Ms. Horwath: When the kids are going to school.

Mr. Kormos: Yes, in time for the kids, as Ms. Horwath said—in time for the elementary school kids and high school kids to be marching off to school.

I don't want anybody to think I'm a prude on these types of matters. Unlike my predecessor, Mel Swart—who, I want to tell everybody, is alive and well and doing well, well into his 80s, I must say, and who is still very much a mentor and a source of advice for me. I consult

him often. Mel was a temperance man. It's true. He got his start in politics when he was delivering milk. He was a milkman after the war down in Thorold South. And he was a temperance man. He saw, as a milkman—think about this, because there were a few bootleg joints down there—the drunks stumbling home at 5 and 6 a.m. when he was on his milk run. He also saw the devastation that families suffered when the old man blew the paycheque at the bootleg joint. Mel was a temperance man, and still is. I'm not, unapologetically. I like supporting Ontario's wineries and grape growers and the spirits manufacturers of Windsor and down Grimsby way.

1650

As I say, the 2 a.m. extension in and of itself and the silly argument that it promotes tourism—was that one of the arguments, that it promotes tourism? Oh, horse feathers. Tourists are up early in the morning going to the sights and at 2 a.m. they're dead asleep in their beds. Please. Is it helpful to the restaurant industry? No. At 2 a.m., 1 a.m. or even midnight, people aren't eating anymore. That's when they're into the two-fisted, heavy-duty drinking.

Ms. Horwath: The shooters.

Mr. Kormos: The Jell-O shooters, Ms. Horwath says.

Ms. Horwath: I didn't say Jell-O, but whatever.

Mr. Kormos: For the life of me, I don't know why we need to abandon or abdicate what I believe is provincial responsibility to determine standards around the availability of booze in our society. I really believe that's a provincial responsibility. It's a provincial responsibility not just constitutionally, but I think from a pragmatic perspective, it's important that there be one law for all of the province.

Take a look at what's going to happen. I read subsection 6(2) very carefully. It gives two distinct powers to a municipality. One is to pass a bylaw extending the hours of sale of liquor in all or part of the municipality. That's how I read the section. The second power contained in that—so that means for all time, every day of the week, every week of the year. If municipality A says, "No, to heck with 2 a.m. closing times; we're going to have 3 a.m. closing times," the municipality can pass that bylaw. Boom, the liquor license act is overridden. Or the municipality can pass a bylaw designating a specific officer or employee, without council's approval, without the need for a bylaw in effect to do this, to grant or authorize the extension of hours of sale—now, catch this; the government should be proud of this language—during events of municipal, provincial, national or international significance. That's every day of the week, every week of the year. Every day is going to be Hamilton Day. So we'll have people pouring onto the streets all drunked up at 3 in the morning.

Look at what the impact is going to be, because this is going to drive us to the point of dangerous irrationality: If municipality A extends its drinking hours, its closing time, to 2:30, then the saloon owners, the tavern owners, the club owners across the road in the next municipality are going to say, "But we need to extend our hours to

2:30 so we can be competitive.” Then municipality C says, “Well, we’ll fix them. We’ll stay open till 3,” and you’ve got the domino, the ripple effect. I think this is bad, bad policy.

There may well be the rarest of times—and one of them was during the international soccer events. One of the arguments made was that folks are gathered in bistros and clubs and bars watching soccer games that are being played at 5 a.m. our time. So maybe it’s arguable that on a real “one-off,” those people can be accommodated, although I’m still not going to advocate it as a general rule.

To extend hours of sale doing events of municipal significance? Provincial significance? What’s that going to be? Look, I’ll tell you what. The night of the election in which this government gets defeated, I’ll be hoisting a few myself, okay? That will be of provincial significance. I’ll be drinking Niagara champagne. I’ll be drinking the VQA’s finest. That would be of provincial significance. This illustrates the silliness of it. It’s not well thought out.

I’m not sure municipalities want that power. Look at the sort of pressure that can and will be applied to councils around this issue, especially when you get into the checkerboarding and the result of checkerboarding; you know, municipality A is at 2 a.m. but municipality B is at 2:30. We’ve seen this happen in other areas of the retail and service sector, where there has to be catch-up. It’s just one of the realities. I think it’s a bad policy.

Again, I really think that to cavalierly propose the extension of drinking hours is a very dangerous social policy. However much we can joke about liquor consumption—and that’s part of the problem; there’s still some humour in being tipsy, amongst some quarters, at least, and getting behind the wheel of your car—the fact is that it’s a very serious matter. I’m not saying this should be a province of prohibition. You’ve heard me say that prohibition doesn’t work. It didn’t work for booze and it doesn’t work for marijuana, for instance. But I think this is something that warrants far more thorough consideration than it has received so far.

I have so little time, but let me take you to wacky and wackier. One of the biggest complaints that I’m confident most, if not all, of us get from people in our communities—because, don’t forget that people don’t just come to us about provincial matters; people come to us about federal and municipal matters. One of the things that just rots people’s socks is the in camera meetings, the secret meetings of city, town and regional councils.

I was on Welland city council. I was so pleased and so grateful to the folks who entrusted me with that before I came here. As it is now, the current Municipal Act requires that there be certain prerequisites in terms of the type of matter that is being discussed before a council can go in camera, but that, of course, was abused persistently and consistently: “Oh, it’s a personnel matter.” Well, just in the most extreme and scarcest of ways was it a personnel matter. You mention the name of the HR staff person and it becomes a personnel matter.

My view about in camera meetings of councils when I was a councillor—you know the argument: “Well, there are things we can say in camera that we can’t say publicly.” Well, if you can’t say it publicly, maybe you shouldn’t be saying it. If you’re in an elected position, an elected official, and you haven’t got the guts to say it publicly, or if it’s libellous, then don’t say it privately. Huh?

This government wants to lower the bar for municipal councils that want to hold secret, behind-closed-doors—you know, those smoke-filled backrooms where all the deals are made—kinds of meetings. Some councils use them to do the straw votes and the arm-twisting. There’s no voting, right? Some councils actually have the audacity to do this before a regular council meeting, the same evening. So let’s have a pre-council meeting and then the council meeting, and boom, it’s like a greased pig, the way stuff slips through and gets voted upon and the gavel comes down. Well, it is. You’ve been there, Ms. Horwath.

1700

Ms. Horwath: I have.

Mr. Kormos: You feel like somebody smacked you in the back of the head with a hockey stick. You’re stunned. You go, “Holy moly,” because all the wheeling and dealing and brokering—brokering, huh?—is going on behind closed doors. No, I don’t buy that. We shouldn’t be lowering the bar. This government should be ashamed of itself for lowering the standard for when secret, behind-closed-doors meetings are being held. It should be raising the standard.

The other one, and this is wackier, is the provision that permits councils to pass bylaws to permit a member to participate electronically in a meeting, even to the point of voting. So you’ve got a council, and the mayor is down on some Cuban beach with Tony Ruprecht, phoning in his or her vote. Well, think about it. That’s what this bill permits and encourages. We don’t have to encourage that kind of behaviour. Phone in your vote; what a stupid proposition.

Ms. Horwath: Pizza Pizza democracy.

Mr. Kormos: I love that, Ms. Horwath. Pizza Pizza democracy, yes: Phone in your vote. Oh, yes. You’ve got some councillor at 2:30 in the morning all drunk up in some saloon somewhere phoning in his or her vote—and don’t think these things aren’t going to happen. Dollars to donuts they will, if this bill passes in its present form.

There’s so much more. But one final issue is the issue of municipal ombudsmen. I think it’s imperative. I really think there should be ombudsmen, and I say that because that’s the historic word. Some people have taken to saying ombudsperson; I’m not quite there yet. I’m just not. I may be forced to at some point. But it’s imperative that should a municipality, should the council of a municipality in its wisdom—and it would be a wise thing to do—make available the services of an ombudsman, that that ombudsman be independent, that ombudsman be, and be perceived to be, above and beyond any influence by any member of the council or any member of

the municipal staff, clerk, administrative officer, what have you.

It is noted that André Marin—and we are grateful to him for his observations about the bill and his comments in this regard that the bill permits a city, a municipality, to have an ombudsman as one of its staff, reportable to the clerk's office or whatever. That's totally unacceptable. That betrays a lack of understanding about the ombudsman role. But if you're going to invest in the cost of an ombudsman, and it costs money, I submit to you it's money well spent. An ombudsman in municipalities—you know what? Small towns could actually collaborate. Small municipalities that have limited, limited, limited revenues could have an ombudsman working for a whole region—perfectly feasible. But the proposition that an ombudsman could even be thought of as being a staff person of a municipality is a contradiction. It's no longer an ombudsman. It's something, but it's no longer an ombudsman.

That has to be addressed. I think it's a flaw that has to be spoken to and that cries out for committee.

I tell you, New Democrats have made it clear from the get-go that we're going to insist that this bill go to committee. We're going to deny it third reading until such time as committee reports it back to the House. And the committee hearings have got to be broad enough to—there's a whole lot of stuff here. I've just highlighted a few areas that have caught my interest and that I've chosen to highlight in the course of a mere 20 minutes. It's an extensive bill. It warrants thorough committee

consideration and broad-based public participation. Of course, with the municipal election coming November 13, it would be naive to have those committee hearings before those municipal elections. It is imperative that the committee hearings be held when those newly elected or re-elected councillors, reeves, mayors etc. are in office, because they will undoubtedly have an interest and want to make contributions.

Thank you kindly for your patience with me, Speaker. I appreciate your rapt attention.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Seeing none, Mr. Gerretsen has moved second reading of Bill 130, An Act to amend various Acts in relation to municipalities. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. Mr. Phillips: I would ask that the bill be referred to the standing committee on general government.

The Acting Speaker: The bill is ordered referred to the standing committee on general government.

Orders of the day.

Hon. Mr. Phillips: I move adjournment of the House.

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

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This House stands adjourned until Monday, October 16, at 1:30 p.m. of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1707.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. James K. Bartleman
Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. Brown
Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers
Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma–Manitoulin	Brown, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (L) Speaker / Président	Haliburton–Victoria–Brock	Scott, Laurie (PC)
Ancaster–Dundas– Flamborough–Aldershot	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC) Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Hamilton East / Hamilton-Est	Horwath, Andrea (ND)
Beaches–East York / Beaches–York-Est	Prue, Michael (ND)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Hon. / L'hon. Marie (L) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique
Bramalea–Gore–Malton– Springdale	Kular, Kuldip (L)	Hamilton West / Hamilton-Ouest	Marsales, Judy (L)
Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Hastings–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
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Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kenora–Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Millroy, John (L)
Chatham–Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Kitchener–Waterloo	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, deputy government House leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement	Lanark–Carleton	Werling, Norman W. (PC)
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	Crozier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Mississauga East / Mississauga-Est	Fonseca, Peter (L)
Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (L) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Peterson, Tim (L)
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Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (L) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement	Nepean–Carleton	MacLeod, Lisa (PC)
Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Guelph–Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)	Niagara Falls	Craitor, Kim (L)
Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)
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		Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)

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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
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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 délégué 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
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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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