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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 17 October 2006

Mardi 17 octobre 2006

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 17 October 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 17 octobre 2006

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SUDDEN INFANT DEATH SYNDROME AWARENESS MONTH

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby–Ajax): I rise today in the Legislature to recognize October as Sudden Infant Death Syndrome Awareness Month, and this past October 15 as International Infant Loss Day. Sudden infant death syndrome, or SIDS, is the unexpected death of an apparently healthy baby that remains a mystery after a complete investigation and autopsy.

Let me begin by speaking on behalf of all honourable members in this Legislature as I offer my deepest condolences to every family that has undergone the tragic ordeal of suddenly losing an infant.

Today I would also like to recognize the work of the Canadian Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths, a wonderful organization composed of nearly 1,000 volunteers devoted to solving the mystery of sudden infant deaths by funding various research projects through Dr. Sydney Segal research grants. The organization is also committed to providing emotional support for families affected by SIDS, offers public education and awareness programs about issues relating to infant deaths, advises new or expectant mothers about the latest prenatal health advice and education and, most recently, has expanded its mandate to include all sudden, unexplained or unexpected infant deaths. These volunteers are to be applauded for their hard work and commitment.

Unfortunately, I must also thank them for the work they will continue to do in the future. We must remember that with the help of organizations like the Canadian Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths, although we're still looking for answers, hopefully those answers will be found very soon.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): Recently, the Hanover and District Hospital averted closing its emergency room thanks to a very innovative strategy by Minister Smitherman's health ministry. Alongside the Professional Association of Interns and Residents of Ontario and the Ontario Medical Association, a made-in-Ontario solution was born by bringing in a new group of

doctors, third-year interns, to cover the emergency room. We support the use of these highly trained and enthusiastic residents in our province's emergency rooms. Third-year residents are licensed and they can practise in areas like intensive care units and ERs. Second-year residents could also work in ERs under a very limited licensure.

We call on the med school deans to support this plan. Everybody wins with this strategy as the community continues to get high-quality health care close to home and our residents are able to get the experience they need to become even better doctors.

The doctor shortage caused by the previous government won't be solved overnight. But by tapping into this pool of skilled doctors, hospitals like Hanover and District Hospital can continue to provide care to the community, close to home, and all the people of Ontario will benefit with this program.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton): Yesterday, after flipping through a partisan government brochure touting the Liberal education plan, I waited for the Premier to announce his character education initiative.

When asked when this program was going to be put in place, he was non-committal; so was his education minister, who said, "Some time in the next couple of years." What a strong, character-filled response.

When asked about the standoff in Caledonia and the fact that the Premier is on record as saying it will be cleared up this winter, the response was, "Negotiations are under way." So much for leading by example in the character department.

Snow flew here at Queen's Park the other day. Is the Premier waiting for the winter equinox or the start of Australian winter? Delay after delay, dithering after dithering, Ontario never gets a firm date for action from this Liberal government, and it's starting to wear thin. Whether it's character education, Caledonia, surgical wait times, property taxes or the municipal review, there is always a commitment but never, never a follow-through.

Ontario families can't pay their bills "some time in the next few months," and they can't put food on the table just when they get around to it.

Saying anything because they can and because it's convenient is wrong. No firm timelines, no real commitments and no real results is not acceptable to the people of Ontario.

POVERTY

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): Imagine trying to raise a family on less than \$10 an hour. That's the troubling reality for 37% of working women who lead single-parent families. One in five Ontario women is living in poverty. Many are socially isolated as well. The statistic is a provincial shame. Still, I don't see governments—particularly the McGuinty government here in Ontario—being leaders in the fight to change conditions that keep women and their children in poverty.

More than a decade ago, governments pledged to eradicate child poverty. So why has the problem grown worse?

In my community of Hamilton East, immigrant women, senior women, women receiving social assistance, women employed doing minimum-wage and part-time work grapple with difficult questions such as: Do I pay the rent or put food on the table? Do I pay the hydro bill or buy winter clothing for the kids? How can I keep my job without affordable child care? Will I lose my home because I can't pay the property taxes?

Every day in some Ontario community, a woman is breaking from the pressure, strain and hopelessness of living in poverty.

The McGuinty Liberals pretend they are taking action that is making a difference. If they were serious about it, they would immediately end the clawback of the national child benefit supplement, build the 20,000 affordable housing units the McGuinty government promised, ensure equal employment opportunities and equal pay, invest their promised \$300 million in affordable child care funding that never materialized, reform pension laws so more women in part-time and contract work have pensions, and take action on property taxes rather than waiting years and years.

Ending poverty among women benefits us all. For example, poverty is strongly linked to children's poor scholastic opportunities. It's time to end poverty in Ontario.

TEENAGERS IN ACTION

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I rise in the House today to congratulate and draw attention to a wonderful organization in my community of Oakville. The Oakville Teenagers in Action is a non-profit group that is driven by young citizens from Oakville.

Last year, they raised enough money to help build a school in a village in Sierra Leone, in Africa. This year, they are raising money to help build a well in the same village. The group not only generated corporate support, but they asked each Oakville teenager to pitch in with a \$5 donation.

I hope to have here in the Legislature a little bit later some members from that organization. At that time, I will be introducing and welcoming Fiona Burgess, the director, and Hina Parmar, who works with Fiona.

I'd also like to specifically thank all the school volunteer coordinators and the group as a whole. Having spent

some time in Africa myself, I know all too well the need for assistance on that continent. What these young people are doing is something we should all be doing ourselves. They're making a fundamental difference in the lives of people who really, really need help.

Again, my thanks and congratulations to the Oakville Teenagers in Action. I know all of us in this House hope they keep up the good work.

1340

SMALL BUSINESS WEEK

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): I rise today to salute the thousands of entrepreneurs in Ontario because it is, after all, Small Business Week in Ontario, but the Minister of Small Business has yet to rise in the House to acknowledge this fact. Yesterday we heard from the government's Minister of Culture on library week and we heard from the Minister of Citizenship on Citizenship Week, both very noteworthy events. I would only think the Minister of Small Business would also wish to enlighten this House on the importance of Small Business Week.

This government continued to ignore the issues faced by small business. I suppose it wouldn't go over well for the Minister of Small Business to actually admit that his government's punitive taxation, regulation and energy policies continue to hurt small businesses in Ontario. This government has its head in the sand. The latest Royal Bank economic forecast has Ontario in last place—last place. Ontario is the caboose of Canada's economic engine. The Royal Bank's economic provincial outlook assesses the provinces according to a number of economic indicators, all of which have continued to be negatively affected by the McGuinty government's policy of higher taxation and broken promises.

Perhaps we are better off not to have heard from the government on the occasion of Small Business Week here in Ontario. We are all growing weary of their policy of saying anything to get elected. In the case of Small Business Week, it would seem that the government has stuck to an old adage: If you don't have anything good to say, don't say anything at all.

MEDICAL DEVICES CANADA

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): It's with great pleasure that I rise in the House today and offer words of welcome to representatives of MEDEC, the national industry association representing Canada's medical device and diagnostic companies. Representatives from the association and 16 member companies are here today to promote innovations in medical device technologies, as well as the good work this important sector does in our communities across the country.

Through their strong and valued partnership with health care professionals, patients, hospitals and governments across the country, MEDEC members are key drivers of innovation aimed at improving health out-

comes and the quality of life for patients in Ontario and across the country.

Throughout today, MEDEC members will meet with MPPs and political and public service staff to learn more about government and legislative processes. They will also share their views on how patient access to innovative and safe medical device technologies can advance health care, and how the medical device industry can contribute to enhancements in quality and delivery of care and a robust economy.

MEDEC will be hosting a reception in the legislative dining room today from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., where political and public policy-makers will have further opportunities to speak directly with company representatives from across Ontario and take a look at just some of these important technologies. I'd encourage all members to attend.

I'd like once again to extend a warm welcome to MEDEC and their member companies represented here today. I wish them a very successful day at the Ontario Legislature.

JOSH KLUKIE

Mr. Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay–Superior North): Last week in Thunder Bay, Private Josh Klukie, a dedicated Canadian Forces member serving in Afghanistan, was put to rest in a touching service which celebrated a life that ended too early. Words of solace seem impossible at times like this, but it is nonetheless vital that we try to pay tribute to this special young man who was so devoted to the mission for which he gave his life. Speaking yesterday with his mother, Carol, I was struck by how, despite her immense grief, she was intensely proud of Josh and how important it was for her to convey that pride to all those people who have supported her and her sons David and Daniel since that tragic day.

Mrs. Klukie revealed how lost Josh was when his beloved father passed away seven years ago and how he struggled to find his way for some time afterward. But she then described how he blossomed when he joined the military and went on to serve in Afghanistan. He firmly believed in the goals of the Canadian mission and knew he was making a difference. He is no longer with us, but his contribution to peace and his joy for life will never be forgotten.

Josh is the third Canadian soldier with Thunder Bay roots who has lost his life in Afghanistan. Corporal Anthony Boneca, the beloved son of Antonio and Shirley Boneca, was tragically struck down during combat this past July. He was buried with full military honours in Thunder Bay. This past April, Private Robert Costall, who spent his formative years in Thunder Bay, also lost his life.

Like the other Canadian soldiers who have perished during this mission, our Thunder Bay heroes will be remembered always as brave men who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country, but also as vibrant young men with once limitless futures who leave behind many

heartbroken family members and friends who, like us, shall never forget them.

MARK WILSON

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe): I am speaking today on a sad note. Yesterday, I attended the funeral of fallen soldier Mark Andrew Wilson. Mark was a soldier with the Petawawa-based Royal Canadian Dragoons. Wilson was 39 years old. He was killed Saturday, October 7, 2006, when his armoured vehicle was hit by a bomb west of Kandahar, Afghanistan.

Mark lived in Sudbury with his wife and their two sons. Mark is also survived by his loving twin brother, his sister and his parents who reside in London, where Mark grew up. Wilson's family wants him to be remembered as a brave soldier, an avid outdoorsman and a loving father.

I would like to take this time to extend my deepest condolences to Mark's family and express to them how grateful we are for the sacrifice Mark made throughout his service in the Canadian Army. I would also like to take this time to acknowledge and send my condolences to the other 41 Canadian families who have lost a loved one in Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, I ask, on behalf of my colleague from Thunder Bay and myself, that each and every one of us take a moment to pay our respects to all of our fallen Canadian soldiers.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Ramal has asked for unanimous consent to pause for a moment of remembrance. Agreed? Agreed.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker: Thank you.

VISITORS

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: With your kind permission, I want to introduce a visitor from Punjab, India: Sant Baba Balbir Singh. He has been a community social worker, well recognized by the President of India.

Accompanying him are some of my constituents: Sukhbir Nijjar, who is a host of the Punjabi television program *Watno Dur*, and Harpreet Singh, Nachattar Singh, Paramjit Deol, Hakam Singh, Sukha Bhopal and Tarsem Singh. I want to welcome them to Queen's Park.

WEARING OF PINS

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby–Ajax): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I seek unanimous consent for all members of this Legislature to wear the baby's breath pin for SIDS awareness, in recognition of October being SIDS Awareness Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mrs. Elliott has asked for unanimous consent to wear the baby's breath pin. Agreed? Agreed.

VISITORS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce to the House, from the organization Oakville Teenagers in Action, Ms. Fiona Burgess and Ms. Hina Parmar, and their families. They built a school in Sierra Leone and travelled again this year to help those in Africa who are far less fortunate than us.

If the House would recognize them, it would be appreciated.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TRANSCANADA HIGHWAY
IMPROVEMENT ACT
(HIGHWAY 17), 2006LOI DE 2006
SUR L'AMÉLIORATION DE L'AUTOROUTE
TRANSCANADIENNE (ROUTE 17)

Mr. Orazietti moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 149, An Act respecting the improvement of Highway 17, part of the TransCanada Highway / Projet de loi 149, Loi ayant trait à l'amélioration de la route 17, qui fait partie de l'autoroute transcanadienne.

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

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

1350

Mr. David Orazietti (Sault Ste. Marie): The bill proposes federal-provincial discussions for the development of a plan for the improvement of the Highway 17 portion of the Trans-Canada Highway to enhance the regional economy and improve public safety. The bill identifies several ways in which to improve Highway 17, including, but not limited to, increased passing lanes, paved shoulders, rest stops and widening to four lanes. I hope this bill will have the support of the entire House, as it will greatly benefit all northern communities and businesses as well as the economy of the entire province.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS
AMENDMENT ACT (RAISING THE
MINIMUM WAGE), 2006LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR
LES NORMES D'EMPLOI
(AUGMENTATION DU SALAIRE
MINIMUM)

Ms. DiNovo moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 150, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 / Projet de loi 150, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi.

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

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale-High Park): It has been said that we can't afford in this province a minimum wage of \$10 an hour. I maintain, and so does the New Democratic Party, that we can't afford not to have a minimum wage of \$10 an hour. One in six of our children lives in poverty and 13,500 children use food banks in the GTA. This bill will primarily affect the lives of women and children in our province. It is our moral and ethical responsibility to enact this bill.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Tuesday, October 17, 2006, for the purpose of considering government business.

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

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1353 to 1358.

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

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Gerretsen, John	Peterson, Tim
Arthurs, Wayne	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Balkissoon, Bas	Hardeman, Ernie	Qaadri, Shafiq
Barrett, Toby	Hoy, Pat	Ramal, Khalil
Bentley, Christopher	Jeffrey, Linda	Runciman, Robert W.
Bradley, James J.	Klees, Frank	Ruprecht, Tony
Brotten, Laurel C.	Kular, Kuldip	Sandals, Liz
Bryant, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Scott, Laurie
Cansfield, Donna H.	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Levac, Dave	Smith, Monique
Chudleigh, Ted	Matthews, Deborah	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike	Mauro, Bill	Sterling, Norman W.
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Takhar, Harinder S.
Di Cocco, Caroline	Meilleur, Madeleine	Tascona, Joseph N.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Miller, Norm	Tory, John
Duguid, Brad	Mitchell, Carol	Van Bommel, Maria
Duncan, Dwight	O'Toole, John	Watson, Jim
Elliott, Christine	Orazietti, David	Witmer, Elizabeth
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Parsons, Ernie	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Fonseca, Peter	Peters, Steve	Zimmer, David

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

Nays

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

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 60; the nays are 9.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

VISITORS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): On point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm sure all members of the Legislature would like to join me in welcoming the parents and family of page Stephen McGuire from Smiths Falls. Stephen is the grandson of a former MPP, Leo Jordan, who represented Lanark–Renfrew. In our audience we have Michael, Stephen's father; Helen, Stephen's mother; and, most importantly, young Shamus. To all of you, welcome.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship): I am pleased to inform the Legislature about an important investment that furthers the McGuinty government's support for youth entrepreneurship in Ontario.

Small business and entrepreneurship is the foundation of our economy. The 340,000 small businesses operating across the province employ over half of Ontario's workforce and create valuable jobs for Ontario workers.

The Ministry of Small Business and Entrepreneurship understands that small business growth brings economic prosperity to communities across the province. For this prosperity to continue, our youth must be able to fill and exceed our roles as future business leaders.

I am proud to announce that the government of Ontario has provided the Canadian Youth Business Foundation with over \$1 million—actually, the amount is \$1.7 million—to ensure that our young entrepreneurs will be able to get their businesses off the ground and products to market faster.

The Canadian Youth Business Foundation supports youth entrepreneurship across the province—young entrepreneurs like Chris, who I had the pleasure of meeting this morning. Chris runs a company called JobLoft.com. JobLoft.com is an online job board where employers in the retail, food services and hospitality industries can advertise vacant job positions they wish to fill. JobLoft allows people seeking work to search for jobs by entering their postal code to view nearby job postings using Google map software. Chris plans to expand his business and enter the US market in the near future.

The Canadian Youth Business Foundation helped bring Chris's dream from the drawing board to the market, as it does for so many aspiring entrepreneurs. The Canadian Youth Business Foundation is one of our key partners, and it works with other partners like 19 small business enterprise centres and volunteer business mentors to make it easier for our young entrepreneurs to give life to their ideas. The Canadian Youth Business Foundation provides this program to youths throughout

Ontario, ensuring that every young person with an entrepreneurial spirit has the opportunity to potentially benefit from its services.

The funding provided to the Canadian Youth Business Foundation will be used to give qualifying young entrepreneurs repayable loans, allowing them to have the financial support that is needed to launch a business. Canadian Youth Business Foundation volunteers will mentor the new businesses during their initial stages, ensuring a successful start-up phase.

An investment in entrepreneurship is an investment in a better quality of life for many Ontarians. The Canadian Youth Business Foundation estimates that this funding will create over 2,500 jobs and generate \$50 million in gross revenue over the next four years. I am pleased that our next generation of entrepreneurs is contributing to the strength of Ontario's economy at such an early age.

My ministry also understands that it is important for Ontario's entrepreneurs to build international relationships so that they may prosper in the global economy. That's why we are developing a pilot project that will give post-secondary students the opportunity to travel abroad and experience how international businesses operate and learn why Ontario's role in the global marketplace is critical to our prosperity.

There are hundreds of young entrepreneurs nurturing exciting new ideas that have the potential to help our economy prosper, but without money or business expertise, some of these ideas may never see the light of day. That's why the government of Ontario launched its \$46-million market readiness program. It provides entrepreneurs with the money they need to bring their ideas from the drawing board to the market.

The McGuinty government champions the entrepreneurial spirit that drives our economy forward. Since May of this year, my ministry has worked hard to promote youth entrepreneurship across the province. We invested over \$1 million in the Summer Company program and had a record number of 370 students accepted. Eight hundred fifty students participated in the Ontario secondary school business plan competition in 2006, the highest number to date, and we will be announcing the winners of the competition next month. The success of our programs shows that entrepreneurship is alive and well in Ontario.

The government of Ontario recently signed an agreement with the federal government to set a new standard for business income tax collection in the province. The new agreement provides business owners with one set of rules to follow, a single tax form to complete, and the CRA as the single point of contact when submitting their tax information. This new system will allow entrepreneurs to save time and money so they can focus on more important issues, like growing their own business.

Our government's investment in the Canadian Youth Business Foundation provides more opportunities for Ontario's future business leaders to turn their ideas into real enterprises. We are very proud to support the Canadian Youth Business Foundation. After all, an invest-

ment in our youth is an investment in a better future for all of us.

As I said on October 3, 2006, in the Legislature, we have lots to celebrate in Ontario, and during October we are celebrating Salute to Small Business Month. We want to recognize the outstanding contributions small business owners and entrepreneurs make every day in our province.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I can't control my enthusiasm. Stop.

Hon. Mr. Takhar: The member from Niagara's enthusiasm is always out of control.

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

1410

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY WEEK

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation): I rise in the House today to talk about an important matter for all Ontarians: the safety of our children.

Earlier today, I joined the Ontario School Bus Association at Princess Margaret public school in Etobicoke to mark School Bus Safety Week, which runs until October 20.

About 800,000 children ride a school bus every week-day in Ontario, and now they are even safer than they were before. According to the latest Ontario Road Safety Annual Report, ORSAR, for the second year in a row Ontario has the safest roads in North America.

Fewer children aged 9 or under were killed or injured on Ontario roads in 2004; we hope one day that will be zero. The report also shows a 13.3% drop in the number of pedestrian fatalities compared to the year before.

These statistics are important, because about 70% of school-vehicle-related deaths happen while students are crossing the street or getting on and off the bus. The McGuinty government has made the safety of children a priority, with legislation in 2004 to improve school bus safety and, in 2005, to crack down on speeders and those who ignore the rules at crosswalks and school crossings.

We required new safety features on buses, including an arm at the front of new buses to prevent children from walking out in front of the vehicle where the driver can't see them. The owner of any vehicle that illegally passes a school bus now faces charges, regardless of who is driving at the time. We require decals on the back of every school bus reminding other drivers of the \$2,000 fine for illegally passing a stopped school bus. We have increased the fines for speeding from 30 to 34 kilometres over the speed limit and added three demerit points for those who endanger pedestrians at crosswalks.

I have asked the Ministry of Transportation to review if there is a need for seat belts on school buses. There is a

wide variance of opinion on the topic, and the Ministry of Transportation is gathering as much information as it can to see if the current policy needs to be changed.

School buses travel nearly two million kilometres every school day in Ontario. School Safety Bus Week is an important public education tool to remind drivers of the importance of safety around our schools, around our school buses and, of course, around our children.

Our government works closely with safety partners such as the school boards across the province, the Ontario School Bus Association, the Ontario Safety League and others to make sure everyone in Ontario knows how important it is to drive with caution near school buses and school zones.

We also work with the school boards across the province to educate children about safety. I spent my morning with Buster the School Bus, where we looked at all the challenges that children face dealing with getting on and off the bus and being safe. It's important for them to look both ways before crossing the street and getting on and off that school bus. So we're doing what we can to keep children safe on school buses and also wherever they travel in Ontario.

I know all members will want to join me in supporting School Bus Safety Week. I'd like to take just a moment to say a very special thank you to the school bus drivers who, every day, work to ensure that our children are delivered to school and from school to their home or place of pickup safely. They are truly remarkable people who, at times, have to be everything from an educator, a teacher, to a disciplinarian, a social worker and maybe even a nurse. We are indeed fortunate to have these folks who work within the school bus association and the systems on behalf of all our children in Ontario.

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

YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Supporting an organization like the Canadian Youth Business Foundation is the least this government could do, and what a great organization it is. It is, after all, this government's policies of broken promises, high costs and saying anything to get elected that most hinder small business success in Ontario.

Perhaps the government should take a page from the CYBF book and look at how they can better help small businesses to succeed instead of crushing them with punitive regulations, high energy prices and unfair property, income and business taxes. Any small business success story in Ontario is well received. However, this government is so lacking in stories of its own that it is forced to look to the non-profit, charitable sector in order to find an example of how to help small businesses succeed in our province.

I refer to the World's Finest Chocolate Factory, the Prescott Shirt Co., Curwood Packaging, Winpack Technologies, Blue Mountain Pottery, Trent Rubber, Glenoit, Glis, Bazaar and Novelty, Rheem Canada, and

Harrowsmith cheese—all companies that have ceased to exist in Ontario. If only the new ministry dedicated solely to small business and entrepreneurship in Ontario was as effective as CYBF, then small businesses in Ontario would have a true public sector resource to rely upon instead of the stories that we hear about the closing of manufacturing plants in Ontario and the demise of the manufacturing jobs, the backbone of Ontario's economy.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY WEEK

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): On behalf of the John Tory opposition party, we're certainly in support of recognizing the important work and important role of the school bus operators and drivers. We do extend our thanks to them.

In following up on the theme today of "Cross With Care," certainly it is good advice to drivers because, as you know, the Highway Traffic Act has recently been changed to include a fine of \$2,000 and the potential of six demerit points.

As of September 1, 2005, owners of vehicles may be charged if their vehicle passes a school bus illegally while it is stopped with its warning lights flashing. They should also be aware that the bus driver has the ability to write down the licence plate number and report that to the police, and a fine will ensue.

I spoke with Rick Donaldson of the Ontario School Bus Association. He points out that, indeed, over 800,000 children are transported each day on 16,000 school buses. Importantly, Transport Canada research shows that on a per passenger, per kilometre basis, the occupants of school buses are 16 times more likely to be injured in road collisions than the occupants of any other vehicles. This statistic is alarming, and I think the minister should respond with some sort of action plan.

Importantly, yesterday, you talked about the seat belt issue, and you brought something forward. Minister, you said this morning that you would have MTO officials review the need for seat belts on school buses. Contradicting that, just after you said that, Dalton, the Premier, said today, before going into caucus, "It's in fact safer for children not to have seat belts." So it seems there's some confusion for any strategy on that side of the House, but one thing that is clear is we on this side would give the school bus operators the resources they need to do the job safely.

I know most members here have met with their school boards, and the top three issues they brought to our attention were the reduction in funding for autism, the reduction in funding for school bus operations and the resources for special education generally. So school buses aren't being given the tools to do the job safely.

I would only say that school bus safety is important for students, but each of us has an important responsibility, whether it's the parent, the students themselves, the bus operator or indeed, the education community.

I want to conclude with some advice to the Minister of Education. This is a part of the plan that you could

simply bring in to play: funding the school bus association appropriately. You know that's an issue. You know it's appropriate to the theme today of School Bus Safety Week, "Cross With Care." I'm looking for some sort of strategy or some kind of consistent response from the McGuinty government. It seems they have a lot of pleasant tone but very little substance in any of their commitments here today.

YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): Certainly small business is the engine of our economy, both in Ontario and in Canada. I had the pleasure of running my own small business for over seven years and being in corporate life for many more years than that, so I speak with some experience.

I'm looking at the Canadian Youth Business Foundation, and I'm concerned a little that this is just a mere beginning. It's a mere beginning in terms of what we need to do for this group of young people between 18 and 34.

First of all, we should know that this group, among all groups, suffers one of the highest levels of unemployment—that is partly due to the policies of our government—and also, they suffer the burden of student loan debt to a greater degree now than ever in Ontario.

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When we look at what the Canadian Youth Business Foundation actually does for them, what we really see is a mentorship program and an opportunity to get yet another loan. This is a loan program through the CIBC that gives them prime plus 2%. That's what it is. Certainly, we require far more for our young people than a mentorship program and another loan program that they may not be able to pay back, because we know that most first business attempts tend to fail. That's the reality of small business. So, really, what we're doing here is saddling our young people with yet another debt—a \$7,000 to \$15,000 debt—added to their student loan debt, which they will accrue as well.

We in the New Democratic Party would like to see some real progress on this. We would like to see grants, not loans.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY WEEK

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): I rise to respond to the Minister of Transportation. We in the NDP welcome all initiatives that improve school bus safety. Unfortunately, in the past it has been the practice of the McGuinty government to introduce new safety requirements without providing support to the school boards so they can afford to actually implement them as they are meant to be implemented.

Imposing new costs without changes to the school funding formula hits school boards and school bus operators. When we fail to address the need for increased transportation funding under the school funding formula,

we download the cost of safety onto the school boards and the school bus operators. That's a problem for schools and school boards across this province.

In opposition, the McGuinty Liberals said they would implement the recommendations of the Rozanski report. Those recommendations with respect to transportation funding have been sitting there for over three years now and no mandate for reform is in sight.

Underfunding of school bus operators, of school bus transportation, is not the road to safer buses. Operators need to have the necessary funding to implement higher standards and to attract safe drivers. The reform of school bus funding, school transportation, is just one more area where the Liberals promised to act while they were in opposition, yet have done nothing while in government.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. It seems that every day Ontarians wake up to see more headlines about troubles in our economy. Here is just a sample: "Ontario on Brink of 2006 Recession"—that's from the National Post.

Interjections.

Mr. Tory: If you don't like that one: "Growth Outlook Places Ontario Last"—Toronto Star, October 14; "Sorbara's Prophecy of Doom is Coming True"—Globe and Mail, October 14; "Ontario's Jobless Rate Rises"—Toronto Star, October 7; "Calgary Could Take City's"—Toronto's—"Title as Economic Capital"—National Post, October 17.

A recent report from the Royal Bank of Canada says Ontario will "narrowly avoid a recession." We're ranked 10th out of 10 provinces for economic growth this year. Growth has, for all intents and purposes, stagnated.

Premier, you've seen this coming. You've had the time and the money to conceive of multi-million dollar advertising campaigns to tell us all how good things are. Where is the plan to deal with the economy? Where is the plan to deal with the job losses we've seen in this province, a plan that you said would be coming forward? Where is it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Again, I'm not inclined to be pessimistic, as the leader of the official opposition is. I'm very optimistic about the economy, and particularly the ability of Ontarians and Ontario entrepreneurs to manage their way.

The leader of the official opposition asks me what we have been doing to strengthen the economy. I will tell you that we have been doing all the things we need to do. We're investing in the education and skills of our people. We're investing in the health of our people. We are also working very well with both labour and business. Whether we're talking about the auto sector, advanced

manufacturing, forestry or agriculture, we're doing all the kinds of things we need to do. In addition to that, we have a \$30-billion infrastructure plan.

When you hear from economists—and I have heard from many—they tell us that you've got to invest in your people, you've got to invest in your infrastructure, and you've got to find ways to work with business and labour. We're doing those very things.

Mr. Tory: We'll concede there's an initiative to do with the auto industry, but when it comes to the rest of it, whether it's forestry or other manufacturing, there is no plan; that is a fact. There is no plan in this province; there is no strategy. In fact, your reaction throughout, when we have confronted you with news of this crisis affecting thousands and thousands of Ontarians, has been to belittle it. At one time, in November 2005, you called it "a little bit of contraction." Your former parliamentary assistant, Tony Wong, who rushed for the exit, called communities that were upset about job losses "cry-babies." The member for Guelph-Wellington, sitting beside you today, said about job losses in her community that they did prove that the government legislation to reduce smoking was at least working.

Premier, 100,000 manufacturing jobs lost since 2005 is not a little bit of contraction; predictions of 50,000 more manufacturing jobs to be lost is not a little bit of contraction. Ontarians deserve a serious plan. Where is a comprehensive plan from your government on the economy and job losses?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I hope the international investment community is not listening to the leader of the official opposition, because I'm not sure there is any more effective spokesperson in all the province when it comes to talking down the Ontario economy. He's very effective in that regard.

We consider it our responsibility to continue to work, with a sense of optimism, with labour and with business. The leader of the official opposition doesn't like to hear this, but the fact of the matter is that while it's true we've lost some jobs during the course of the past few years, overall we've gained 254,000 net new jobs.

Again, we've got a great plan in place. We're always looking for more opportunities. I know that my new Minister of Economic Development and Trade has some announcements in the wings. I know the leader of the official opposition looks forward to those with great impatience, but again, we are optimistic about the economy. We will continue to work with both business and labour.

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

Mr. Tory: The McGuinty government has more things in the wings and in the pipeline and on the way and all that sort of thing, but the fact is, while you have things in the wings and on the way and in the pipeline, last month 34,000 jobs were lost in this province. The TD Bank says any results in the auto sector are what they call a temporary reprieve. The CIBC says Ontario is a graveyard for manufacturing jobs. That's not a politician or the

Leader of the Opposition speaking; these are some of the leading banks and financial institutions in this country.

Now, I asked you about a resolution passed in this House with the support of many of your members—in fact, unanimously on all sides—calling on your government to introduce a comprehensive plan immediately to deal with these job losses and to bolster the economy. When will you keep your word, respect the wishes of the members of this House and bring forward a comprehensive plan? We're not looking for it to be in the pipeline or in the works or on the way; we're looking for help for these people now.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Let me tell you about some of the things we're doing in addition to generating growth by working with business and with labour. We have, as my friend opposite will know, led the first Ontario government to enter into a labour market development agreement with the federal government that will transfer existing programs to the province and give us more say over those programs, to use them in the way that best serves the needs of Ontarians.

But here is an important issue: I also entered into an agreement with then Prime Minister Martin for a labour market partnership agreement that would bring \$314 million annually to expand and enhance our labour market programs. That was part of the McGuinty-Martin agreement. The federal Conservative government has yet to flow one single penny of that money. I ask the leader of the official opposition to pick up the phone, phone Prime Minister Harper and tell him to send us the \$314 million that will help Ontarians who are caught in this economy and losing their jobs.

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UNEMPLOYMENT

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier again. Your governing strategy has been clear from the beginning: It's to blame anybody you can and not accept any responsibility; it's to make wild promises; it's to break those promises and lurch from crisis to crisis. It's how you've handled the emergency room crisis, it's how you've handled energy, it's how you've handled Caledonia, it's how you've handled everything.

There's a crisis today in Sarnia, where 380 jobs have been lost at Dow Chemical; Stratford losing 280 jobs at Dura Automotive; St. Marys, 100 jobs at Dana Corp. The people in Sarnia, Stratford and St. Marys are wondering why you won't listen to the Legislature, including your own McGuinty Liberal members who voted to bring forward a comprehensive plan immediately to help these communities and these families that are losing jobs. Why won't you bring forward a plan to help these communities and the tens of thousands of people who have lost their jobs? Why won't you do it? Where is the plan?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'm more than pleased to

join the debate on this very specific issue. The leader of the official opposition asks me what are we going to do to ensure that we provide all the necessary supports and assistance to Ontarians who lose their jobs as a result of dislocation in this economy.

As I say, on behalf of a government that has done this for the very first time, we have entered into a labour market development agreement with the federal government—never been done—that will give us control over those federal monies so that we can deploy them in a way that best meets our particular needs. But there's the outstanding matter of a labour market partnership agreement I signed with Prime Minister Martin. He said, "I'll send you \$314 million so you can use that to enhance your programs."

I say again to the leader of the official opposition: Ontarians want to know on whose side he's on. Is he on Prime Minister Harper's side or is he on the side of the people of Ontario who have lost their jobs?

Mr. Tory: Again no answer from the Premier. What the people of Ontario do know is that there were more people unemployed in this province in September of this year than compared to September—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): We just can't keep doing this. I need be able to hear the Leader of the Opposition place his question. The Premier needs to be able to hear the question also. It can't happen if everyone else is speaking at the same time.

Mr. Tory: The people of Ontario do know that there were more people unemployed in this province in September of this year than September of last year. They know that our unemployment rate is above the national average for only the second time in 30 years. That includes 110 people in St. Thomas who were laid off last month by Sterling Truck. Another 500 will lose their jobs in the spring of 2007. AFG laid off another 250 people.

They don't want rhetoric. They don't want multi-million dollar taxpayer-financed advertising propaganda. They don't want your new government logo. They don't want you to say whatever it is you think will help you to win an election. They don't want you blaming anybody else. They want you to stand up in your place and take some responsibility for the fact that your members voted with us when we moved a resolution calling for a comprehensive plan to help the communities and people who have been losing their jobs.

Where is that plan? It's your plan. Your people voted for it. The people of Ontario, thousands of them, are waiting. Where is the plan?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The leader of the official opposition has had two opportunities now, and I'll give him a third. One of the things that we're asking the federal government to do is to fund an agreement that the Prime Minister specifically said he would honour within the context of the last campaign. He said in writing to me that he would honour the Canada-Ontario agreement. Part and parcel of that agreement is \$314 million to be delivered to the people of Ontario so that we can better

enhance and support their employment dislocation program. What the people of Ontario now want to know is whether or not Mr. John Tory stands with the federal government in Ottawa or stands with the people of Ontario and their province at Queen's Park.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Tory: I am the one who is here asking questions on behalf of the people of Ontario today, and you are the one who is adopting your usual strategy of dither, deny, deflect, blame anybody and don't accept any responsibility. The results are that the people—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Final supplementary?

Mr. Tory: The people who are losing their jobs, thanks to the inaction of the McGuinty government, are the very people who need the support systems that your government has also ignored and for which they're here protesting today. Your dithering, denials and deflections are no help to the people of Chatham, for example, who are staring at 500 job losses next month, thanks to layoffs at International Truck. They're no help to people across the north, who are seeing communities hollowed out, houses being stripped entirely of their value and thousands and thousands of people losing their jobs while you plan your next self-congratulatory ad campaign.

People want to know where the plan is. It was a plan that 31 of your MPPs voted for in December of last year, a comprehensive plan to be brought forward immediately to deal with jobs and the economy. Where is your plan that your people voted for and that you said you'd bring forward? Are you going to keep your promise, or is this one going to go the way of so many others and be broken?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Let me tell you just a little bit about the program that we have in place, a rapid re-employment program. We issue a call within one hour of getting news about a company that's going down; we send notice to the company and the union by way of a phone call. We've expanded our Job Connect program to include counselling and job advice, and we've added training and academic possibilities at our colleges. But just think of what we could do with 314 million more dollars.

We've been the first government to enter into a labour market development agreement with the federal government. But I ask the leader of the official opposition—

Interjections.

The Speaker: I remind members that I also need to be able to hear the Premier respond to the question.

Premier.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: On behalf of all Ontarians, who have some middling interest in what it is that weighs heavily in the mind of the leader of the official opposition, what they want to know is, whose side is he on? They feel they're owed \$314 million for this new labour market program. They know that the people on this side of the House support them in their quest to get that

money. What they really want to know is, is Mr. Tory on their side or is he on Prime Minister Harper's side?

POVERTY

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. In May, the United Nations released a report on poverty in Ontario and Canada. The report says that too many aboriginal people, too many African Canadians, too many immigrants, too many youth, too many women, too many single moms with kids and too many of our disabled are living in poverty. But instead of addressing poverty in Ontario, the McGuinty government is spending millions of dollars of public money on self-serving ads to promote itself.

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Premier, today is the United Nations' International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. Why is the McGuinty government wasting millions of dollars on TV ads promoting itself and telling the people everything is okay in Ontario when one in seven Ontarians live in poverty?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): There's an important, substantive issue here, but first of all let me say—as the leader of the NDP knows, even though he voted against the legislation—that there's a new law on the books in Ontario that says all the advertising has to be vetted by the Provincial Auditor. He voted against that, but we thought it was a good law and we will continue to respect that law.

Let me say something about the issue of poverty. Without a doubt, there is more work to be done in that regard and, we will not rest until we've done as much as we possibly can to help provide better supports to people who are affected by poverty in Ontario.

An important question is whether we're making progress, and I think by any objective measure we are. We are building 15,000 new affordable housing units. We have an agreement with the federal government and our municipal partners: 15,000 new affordable housing units, and we're going to provide 5,000 rent supplements. We provided a 5% increase for our homelessness programs and emergency shelters. We have free vaccinations for children: Over one million children have received vaccinations. That saves families up to \$600 per child.

Those may not be the kinds of things that the leader of the NDP thinks constitute progress, but we think we're moving in the right direction.

Mr. Hampton: I think what we just heard is that you think it's a good idea to spend millions of dollars of public money promoting your government while people live in poverty.

You talk about objective measures. Under the McGuinty government, one in four workers in this province still falls below the poverty line. They work every day, but at the end of the month they still fall below the poverty line, under your government. Low-wage work, temporary work and on-call work is increasingly the

economic reality for new immigrants, for women, for workers of colour and even for young graduates trying to pay off their student debts. These jobs mean people fall below the poverty line, Premier.

My question again: Instead of spending millions of dollars of public money promoting yourself, why don't you invest some of that money to try to make life better for the thousands of families living below the poverty line?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Something else the leader of the NDP is uncomfortable acknowledging is that we've increased the minimum wage three times now on our way to \$8 per hour. Also, 84,000 more children are being served through our student nutrition programs. We're the first province in Canada to fund insulin pumps for children. We have doubled our child care investment. We are waiving cost-sharing on new child care funding, which saved municipalities \$140 million over four years. By the end of this year, we will have created 15,000 new child care spaces.

All of those speak to our continuing commitment as a government to help Ontarians who are less fortunate and who are in need of a bit of assistance, and we are proud to provide it.

Mr. Hampton: The Premier talks about child care spaces. You haven't invested one cent of provincial money in child care. That's all federal money that's created child care spaces.

Premier, it takes a split second to fall into poverty. You lose a good manufacturing job, you get sick or you're injured or you lose your home because you can't pay the escalating property taxes. You have to quit work because there aren't enough child care spaces.

Premier, under your government—the McGuinty government—118,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs have been lost, and many of those families are now struggling in poverty. The Royal Bank says Ontario's economy is dead last in Canada.

I say again, Premier: With the situation this serious, why are you spending millions of dollars of public money on television ads to promote your government while so many people live in poverty and many more are falling into poverty?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, as the leader of the NDP knows, even though it's a law that he voted against, all government advertising now, for the first time in Ontario—and I believe the first time in Canada—is subject to approval by the Provincial Auditor.

Let me tell you about some of the other things we've done to help our most vulnerable: We're investing \$276 million in new places to live and for supports and services for Ontarians with a developmental disability. We've put in place a \$100 monthly work-related benefit for ODSP recipients, to help with extra costs relating to work—in particular, transportation. We're investing \$28.2 million to help universities and colleges provide services for students with disabilities. In post-secondary education, as the leader of the NDP well knows, we've brought back provincial grants. Some 60,000 students

from our poorest families in Ontario, this September, are receiving outright grants; they don't have to pay us back. Again, I think there is more to do, but I also think it's fair to say we're making some real progress.

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

Mr. Hampton: To the Premier: You want to talk about your record. You promised compassion for low-income Ontarians, but the reality is, when you factor in the cost of living, the lowest-income Ontarians are actually worse off under your government than they were under the former government: Hydro rates have escalated by 55%; rents for lowest-income people haven't come down; the cost of heating has gone up.

Premier, you went on the attack when a former Conservative minister suggested that poor people should buy tuna in dented cans, but then your government cut sick people off their special diet supplement, and you told someone with Lou Gehrig's disease to buy a blender.

Premier, the question again is this: What happened to your promise to help low-income and vulnerable Ontarians? Are they less important than the millions of dollars of public money you spend on TV ads to promote yourself?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for franco-phone affairs): When parents succeed, children succeed. Since taking office, our government has created 254,000 new jobs. In 2003, we inherited not only a fiscal deficit but a compassionate deficit. We are making good investments to help our most vulnerable families. We are investing, this year, \$10.3 billion for family and social services. We have increased the minimum wage two times, and we are in the process of increasing it for a third time. We are investing \$40 million to improve the Family Responsibility Office, and we have invested \$68 million for the domestic violence action plan.

Mr. Hampton: It's no surprise that the Premier doesn't want to answer these questions, but this is another one of the Premier's promises: Three years ago, Premier, you made a promise to 171,000 of the poorest children in Ontario. You promised to stop clawing back the national child benefit supplement. You said, "The clawback is wrong, and we will end it." Then, you forgot all about it. As a result, over 178,000 of the poorest kids in Ontario go without breakfast. They go, in some cases, without proper winter clothing. They go, in some cases, without a place to live. Today is the day for you to stand up and do something meaningful for the poorest people in Ontario.

I ask you, Premier: Will you end your waste of public money on those self-serving television ads and put the money into ending the national child benefit clawback?

Hon. Mrs. Meilleur: Again, I'm going to reiterate what we have done for our children: Since we took office, we have increased social assistance by 5%. That party voted against it, I want to remind everybody. What

we have also done is made certain that all increases to the national child care benefit stay in the hands of the people who need it the most.

1450

When we took office, we ended the clawback of national child benefit supplements going forward. This means that families with children in receipt of social assistance will have received an additional \$56 million in supplements from the federal child benefit supplement. And the McGuinty Liberals have already created 14,000 new affordable child care spots. Is there more to do? Yes, there is more to do. We are making progress, and we will continue to do more—

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, here is your record: You promised 20,000 units of new affordable housing; in fact, your government has provided less than 10% of that. You promised \$300 million of provincial money for child care, but you failed to deliver on that too. You promised to stop taking federal money away from the poorest kids in Ontario, and you failed in that. And today, one in four Ontario workers continues to fall below the poverty line.

Premier, I ask you again, when is the McGuinty government going to stop wasting millions of dollars of public money on your self-serving television ads promoting your government? When are you going to put some money towards ending the national child benefit supplement clawback, so the poorest kids in Ontario can get back the money that belongs to them?

Hon. Mrs. Meilleur: Again, I want to say to the leader of the third party that when we took office, we ended the clawback of the national child care benefit supplement going forward. We are investing more and more every year for the children. We have invested in the school breakfast program; we have invested in the energy bank, so if a family cannot afford the increase in the electricity rate, we are there to help. I want to remind the leader of the third party that when they were in power, one in five children in Ontario was on social assistance, so this is not a record that they want to talk about. It's not a record that we want to leave the province with, so we will continue to work with investments in child care, investments in education, investments—

The Speaker: Thank you.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I have a question to the Premier. The same week that RBC Financial released its report saying that Ontario is dead last on growth, Niagara and Hamilton were again hit with some bad news. Let me repeat that: Ontario is dead last in growth in this country. Ball Packaging in Burlington is set to close by the end of this year, eliminating 300 well-paying manufacturing jobs. That very same week, Maple Leaf Foods announced it's planning to sell its pork processing plant in Burlington, threatening 1,200 well-paying manufacturing jobs.

Premier, you say, "Don't worry, be happy." On this side of the House, we say that there's a real, pressing and

important issue for working families in the province of Ontario. Is it simply bad luck that Ontario is dead last in growth? And if not, what exactly are you going to do about it?

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

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues): I want to say first off that this government is extremely concerned for anyone who is facing a job loss. We individually and collectively have watched many cycles in this province, and we know that Ontario always comes back stronger. So let me say this in particular for the manufacturing sector, that we as a government are extremely concerned about—I want to say that this puts far more emphasis on what we are collectively doing to get every opportunity to help Ontario residents, including calling Prime Minister Stephen Harper. Now, I realize that your leader is opposed to calling Stephen Harper to say, "Get us \$314 million," which will go a long way to helping the people in your very riding. I want to know where you are on this. Are you prepared to push your leader to make every call imaginable to help—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Hudak: You've got to wonder where the heck the minister has been. She dismisses it as a cycle, that we'll come back strong. Well, Minister, we've got a hell of a long way to go, because in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario we've hit rock bottom: dead last in economic growth.

Let me read you some of these jobs that you simply dismiss as part of a cycle: Ball Packaging in Burlington, 300 jobs; Ferranti-Packard in St. Catharines, 212 jobs; Bazaar and Novelty, St. Catharines; General Motors, St. Catharines; Redpath Sugar; Automation Tooling Systems—the list goes on and on. These are real, hard-working families in desperate times, and you say it's just a cycle.

Minister, stand in your place and tell us today, what is your plan? Will you finally admit that your high-energy, high-tax policy is chasing manufacturing jobs out of Ontario? Don't say it's a cycle; tell us what you're going to do about it.

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: I could wish that this individual would expend the same amount of passion in speaking to his own leader about the role he could play with his former colleague, former boss, with—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: Here's what I want to say: This is a government that stands up for Ontario. This is a government that is determined to do everything we can in the face of significant changes in the manufacturing sector, and to that end, that is unprecedented investment in post-secondary education, in infrastructure projects. In

the next six years alone, \$500 million just to construction. This is the kind of investment that we are making in our province.

What I say to this individual now is, you save some of that passion for your federal colleagues, your former colleagues, and you tell them—

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Where's Jim Flaherty now?

The Speaker: Order. The Minister of Health will come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order, member for Nepean–Carleton. I won't warn the Minister of Health again.

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): Today, I introduced a private member's bill that would raise the minimum wage to \$10 an hour. Approximately 1.2 million workers in Ontario earn less than \$10 an hour. People working full time are still living below the poverty line.

Premier, a job should keep you out of poverty, not keep you in it. Your minimum wage is a poverty wage, not a living wage. Ontario's minimum wage is not fair, economically or ethically. It is not good for our families, workers, business or our province's future.

Premier, will you stand up today and increase the minimum wage to \$10 an hour for those millions of workers, most of whom are women, immigrants and single parents?

1500

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

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): I want to thank the member for the question. I think the member, because she's new to this House, needs to have a little bit of a history lesson. Remember that for nine years—for nine years—there was no increase in minimum wage. We followed a party that had no compassion for people in Ontario. But also, you represent a party that had no ability to manage.

What we have here is a party with compassion and a party with an ability to manage. When we took office, we made a commitment to bring in a balanced approach to dealing with the issue of the minimum wage. We came forward with a balanced approach to phase in an increase in the minimum wage over a period of four years. On February 1, 2007, the minimum wage in Ontario will rise to \$8 an hour, an approach that is fair and balanced, an approach that was endorsed by the Toronto Star in an editorial in January 2006—

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

Ms. DiNovo: Actually, the Toronto Star called for a raise in the minimum wage to \$10 an hour in their editorial very recently. But let's take the case of Maheswar,

her last name is Puvaneswaran, a mother of two. She's an example of McGuinty's poverty wage. This is a Tamil mother who works two low-wage cleaning jobs and earns just \$12,000 a year. She would need to work 92 hours a week, over 18 hours a day, to lift her family out of poverty on your minimum wage.

I point out that several G8 jurisdictions already have a higher minimum wage than \$10 an hour, and numerous studies have shown that jobs do not vanish. In fact, it helps the economy.

So I ask again, for the poor of this province, for the one in six children who live in poverty, for the 13,500 children who use food banks in the GTA: Will you raise the minimum wage to \$10 an hour?

Hon. Mr. Peters: The US minimum wage is US\$5.15 an hour. As well, again I remind the member, we went through a period from 1995 to 2003, nine years, with no increase in a minimum wage.

On this side, though, we recognize that yes, we need to show compassion, we need to be concerned about the most vulnerable in our society. That's why we've taken a number of steps, whether it has been minimum wage or dealing with better enforcement of Employment Standards Act regulations. But as well, we need to recognize that we need to keep the economy of this province moving. That's why we move forward with a balanced approach. We move forward with a four-year plan to increase the minimum wage, recognizing that we have to bear in mind what the impact will be on the business community in this province. But \$5.15 an hour in the US minimum wage, no increases in nine years—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

STUDENTS' ASSEMBLY ON ELECTORAL REFORM

ASSEMBLÉE DES ÉTUDIANTS SUR LA RÉFORME ÉLECTORALE

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): My question is for the Minister of Democratic Renewal. Minister, I understand that recently you announced a Students' Assembly on Electoral Reform, which will run in conjunction with the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform. This is a very important initiative. It will increase the interest of young Ontarians in our electoral system. Minister, could you tell us a little bit about how this students' assembly is going to work?

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I'd like to thank the member from Willowdale for his question. Through the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform, Ontarians have the opportunity to participate in a full and open debate on our electoral system. This was one of the reasons why it was important to extend the debate to the students of Ontario. Students are now being given the opportunity to participate in one of the most important and exciting democratic renewal initiatives in our province's history.

This is an opportunity to listen to the future generation of voters. The Students' Assembly on Electoral Reform is a parallel citizens' assembly process for Ontario high school students. One hundred and three students from across Ontario will be selected to participate in the assembly conference to be held in Deerhurst Resort, Muskoka, from November 15 to 19.

Pendant cette rencontre, les participants apprendront le fonctionnement de notre système électoral ainsi que celui des systèmes utilisés dans d'autres pays. Ils vont s'y pencher et décider quel système représente mieux leurs idées et valeurs.

Mr. Zimmer: In your answer, Minister, you mentioned that all students will be able to learn and take part in the process. Specifically, how can the students in my riding of Willowdale get involved in this process if they're not chosen for the assembly? Can they still participate and voice their opinions? Finally, when the students do make a decision on their preferred electoral system, what will be done with that recommendation?

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: I encourage every student in Ontario to go to the students' assembly website at www.studentsassembly.ca. There are two ways for students to participate in this program: individually or through their classrooms. Individual students can apply online until October 19 for selection as one of 103 participants in the students' assembly conference. High schools can also apply to receive curriculum materials. These materials will enable classroom assemblies on electoral reform to be held between November 13 and December 14.

Once the classes have completed their work, students will vote online or through a students' assembly hotline for their preferred electoral system. Feedback from the students' assembly process and the province-wide classroom vote will be compiled in a report that will be submitted to the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform in February 2007. Engaging—

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

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): To the Minister of Education, perhaps this quote will sound familiar to you: "If we cut \$90 million from the system, it's going to be a bad scene in Toronto schools. Public education in the city of Toronto as we've known it will be changed forever." You will probably recognize that that was Kathleen Wynne, trustee at the Toronto District School Board, who said that in 2002. I'm wondering what Kathleen Wynne, the Minister of Education, says now to the recommendation to cut \$84 million from the same school board. What do you say to that?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): What I say to that is there are more than \$260 million more in that school board than there were when I was a school trustee. And what I say to that is that there is a government working with that school board that believes in publicly funded education, in more teachers in the

schools, in smaller class sizes, and that believes that all of those things, all of those resources, have the effect—and they are demonstrably having the effect—of improving student achievement, of making the outcomes for students better, keeping students in school, making the graduation rates higher, because the money that goes into the system is targeted to those things that parents are most concerned about.

Mr. Klees: My, what a difference an appointment to the ministry makes. Here is what your predecessor, the former Minister of Education, said in this House: "This government is not about program cuts and we're not about to start now." That was your predecessor. Now you are all about cuts, because it's cuts to programs, cuts to facilities, cuts to staff, cuts totalling \$84 million that you now are presiding over as Minister of Education.

Ms. Wynne, what has happened in your transformation from trustee to Minister of Education? Have you lost faith in the education system?

Hon. Kathleen Wynne: I will not sink to the level of defending my record on publicly funded education and juxtaposing it with the record of the member opposite. There is nothing in my background, there is nothing I have ever done, there is nothing I have ever said or will say that will undermine my commitment to publicly funded education. That is why I am proud to be part of this government. If the member opposite read the report put out by Brian Cain and Joan Green, he would know that this report shows the way forward for a board that has challenges because of an amalgamation imposed on it by the previous government that it has not recovered from. This report shows the way forward, without harming the classroom.

1510

DISABILITY BENEFITS

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Last week, I had a special diet client referred to me by a backbench Liberal MPP who can't get the special diet supplement for his constituent. The MPP asked me to try; I might have more success.

Your first job as minister was to cut, worthy of Mike Harris. You slashed the average special diet allowance by 30%, over \$50 a month, right out of the mouths of disabled people. The special diet is supposed to help people get proper, nutritious food. Why are you forcing them to use food banks, which are ill-equipped for special-needs diets?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for franco-phone affairs): I appreciate the question and the concern of the member of the third party.

Last year, we saw a dramatic increase in the number of people accessing the special diet allowance. This increase was a result of a certain advocacy group encouraging people to apply for a special diet allowance whether or not they had a specific medical condition that

required a special diet. The allowance has always been intended for people who require a special diet as a result of a medical condition. The member opposite knows that very well. Any misuse of our social assistance programs jeopardizes those programs for everyone. So the need for a special diet must be confirmed by an approved health professional, and we have worked with health care professionals to draw a list of medical conditions that need special diets.

Mr. Prue: Minister, you've forced people to go to the tribunal, where almost all of that is overturned. The fact remains that thousands of sick Ontarians have had a third of their food money taken away from them. That's the reality of your policy. You did nothing for a man by the name of Brian Woods, even though we asked in this House many times, and you were shamed into reinstating the special diet for George Goodwin. You'll remember him. He is the ALS patient who you told he could have no money and you gave him \$75 to buy a food blender as a final payment. Can we add what you're saying today to the McGuinty poverty hall of fame; that is, your government's idea of healthy eating is dented tuna mixed with a blender?

Hon. Mrs. Meilleur: I'm very sorry to see a member of this House use a particular individual as a political football in this House. I want to assure the member of the third party that when someone needs a special diet because of a medical condition, that person will receive the amount he or she needs for a special diet.

As an example, it was raised in the House at one point that someone with ALS was not receiving the special diet. This condition was reviewed by the expert committee and was added to the list. I wanted to say to this House that everyone who has a medical condition that requires a special diet will get it.

NORTHERN EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay–Atikokan): My question is to the Minister of Education. Education in the north is challenging for many reasons, but the McGuinty government knows there are unique areas across the province, including northern boards, that are unable to thrive on a one-size-fits-all approach.

I recently met with directors of northern boards of education—Northern Ontario Education Leaders, called NOEL—who represent boards from a large area of northern Ontario. The directors were complimentary towards our government for several initiatives, including primary class sizes, the hiring of new teachers and the turnaround teams that are up in the north helping to improve literacy and numeracy. They have, however, expressed concern over the funding levels for this year. Can you please respond to their concerns with respect to funding?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): Thank you very much to the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan. He, like so many members of our caucus, is very concerned about publicly funded education. And I

am well aware of the concerns of northern directors; in fact, I'm going to be meeting with some of those northern education leaders shortly.

Ministry staff have been in constant communication with boards in the north to discuss their concerns, and let me just say some of the improvements that we have put into northern boards. We've funded northern students \$2,500 more per pupil; that's a 30% increase since we've been in office. Northern boards are receiving \$1.3 billion this year; that's an increase of \$334 per pupil over last year even though enrolment has declined by 2.5%. The reality is, we understand that the per pupil funding has to go up, even though declining enrolment takes place because of the lack of critical mass, small schools and large geographic distances.

Mr. Mauro: As you are aware, there was a report unveiled recently with several recommendations to help northern school boards, which are challenged by vast areas and declining enrolment. The group is called People for Education. This report is calling into question resources that are going into northern boards.

Minister, as you've mentioned, our government has made significant investments in education in our three years in government. Can you please clarify for people in my riding, and in fact for many other northern ridings, some of the issues raised in the report and what the northern boards can expect from our government in the coming months?

Hon. Ms. Wynne: One of the things that report says is that the average northern elementary school has 188 students, compared to an average enrolment of 356 in the rest of the province. One of the things we did was to change the funding formula so that schools with 50 students or fewer actually would generate a principal and a secretary. We created a school foundation grant that specifically would deal with those smaller schools. So that was something that was specifically targeted at one of the issues that northern boards deal with.

We've made further investments of \$92 million in transportation and top-up funding of \$44 million. But I think some of the program issues we've addressed are the most important. There's a special literacy and numeracy project, and the focus of this project is to improve aboriginal student success through three areas. We know that aboriginal students are some of the students in the province who are struggling the most, we know we have to target funds at those students, and that's some of the work we're doing. And I'm very proud of the success that we're seeing there.

TOBACCO ADVERTISING

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): My question is to the Premier. Recently, there's been much talk about your government's double standard with respect to the rule of law. With respect to tobacco advertising, is there such a double standard, as alleged, within our province of Ontario?

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

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): I'm sure the member is alluding to the difference between Ontario law applying to everything within Ontario jurisdiction and the laws that apply to First Nation reserves, which are under the federal domain. I know our Minister of Health Promotion has been in contact with Ottawa about that. But I think the member understands that reserves are different from the rest of the province.

Mr. Barrett: I'll go back to the Premier. Your Minister of Health Promotion was quoted as saying, "No one is above the law," in this case referring to Sean Penn lighting up at the Toronto International Film Festival. For the last few years, driving along provincial Highway 6 between Hagersville and Caledonia, one sees tobacco advertising and billboards, many for brand names. Premier, why this double standard, something people can see from a provincial highway? Sean Penn is not above the law. The question is, is your government content with all the tobacco signs along provincial Highway 6?

1520

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): Mr. Speaker, I refer the question to the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation): I thank the member for the question. The signs along our highways actually do cause driver distraction, and at times may pose a safety risk as well. Under the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act, it is illegal for parties other than the ministry to place signs on provincial highway rights of way. So the advertising signs on Highway 6 between Caledonia and Hagersville are currently being removed, in accordance with normal ministry policy.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. I want to bring to your attention a case in my riding that I think clearly demonstrates just how bad the policies of the OW office are when it comes to young people and poverty in general. A young woman in my riding, 14 years old, was sexually assaulted, raped, and as a result of that rape, gave birth to a young boy. She has now got her life back together and is trying to return to high school so that she can provide for her son in years to come, and not have to rely on assistance or her parents to be able to survive.

She appeared before the OW office and was refused even an application form, because she was under 18. She was told that because of the Liberal McGuinty government policies, somebody under 18 years old can be refused an application. Our office has since assisted her, but there are still more roadblocks in the way.

I want to ask you this question: You said earlier in this House that when parents succeed, children succeed. You tell me how that policy is going to help this young woman and her son to succeed.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for franco-phone affairs): I thank the member from the third party for this question. Yes, I understand your concern about the policy. This is a very sound policy. But when someone comes for social assistance and wants to have the benefits apply to their case, the people are there to explain to them what is the process and what is not the process. We know that for people under the age of 18, there are certain conditions attached to their receiving social assistance.

I cannot talk about individual cases, but I will say to you that if this person is not satisfied with the answer that she got, she can contest it; she can appeal it. So I would say to you—

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

Mr. Bisson: How do you appeal when you can't even get the application? But we'll deal with that.

The condition is this: This young woman was raped and she's trying raise her son and get her life together. She'd constantly at our office because she's at wit's end. We've got an agreement for interim assistance. The OW office wouldn't pay even after we won an interim assistance award. Now, to make matters worse, your ministry people, because of your policy, are telling the OW people that she now has to go after support from the father, who raped her. You know what that means. This young woman is going to have to come in contact with the very person who raped her, and the OW office is saying, "This is a condition for you to receive assistance." Minister, that is unacceptable, and I say it again: What are you going to do to fix this problem so young women like this don't have to be in the situation that she is in?

Hon. Mrs. Meilleur: It's very disturbing, but I will say to you, we will discuss the case. I cannot discuss a case in this House. I'm not at liberty. The member of the opposite party knows about it, so I will say to you, let's talk after question period, and let's hope that we will be able to resolve such a case.

TRANSIT FUNDING

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, as you know, congestion on Ontario's roads means less time spent with family and friends, and more time stuck in traffic. The McGuinty government has made good on its commitment to invest two cents of every litre of gasoline sold in Ontario in the municipal transit systems. I know that in my riding of York West we can certainly appreciate how congestion elongates the commute to and from work and schools. We, as other ridings do, have really come to value the contribution to public transit this government has made, through gas taxes but also through numerous other initiatives. Minister, my question is this: What can

the people of Ontario expect from the third year of the gas tax program?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation): I thank the member for his question. It is absolutely true that we need to deal with the congestion that's occurring on our roads. Movement of goods and services and people is as important to us as an integral, sustainable transportation plan, and that's what we've put forward with the gas tax. This year alone: \$313 million to 102 municipalities. That will make it a \$700-million initiative over three years. I'm pleased to say that it's working: 19 million car trips off the road.

Mr. Sergio: I'm very grateful for the answer from the minister, and I also appreciate the amount of work and effort that she has indeed put in delivering that funding to the various municipalities.

I also understand that the city of Toronto alone receives over 50% of the gas tax funding in Ontario. There has been a lot of discussion lately of the investment in Toronto's public transit system. Although the dollars given to municipalities this year are impressive, Minister, I would like to know, in addition to this important funding, what does Ontario's largest city receive? Specifically, what is the province of Ontario doing for the city of Toronto?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: The first thing I'd like to say is that we're making up for a good number of years of neglect in the public transit system. I always said there was neglect in the energy system, and there is incredible neglect within the transportation system. Some \$1.6 billion will go to the Toronto Transit Commission over the next five years. In fact, 50% of the gas tax goes to the Toronto Transit Commission as well.

We are working with the federal government, with the city of Toronto and with this government to acknowledge and deal with the challenges that face the city of Toronto. But there is no question that \$1.5 billion over five years is an extraordinary investment in the city of Toronto, dealing with their public transit issues. This government is committed to doing what that government didn't do.

PETITIONS

LANDFILL

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is currently a proposal to more than double the size of the Carp landfill in west Ottawa; and

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

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

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

"Whereas the municipal councillors representing this area, Eli El-Chantiry ... and Peggy Feltmate, and the MPP, Norm Sterling, all oppose this expansion;

"We, the undersigned, support our local representatives and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure the Minister of the Environment does not approve the expansion of the Carp" dump "and instead finds other waste management alternatives."

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition 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;

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"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 this petition, and will affix my signature to it.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the parents of St. Paul's elementary school in Alliston have raised many issues regarding the security, cleanliness and state of repair of their school; and

"Whereas a 2003 condition assessment completed by the Ontario government identified the need for \$1.8 million in repairs to St. Paul's elementary school; and

“Whereas the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board has approached the Ministry of Education with the intention of having the school deemed prohibitive to repair as they believe the school requires \$2.28 million in repairs, or 84% of the school replacement cost; and

“Whereas there are ongoing concerns with air quality, heating and ventilation, electrical, plumbing, lack of air conditioning and the overall structure of the building, including cracks from floor to ceiling, to name a few;

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

“That the Minister of Education immediately deem St. Paul’s elementary school prohibitive to repair, secure immediate funding and begin construction of a new facility so that the children of St. Paul’s can be educated in a facility that is secure and offers them the respect and dignity that they deserve.”

I have signed this petition.

LANDFILL

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. I have 67 petitions here:

“Subject: Proposed expansion of the Navan Road landfill site in NDC,” Notre Dame des Champs....

“I petition the Legislative Assembly to direct the Ministry of the Environment to defer finalizing the terms of reference for the Carp and Navan Road landfill expansions until the expedited review of the revised and comprehensive waste management master plan is completed and available to all the concerned parties.”

I will put my signature on it as well.

PROPERTY RIGHTS

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): 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 a 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.”

I support this petition and affix my name to it.

FAIR ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

HIGHWAY 35

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

“Highway 35 Four-Laning

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas modern highways are economic lifelines to communities across Ontario and crucial to the growth of Ontario’s economy; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has been planning the expansion of Highway 35, and that expansion has been put on hold by the McGuinty government; and

“Whereas Highway 35 provides an important economic link in the overall transportation system—carrying commuter, commercial and high tourist volumes to and from the Kawartha Lakes area and Haliburton; and

“Whereas the final round of public consultation has just been rescheduled;

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

“That the Liberal government move swiftly to complete the four-laning of Highway 35 after the completion of the final public consultation.”

I affix my signature to it and give it to page Patrick.

HEALTH CARE LEGISLATION

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the McGuinty government and the Ontario Medical Association plan to work together to ensure reliable coverage for emergency departments across the province, ensuring stable coverage to meet the needs of Ontario patients;

“Whereas with the Long-Term Care Homes Act, the McGuinty government is pursuing new legislation that, if passed, will enhance the quality of life for residents of long-term-care homes by improving care;

“Whereas the McGuinty government has moved to regulate Chinese medicine in Ontario, protecting Ontarians who choose alternative health care and ensuring that traditional Chinese medicine is delivered by practitioners with a high level of competence;

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

“To the support the McGuinty government’s plans already in effect and to pass the above-mentioned suggested legislation as soon as possible so that health care can be improved for all Ontarians.”

I agree with this, affix my signature to it and give to page Adam.

DRUG LEGISLATION

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

“Whereas the McGuinty government’s Bill 102 introduces a significant degree of uncertainty for pharmacists and patients across Ontario; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government’s Bill 102 could result in reduced services to patients resulting from fewer hours of pharmacy operations, fewer pharmacies stocking expensive drugs, unfair capping of claim maximums, elimination of rebates and the permanent closing of some pharmacies; and

“Whereas the changes to the dispensing fees do not accurately reflect the true costs of safely dispensing drugs; and

“Whereas there is no protection afforded by Bill 102 to prevent future increases in drug prices where pharmacies are limited to the acquisition cost;

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

“That the McGuinty government withdraw or amend Bill 102 to ensure fairness to patients and pharmacies.”

I support the petition and affix my signature.

IDENTITY THEFT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I keep getting petitions from the Consumer Federation Canada in regard to identity theft. This reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Since I agree with this petition 100%, I’m delighted to affix my signature to it.

1540

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is the leading cause of blindness in the elderly and is present in some form in 25% to 33% of seniors over the age of 75. AMD has two forms: the more common ‘dry’ type and the ‘wet’ type. Although the wet type occurs in only 15% of AMD patients, these patients account for 90% of the legal blindness that occurs with AMD. The wet type is further subdivided into classic and occult subtypes, based on the appearance of the AMD on special testing. Photodynamic therapy, a treatment where abnormal blood vessels are closed with a laser-activated chemical, has been shown to slow the progression of vision loss in both subtypes of wet AMD;

“Whereas OHIP has not extended coverage for photodynamic therapy to the occult subtype of wet AMD, despite there being substantial clinical evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of this treatment in patients with either form of wet AMD. Untreated, these patients can expect a progression in their visual loss, with central blindness as the end result;

“Whereas affected patients are in a position where a proven treatment is available to help preserve their vision, but this treatment can only be accessed at their

own personal expense. Treatment costs are between \$12,500 and \$18,000 over an 18-month period. Many patients resign themselves to a continued worsening of their vision, as for them the treatment is financially unattainable. The resultant blindness in these patients manifests itself as costs to society in other forms, such as an increased need for home care, missed time from work for family members providing care, and an increased rate of injuries such as hip fractures that can be directly attributable to their poor vision.

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to fund the treatment of the occult subtype of macular degeneration with photodynamic therapy for all patients awaiting this service.”

I’ll be happy sign to sign my name to that and give it to Julia.

FAIR ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS

Mr. Bas Balkissoon (Scarborough–Rouge River): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

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

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

I support this petition, and I’ll be signing it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LONG-TERM CARE HOMES ACT, 2006 LOI DE 2006 SUR LES FOYERS DE SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

Mr. Smitherman moved second reading of the following bill:

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I assume the minister wants to lead off the debate. I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I’m pleased to say at the outset that I’ll be sharing my time with the member from Nipissing. But, with respect, the more appropriate way to say it is that I share my thanks with the member from Nipissing. It was, after all, when we arrived as a government, a circumstance that was of tremendous concern to us. We witnessed on a seemingly daily basis a horrendous display of circumstances where our loved ones in long-term care in our province were not, quite frankly, being provided with the quality of care that our province ought to be in a position to deliver. That was a call to action for us, and I’m very proud of the agenda that we have advanced in the three years since.

Our long-term-care system is large, and our long-term-care system is, of course, very essential. Every member here, and likely every family member in our province, is touched by the circumstances related to the provision of care for 75,000 of our most vulnerable citizens. The obligation is upon us to well protect them and to ensure that the care they receive allows them to live out their days—for many of them their final days—in dignity. I’m one who stands before you and before the people of the province of Ontario indicating that on the file we might call long-term care, we’re very proud of the steps we’ve taken and the improvements that have been made. This piece of legislation is one more piece in that overall comprehensive approach. We’re the first to acknowledge, as well, that as is the case with virtually all elements of health care, there are very obvious needs and very obvious ways to move forward in terms of enhancing the quality of care our loved ones deserve.

We said at the outset that we were calling for a revolution in long-term care, which speaks to the necessity of shifting, of altering the culture that is there in long-term care. One of the ways we sought to convey this was to move away from the word “facility” and more towards the word “home,” not simply as some kind of a branding exercise, but rather to have language which unlocks a better understanding for all of us of what the circumstances in that home ought to be. A homelike environment, of course, conjures up a very different view than does the use of the word “facility.” I’m prepared, and I have this conversation regularly with my mother, for a circumstance where at some point she might need to find care, to find a home, in a long-term-care home. It is not too appealing in that conversation I might have with my mother that we use a word like “facility.” It conjures up a cold, sterile institutional view.

We recognize that all across long-term care, those 75,000 vulnerable folks I spoke of are receiving care today, but way more importantly, they’re receiving a beautiful contribution of love alongside that care. I speak very often of the dedicated women and men who staff the front lines of health care; I usually talk about them as about 250,000 strong. I want to pay appropriate respect to the folks who provide that love and care on the front lines of health care. All of us have seen circumstances in this

place where we talk about those challenges in health care which we have yet to meet, but we can never lose sight of how much care we're providing in a good quality way, and how grateful we are for the work that happens on the front line.

The fundamental principle of this bill is that we're talking about residents' homes. We want to bring back resident-centred care, starting with the arrival of a resident in a long-term-care home. We want to make sure there's been a very adequate assessment done of the underlying circumstances that bring that individual to that long-term-care home. We want to ensure, and this legislation does it, that the principle of having a registered nurse on site—24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year—is fundamental, and you see that embedded here as a principle in this legislation.

We want to enhance, clarify and make very clear the rules that govern the use of restraints. A former member of this place who currently serves with distinction as the president of the United Way of Toronto, Ms. Frances Lankin, brought to this Legislature and to people more generally a very high degree of awareness about the challenges of appropriately dealing with residents in our long-term-care homes and about the circumstances occurring too frequently where they were being restrained in one fashion or another. We've sought in this legislation to create a very appropriate protocol that acknowledges, in some limited circumstances, that restraints may be an appropriate response, but that they cannot be utilized without considering an appropriate protocol that protects the rights of our patients, that in the circumstance where a patient or a client is not able to communicate on their own behalf, there is an obligation that an independent third person be involved in such a conversation. I use this as one example of where the detail in the legislation itself is a very direct build-out from the words spoken to my colleague Monique Smith as she travelled so extensively around Ontario in preparation for her report, which has served so much as the foundation for this piece of legislation.

It is the package of protections associated with the policy of zero tolerance for abuse and neglect, combined with a 1-800 action line, which has proven itself very effective over the last two years since we established it, to be responsive—when I use the word “responsive,” I mean quickly—to circumstances where anyone makes a complaint or an allegation with respect to neglectful circumstances in long-term care. We have created the capacity—we've had, I think, about 10,000 calls to date—where we can take action very quickly, determine if there are risks for clients or for patients, and make the response that is appropriate for a jurisdiction like ours. Lest there be any doubt of the sheer necessity that everyone—workers, volunteers, administrators, family members and other residents; indeed, anyone who finds themselves in a long term care home. We need to turn all of those individuals on to the role of being sentinels.

1550

We will hear a lot in this debate about other models, about the nature of care. But we believe it's appropriate,

and this legislation creates a very strong framework for this, that the onus is placed on all of us, any of us who venture into long-term care. That's why we're so proud that long-promised and long-discussed whistle-blower protection is an element of this bill, that it makes clear that the onus is there, that we're all in it together with respect to protecting against abuse and neglect, and that in those circumstances where people feel in their hearts that abuse or neglect is present, they're obligated to make us aware of it and they are protected against any reprisal that might come subsequently.

This is a powerful package on behalf of the patients and clients in our long-term-care homes. We want to work to enhance the training, recognizing that the role of being a caregiver for people in long-term care is such a precious role. It's one that cannot be taken lightly. The need is great. The people who are being dealt with in so many cases are quite significantly compromised, and, accordingly, we think it's important to have staff who are very well trained. That is an element that is here in the bill.

We think it's important that family members and others have the opportunity to get some assistance in circumstances where the long-term-care system may not have worked well for their loved one. That's why the capacity is there in the legislation to create the Office of the Long-Term Care Homes Resident and Family Adviser.

Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege of ceding the balance of my time to the member from Nipissing. I do so with a very strong degree of confidence in the work that we've been able to bring forward. The reality is that this—

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): We want more, George.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Well, the occasional member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford is moaning, about what I'm not quite sure.

The circumstances are clear: As a Minister of Health, I've had the privilege of working alongside and depending upon parliamentary assistants. On the issue of long-term care, Monique Smith has brought her heart and her soul to this work on behalf of clients in the province of Ontario. In the presence of other members of the Legislature, I want to thank her for the work that she's done.

I want to tell all members, as this debate goes forward, as we have the opportunity to take this bill to committee—which, of course, we will do, as we've done with every other significant piece of legislation that our government has brought forward—that we're excited about the debate; with the knowledge that there is, of course, more opportunity to enhance the quality of care in long-term care but at the same time mindful that our investments to date, totalling about three quarters of a billion dollars, have produced more than 3,000 additional employees working inside long-term care, on the front line, in support of a group of people who we would all agree deserve that support being offered and the very, very significant quantity of love that goes alongside the care. For all those that provide it, we thank them, and I thank you for the opportunity to participate in this debate.

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): It is indeed my privilege today to speak to Bill 140, our Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2006. As the minister mentioned, it has been long in the works, a topic of much discussion, a topic of much consultation. It's my privilege today to speak about the bill and about some of the essences and important issues that we are dealing with in this bill.

Our act is the cornerstone of the government strategy to improve and strengthen care in our long-term-care homes. As you know, and as I think the minister mentioned, we have 618 homes across the province, with some 75,000 people living in them. The average age in our homes is 83, and over 60% of our residents suffer from some form of Alzheimer's or dementia or mental disorder. So we have a very fragile population, one that needs a great deal of care and needs to live with respect and dignity.

One of the things we've done since we came into power was to ensure that we introduced a number of initiatives that have strengthened the role of our front-line workers in our homes and have improved the quality of life, I believe, for our residents across the province.

In 2003, just after we came into office, I was asked to do a review of long-term care. Many in this chamber have heard about my report, *Commitment to Care*, about the future of long-term care in the province. That report, which I drafted over the winter months of 2004, involved visiting over 25 homes across the province. We visited homes unannounced and unaccompanied. We visited large homes, small homes, multicultural homes, charitable, not-for-profit, municipal, rural and urban homes and we saw a variety of methods of care and levels of care. Most of our homes are very well run and our front-line workers are doing the best job that they possibly can. I salute every one of the front-line workers out there who is giving their all to our seniors across the province.

Part of my review included an eight-hour shift in one of the long-term-care homes in my riding. I was privileged to follow one of my RNAs. It was an eye-opening experience and it was a great experience to see first hand the care that they are giving to our seniors across the province.

Since my review, we've implemented a number of changes, including the 1-800 number where family, residents and concerned friends can lodge any complaints or concerns or ask any questions that they have about long-term care.

We now have unannounced inspections, which I think are incredibly important in our compliance and enforcement of long-term care. The unannounced inspections will be entrenched in Bill 140 and will form a basis of inspection of all of our homes across the province. These are annual.

The inspection reports are now posted on a website which is the first of its kind in Canada. It provides people across the province with information about every single one of our 618 homes in the province. There's a basic outline of what type of home it is, the number of beds and some basic information. The most recent inspection reports are posted there as well, providing family and

friends with a great deal of information as they either choose a home for their family member—for their loved one—or as they want to check up on a home where their loved one is.

We have also, as the minister discussed, invested a great deal of funding into long-term care, hiring over 3,100 new staff, including over 680 new nursing positions. We've instituted our regulation for 24/7 RN coverage in our homes, a minimum of two baths per week for each of our residents, and we are ensuring that our meal plans are reviewed and approved by a dietician.

We've done a great deal. Le gouvernement McGuinty améliore la qualité de vie des résidents de foyers de soins de longue durée en présentant un nouveau projet de loi qui, s'il est adopté, renforcerait les mesures d'application de la loi et améliorerait les soins et la reddition de comptes.

Mon rapport « Engagement en matière de soins » a servi de fondement à la refonte législative dans ce domaine. À l'automne 2004, le gouvernement a publié un document de discussion intitulé *Futures orientations pour la législation régissant les foyers de soins de longue durée*. Cette publication a été largement diffusée partout en Ontario auprès des personnes intéressées.

Je suis très contente de vous rapporter que plus de 500 particuliers et organismes nous ont fait part de leurs observations et commentaires sur cette question, que ce soit par écrit ou lors des rencontres publiques tenues à divers endroits dans la province.

La loi proposée aujourd'hui s'inspire de mon rapport et de mes discussions dans mon rapport de 2004, en plus des 700 qui ont pris le temps de partager avec nous leurs vues et leurs « concerns ».

As I said, in 2004, we issued a discussion paper and we were thrilled to receive over 700 submissions to that discussion paper. We also held community meetings in about eight communities across the province for more input. After we received all of that input from stakeholders, front-line workers, family members, residents, concerned citizens and citizens' groups representing our seniors, we set down to drafting.

What we've done today is present legislation which incorporates three pieces of existing legislation. What we heard in my review in 2004 was that people wanted to see one piece of legislation governing all of our long-term-care homes across the province. To that end, Bill 140 will do that.

Let me now turn to what's in Bill 140. First off, I think it's terribly important for the members of this House to note that the fundamental principle, which is section 1 of the legislation, outlines our fundamental principle for how we want this piece of legislation to be interpreted. I'll read it:

“The fundamental principle to be applied in the interpretation of this act and anything required or permitted under this act is that a long-term care home is the home of its residents and is to be operated so that it is a place where they may live with dignity and in security, safety and comfort.”

1600

Again, as the minister spoke to this issue, we very much feel that these homes are in fact homes, and we want to emphasize that. We want our 75,000 seniors who live there to feel like this is their home and that they will be cared for with dignity and with respect. We want to ensure that we have properly trained staff in these homes. To that end, over the last three years we've spent over \$2.4 million—actually, in the last year—for dementia care training for front-line staff through U-First and PIECES training in conjunction with the Alzheimer Society. As well, we've ensured that our staff have the proper equipment with which to support our residents, and we've invested over \$19 million in new lifts in our homes across the province.

After the fundamental principle, you will note that we have an enhanced bill of rights—section 3 in the act. This bill of rights has been in existence for some time and is posted in all our long-term-care homes; however, it has, to that end, only been posted. Now, through this legislation, we will see that it is actually entrenched in legislation and can be enforced through the legislation. We are also, through the bill of rights, ensuring that our loved ones are protected.

I will not go through the entire bill of rights, because it would take some time, but I just want to emphasize how we've enhanced some of them in response to some of the concerns we have heard from residents and their family members. In particular, we used to have a right in the bill of rights that indicated a resident who was dying could have the right to have a family member present 24 hours a day in the home. We've enhanced that provision, so now every resident who is dying or who is very ill has the right to have family and friends present 24 hours a day. This was in response to many people who felt that it should be broadened, because in those final days, at that final time for a resident, it was important that they have those people whom they wanted there and felt most comfortable with.

Through this legislation, through section 6 and through the following sections, we are really focusing on an integrated plan of care for every resident. We believe that all of our residents' care plans should be resident-focused, and we are requiring that every home operator ensure that every resident have an integrated plan of care. That plan of care must cover all aspects of that resident's care and must be based on a collaboration of all staff. The plan will be based on the pre-assessments that are made prior to a resident's admission, as well as the assessments that are made upon the admission. We've heard, loud and clear, the recommendations that were made in the Casa Verde inquest and the need for more elaborate and more all-encompassing assessments before a resident is placed. We have incorporated requirements now that there be behavioural assessments made of our residents prior to their placement and that those behavioural assessments be not just for the short term prior to placement but be for a 12-month period prior to placement so that we can actually get a real sense of where

these residents have been, what their behaviours are and what their care needs are, so that we can appropriately provide them with the care they need in the home.

Through section 7, we entrench the care and personal services that are required in the home, many of which are already required to be provided by the homes, but now they're entrenched in the legislation. We also mandate through section 15 that homes are required to have a volunteer program. I would like to just stop and discuss this for a moment. As I reviewed and visited a number of homes over the last three years—25 in my first few months and another 10 dozen since then—what I found is what a valuable role our volunteers and family members play in long-term care. It's so important that our residents in long-term care still feel like they are a part of their communities and still feel engaged, and our volunteer programs are doing just that. Just over this last weekend, I had the opportunity to visit Cassellholme in my riding, where the volunteers were holding their fall bazaar and craft sale. I had a chance to talk to some of my volunteers. I told them I would say hi to them today. So hi to the gang at Cassellholme, and thank you for all the good work you are doing. They certainly add such a quality of life to our residents at Cassellholme. I know that all of the long-term-care homes in my area have great volunteer programs. I know that Eastholme has a wonderful program, and I'll be meeting with their family council in the not-too-distant future. I was over at Leisureworld on Saturday as well, where they were throwing Oktoberfest and where the activities coordinators were doing such a great job at improving the quality of life of our residents.

We visited a number of homes where we saw some really novel and interesting programs that were being offered for our residents, where we saw an Early Years program integrated into the long-term care so that children in the Early Years program that was just across the street were brought over one morning a week to interact and have some time with our seniors. The seniors absolutely loved that time, and the children loved all the attention they got. It was a great win-win situation for both programs and for all the people involved.

What we've done over the last three years is assist the activities professionals of Ontario to develop a best practices program and manual, so that homes across the province can get ideas from other homes and learn from other homes about these great programs that can be offered for our seniors in all of our homes.

Over the next few days and weeks, we'll hear a lot about minimum standards. Some people feel that we need to legislate minimum levels of care or staffing levels in homes.

We believe in a standard of care that's appropriate for each and every individual. We believe that every individual's needs have to be assessed and that we have to be responsive. We believe that a legislated care level would not be responsive to a resident's changing needs. We believe that front-line workers should be empowered to make those decisions and determine what care is

needed for every single one of our residents across the province.

We also believe in ensuring that there's a holistic approach to our residents' care, so that we're not just looking at nursing care but we are looking at other types of care they receive while they are in the home. Be it physio, the assistance of a social worker or a chaplain or their involvement in activities, all of those things form the daily lives of our residents and they are important and need to be included and considered when we are looking at the quality of care of the residents in our homes.

We are also looking at ways to prevent abuse and neglect in our homes. As many in this chamber have heard, and as many residents across the province heard, about three years ago there was much said about some very serious incidents of abuse and neglect in our homes. What we've done to rectify that over the last three years is to ensure that our compliance officers are responding quickly, that we have the 1-800 number, that we really promote zero tolerance of abuse and neglect.

Through this legislation we are building on what we have already done and we're ensuring that we have a really strong approach to any sign of abuse and neglect in the home. To that end, we have a detailed complaints procedure outlined in the legislation. We have put a positive duty to report on staff and people in the home, so that if they see that there is an incident or they suspect an incident of abuse or neglect, they report it. Under section 22.5 it's an offence if they don't report it.

As the quid pro quo, we've also implemented what was asked for in all of my consultations with our worker organizations, which was whistle-blower protection. They all spoke of the need for whistle-blower protection to ensure that staff and residents and volunteers who report abuse and neglect are protected. They asked for it and it's in the legislation under section 24:

"No person shall retaliate against another person, whether by action or omission, or threaten to do so because,

"(a) anything has been disclosed to an inspector;

"(b) anything has been disclosed to the director including, without limiting ..."—a number of initiatives.

So we are addressing the needs and concerns of some of our front-line workers and empowering them to report if they have any concerns in the home.

Another issue that was raised by a variety of groups, including our family members' groups and Concerned Friends, as well as the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly, is the use of restraints in our homes. What we did find when we were out visiting our homes was that in a number of cases there was a use of different kinds of equipment for restraints. Not all people understand that using a tray or putting someone behind a tray in a chair is actually a form of restraint.

What we've done in this legislation is clarified what we consider to be restraints, and we are minimizing the use of restraints by restricting when they can be implemented or used and under what circumstances. If they are in fact used, then we have limited the length of

time they can be used. We have also put a number of circumstances around how a resident can be protected when restraints are in use.

This was another section that was asked for by a number of stakeholder groups and concerned families. As well, Minister Francis Lankin in a previous life in this Legislature spoke passionately about the need for controls around these restraints. We hope that this legislation goes a great deal of the way to address certainly Ms. Lankin's concerns and a number of the concerns raised by our various stakeholders and front-line workers.

The admission process that we've implemented goes some way to addressing some concerns that were raised in some of the inquest reports. We are dealing with a much broader assessment and we are really trying to provide family members and friends with the information that they need in order to place their loved one in an appropriate home.

1610

We've also provided ourselves with the ability to create the office of the long-term-care homes resident and family adviser. This person will be able to provide information and assist residents and their families, and also advise the minister on matters regarding long-term care.

Another important aspect to our long-term-care homes, which we have really tried, over the last three years, to reinforce and to assist, is the presence of our residents' councils and family councils. I can't say enough about the importance of residents councils and family councils in our homes. They really do make them homes. They are such an added bonus to any home. They allow the residents to have a voice and to discuss any concerns that they have amongst themselves and with staff from the home. They allow family members to do the same and also to provide the residents with more support. I know that there's a family council in Guelph that built a garden for the residents at appropriate levels and heights so that the residents in wheelchairs could participate as well. We've seen some great projects and initiatives taken on by family councils and residents' councils across the province. They also provide eyes and ears in the homes; they're also another group of people who are in the homes and who are addressing some of the concerns that are raised around our residents.

The operation of the home is discussed at some length. We've tried to limit the use of casual and agency staff in order to ensure that we have continuity of care for our residents. As many know, we're also going to be introducing some more requirements around training, identifying abuse or neglect, behavioural management training, minimum use of restraints training and palliative care. These are types of training that our staff need to deal with the day-to-day realities in long-term care. We believe that our staff need to have that training. We need to ensure that our residents are being looked after by people who have the appropriate training.

We are making sure that our residents and their family members receive all of the information they need in order

to feel comfortable when they come into the home, and we're also ensuring that it's posted in the home so that they know what their rights are, what their obligations are and what is available to them as part of their life in a long-term-care home. Included in a package of resident information that they are provided with upon their administration is the bill of rights, the mission statement for a home—each home has to develop its own mission statement—the home's policy for zero tolerance for abuse and neglect, an explanation of the duty to report abuse and neglect, the home's complaint procedure, the policy of least restraints for the home, a listing of what is included in the cost of the home, and information about residents' councils and family councils. We're hoping that, through providing that information, family members will feel more engaged and feel more involved in their residents' lives and will take part in the family council and the residents' lives on a day-to-day basis. We're also ensuring that a satisfaction survey is taken for our residents every year to see in which ways we can improve the quality of life of our residents.

Our legislation also includes provisions around licensing. We're ensuring that no long-term-care home in the province will have a licence of longer than 25 years. The range is from about 10 years to 25, and we'll be looking at different homes, as their licences come due, three years out, and reviewing what is needed in order to continue that home's operation in that community. We're ensuring that all of our residents across the province receive the type of care that they deserve. We'll be ensuring that our municipal homes continue the great work that they're doing through the approvals process, as they have in the past.

With respect to compliance and enforcement, we're ensuring that our homes are being managed appropriately and that we are dealing with any concerns that arise in a timely manner. We have created a new pyramid for compliance so that people are aware of what is expected of them and what action will be taken if they don't meet the standards that they are required to meet. There is an increased level of enforcement as people do not meet those requirements, and we will be able to ensure that we are dealing with problems as they arise and that all of our residents across the province are receiving the care that they deserve. Through tougher penalties, we will be ensuring that action is taken quickly and promptly and that we deal with those issues quickly.

Long-term-care legislative reform has been a long time coming. I spoke to an architect on the weekend who has worked on many long-term-care homes, and he told me that they've been talking about this in the sector for 20 years. I'm sure some of our front-line workers who are with us today could attest to that. It has been a long time coming.

I'm proud of the transformation in long-term care that we've undertaken in the province and of the progress we've made over the last three years. Certainly, next to my work for my riding, the work I've done in long-term care has been all-encompassing and all-consuming. I've

spent a great deal of time visiting homes, speaking to front-line workers, speaking to stakeholders and really working toward improving the quality of life of our residents. I know that's what our front-line workers have at heart, and that's what I have in my heart. That's why we work together to improve the quality of life for all our residents across the province, and to ensure they live with dignity and respect in homes across the province.

It's my privilege to close my opening statement on our new legislation. I look forward to hearing from my colleagues.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I'm pleased to comment on the minister's speech and the speech of the member from Nipissing on Bill 140, An Act respecting long-term care homes. This bill is more talk than substance. I would like to look at what the past PC government did in the long-term-care area. They brought some real, concrete action. This government is talking about terminology: "home" versus "facility." Certainly we all want to create long-term-care homes, versus facilities, and that's exactly what the past government did.

I see living proof in the homes that provide care in Parry Sound–Muskoka, and also Eastholme, which provides care in Powassan for Nipissing and Parry Sound–Muskoka. The homes were completely rebuilt and are warm and inviting. Belvedere Heights in Parry Sound, the Pines in Bracebridge and Muskoka Landing in Huntsville are all homes that were rebuilt, part of the 20,000 new beds and 16,000 rebuilt beds that were done under the past government.

I would like to remind the government of what their commitment was in the last election: You were going to increase funding by \$6,000 per resident. I would like to remind you about that promise and ask what has happened to that, and note that there is no capital plan in this bill you put forward. That means there are some 35,000 residents who will still be living in what you could call facilities—not homes—in wards where there are three or four people in a room. I note that in Huntsville we have Fairvern, which is in need of upgrading. That's something you should be paying some attention to. I know the tireless worker, the member from Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford, will want to add comments in our second chance to add comments to these speeches.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): In response to the comments that were made by the member from Nipissing, let me say a couple of things. First of all, not only is the bill of rights now posted in long-term-care homes; it is in fact enshrined in legislation and has been since 1993. If you look at the residents' bill of rights in the current Nursing Homes Act, subsection 2(1); the Homes for the Aged and Rest Homes Act, subsection 1.1(2); and the Charitable Institutions Act, subsection 3.1(2), they are the pieces of legislation from 1993 that enshrine all of those rights.

Also, with specific reference to the example the member used to say that a patient who is near death could have their family members with them 24 hours a day, I

would point out that in all three acts—I will just read this from the Nursing Homes Act, paragraph 2(2)10: “Every resident whose death is likely to be imminent has the right to have members of the resident’s family present 24 hours per day.” That right is already included in the current three pieces of legislation that govern this sector. So it’s nothing new to have a bill of rights. There are some specific changes with this one, but frankly the changes aren’t major and reflect much of what appears in the legislation and has been in place since 1993. It’s also true that residents’ councils have been allowed to be established since 1993 in all of those three acts, so that’s not a change.

I do want to say that I will be speaking at length about the Liberal election promise to reinstate minimum standards of care and minimum standards of hands-on care, so I won’t get into that right now. But I will point out that in a brief that’s been put out by the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors, they say, “The biggest challenge our members face is the chronic underfunding of the sector by successive governments; and the current government’s failure, thus far, to fulfill its ‘\$6,000 promise’ for direct care and services made during the last election campaign.” If some of that money actually got on the table, we would be in a much better position to enhance care for residents.

1620

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe): I rise today to speak in support of Bill 140 to improve care in long-term-care homes.

First, before I start, I want to commend the minister and his parliamentary assistant for the hard work they do on a daily basis to make sure all our seniors in Ontario live in comfort and are protected, live in dignity and are shown respect. We heard a lot of horrible stories from many different homes that respect the regulations and respect the seniors who gave their life—their youth and their talent—to build this beautiful province for us.

Today we have a bill before us to make sure that all the laws are respected and that our seniors in Ontario live with dignity and respect. I was listening to the minister and his parliamentary assistant on the details of how much this bill, if passed, will improve the lives of our seniors in the province. I was very impressed, especially since I had the chance two weeks ago to visit many long-term-care homes in my riding of London–Fanshawe. I talked to the residents. I talked to the staff. I talked to the nurses. I talked to the families. They were very impressed, very happy. They see the difference between what we are doing as the present government and what the past government did to them, at least in terms of bathing, in terms of staffing, in terms of nursing and in terms of equipment to help the staff do their job without hurting themselves.

I think this bill, if it is passed, will make sure that the residents and the seniors who live among us live in respect and dignity and that they consider the home where they live as their home: They can have a friend to visit, they can have a garden to plant, they can have staff

to deal with them with respect and dignity, and they can make sure that all the people around them are there to serve them, not to abuse them.

Mr. Tascona: I appreciate the member from Kitchener–Waterloo giving me the two minutes. She is our critic and I know she is going to do a great job with respect to speaking on this bill. I know she will be very thorough and much longer than the minister, who I think spent five minutes speaking on the bill and then punted it off to his parliamentary assistant to finish off. Quite frankly, I wish the minister were here to hear what I have to say, but—

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I know the member realizes there is a situation here where we never mention absences in the House.

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the member for Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford not to make reference to the absence of the Minister of Health. I return to the member.

Mr. Tascona: It’s an empty seat. That’s all right, Mr. Speaker.

I can just say that this is a serious issue. In my riding I’m very privileged to be able to deal with a lot of the long-term-care home administrators. Peggy Wall Armstrong is an advocate, certainly a lead person with respect to dealing with this particular issue. We have a shortage. I’m very proud of the years that we were in government with respect to the number of new nursing home facilities—I think seven new facilities, in excess of 1,000 new beds—for an area that didn’t have any. I’m very proud of Victoria Village, Woods Park home, Roberta Place, and the new expansion of the IOOF, just to name a few.

It’s very important, because of the shortage that we have, and I’m very disappointed that we have a shortage. We believed that we were going to get another 150 beds, and one day, what happened was, all the beds seemed to go down to Kingston for some reason. I just wonder why. Maybe there was a Liberal member there. But the shortage is acute and needs to be addressed.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time for questions and comments. I’ll return to the member for Nipissing for her two-minute response.

Ms. Smith: I’d like to thank the members for Parry Sound–Muskoka, Nickel Belt, London–Fanshawe and Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford for their comments.

To the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, who proudly talked of the three or four new builds or rebuilds in his riding: I’m sure that you did benefit from the previous government’s largesse. There are a number of areas in the province, however, that didn’t. I don’t know why the member for Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford still has a shortage, but clearly you didn’t have the ear of the member for Kitchener–Waterloo. You should have talked to her. It’s unfortunate that we’ve had this imbalance across the province in some of the new builds, but we’re trying to address that, and through our licensing we hope to be able to address that over time.

The member for Nickel Belt highlighted that the bill of rights was not amended or changed. In fact, it has been enhanced. I’d just like to emphasize that section 15 used

to read that every member who was in imminent risk of death could only have family, and now what we're saying is that, through this bill of rights—and this is just one example of many; the bill of rights goes on for pages—every resident who is dying or is very ill has the right to have family and friends present.

I was using it as an example to point out that we have expanded the rights of residents to ensure that we address some of the concerns, because not all of our seniors have family members present. The right has been expanded to include the ability for them to have friends and family, and to have them there not only when they are in imminent risk of death but when they are truly ill.

I think we've listened to what residents wanted and what family members wanted. We've addressed that in some of our enhancements to the bill of rights to ensure that our residents across the province live with the quality of life they deserve.

I want to thank all of the members. I know that we'll have an interesting and lively debate over the coming weeks on this piece of legislation. I know that we all have, at the end of the day, the best interests of our residents at heart, and I hope we can ensure that our residents are well served across the province through the introduction of this new legislation.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): I will be speaking to Bill 140, An Act respecting long-term care homes, which was introduced by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on October 3, 2006.

Basically, what this bill proposes to do is to consolidate three existing pieces of legislation—the Nursing Homes Act, the Charitable Institutions Act and the Homes for the Aged and Rest Homes Act—into one single act.

It is a piece of legislation that has been a long time in the coming, and it is a piece of legislation that regrettably fails to respond to all of the hype that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care attempted to generate prior to the bill coming into this House.

I would have to agree: I was disappointed that the minister was only here for a few minutes to speak to the bill. I think this bill gives short shrift to the residents in these homes. It certainly speaks to a broken promise by the McGuinty Liberal government, because what people were hoping for in this piece of legislation was that the Liberal government would keep their promise to provide the residents with \$6,000 per resident for an additional 20 minutes of personal care to allow for more time for feeding, for dressing, for toileting and just that one-on-one interaction with residents.

This was a promise that Premier Dalton McGuinty made in the last election. It is a promise that he has now broken, and in doing so he has betrayed the trust of some of our most vulnerable citizens in these homes, and certainly the family members are extremely disappointed as well.

This bill also has other failures which I will speak to. It certainly does not provide the safety, the dignity or the comfort that the minister purports it does.

Let's just go back. This bill has been a long time in coming. In many ways, this government was only prompted into action because of an article in the Toronto Star. The member for Nipissing did some work on a discussion paper, and you know what? The individual did say, on May 11, 2004, that, "The measures the government is taking will put us on the path to ensure all long-term-care residents live in dignity and have the highest possible quality of life." I would just submit that this bill, as it presently is constructed, does not achieve these particular goals.

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Then, of course, there was more hype in November 2004, when we were told that we could expect to see the legislation introduced early in 2005. This was not the case, and Ontarians were left waiting for a couple of years for the minister's promise for a revolution in long-term care. Regrettably, now that almost two years have passed, the legislation was introduced, and what we find in this bill is not a revolution. Much of this bill is simply smoke and mirrors. It contains initiatives that have already been put in place, and it really is somewhat deceptive. Again, it doesn't speak to the promise of the \$6,000 per resident. It doesn't speak to a capital renewal program. I'm going to certainly speak to some of those problems with the legislation and the broken promises further on.

I want to begin, though, and I want to stress that this bill is evidence of yet another broken Liberal promise. It demonstrates once again that the McGuinty Liberals are prepared to say anything to get elected, as they did, and they are willing to break their promises afterwards. In this instance, it was to our most vulnerable and frail residents.

Yes, they promised in the election that they were going to provide \$6,000 in additional care for every resident, and they were going to provide an additional 20 minutes of care. They have broken that promise. You know, when you visit the long-term-care homes and you speak to the caregivers, you speak to the family members and you speak to the resident councils, the one thing that they all plead for is that they get the additional personal time, the personal care. Yet this government has totally ignored the plea of the residents, the plea of the families and, of course, the pleas of the caregivers. Whether it's the personal support worker, whether it's the administrator, whether it's the nurse, they have simply ignored that fundamental request for more personal time. We are dealing with people who are frail, they're elderly, many of them are in wheelchairs. They need help getting dressed; they need help getting ready for the day—all that personal care. They need help with toileting. Yet this government has broken its promise to provide them with the additional funding to get that additional level of care. In some respects it makes for an unsafe environment for the people in the long-term-care homes because they don't have enough time; they're rushing to accomplish these basic tasks. So certainly they are not being served and provided with dignity.

Let's go back to 2003, when the minister said he was going to start a revolution in long-term care. This bill is anything but a revolution. The minister talked today about the fact that we have these homes. Well, if the minister had taken a look—we started talking about homes and home-like settings in 1998. Eight years later, he's promising that there will be homes, there will be home-like settings. He has totally missed the fact that this all happened eight years ago. The unfortunate reality is that he has not moved forward one iota to make sure that half of the people who live in long-term-care homes today are going to be the beneficiaries of the same design standards that we introduced in 1998. In his world, half of the residents, about 35,000 or 36,000 people, are going to continue to be forced to live in three- and four-bed wards without any ensuite washroom. They're going to be forced to travel through the homes and facilities—and they would be called "facilities" at this point in time, because nothing has been done—that are not wheelchair accessible. They're going to be forced to line up at the elevator for 20 minutes, half an hour, in order to go down to perhaps a dining room in the basement where they would all eat together.

This bill does not speak to improving the dignity and the comfort for half of the residents in this province who require a change in their accommodation and should be given the support in order to make sure that we can continue with the capital renewal plan that we put in place in order that they can live in homes that meet the new 1998 standards.

There is nothing in this bill—very little—that wasn't there before. I think that was the biggest surprise. You take a look at the newspaper articles, at any of the editorials, at what the health care professionals, the providers, the associations are saying about the legislation—there's nothing here. Most of it was already part of other pieces of legislation.

This bill does nothing to address some of the real problems we hear about. This summer I heard from many residents in my community of Kitchener–Waterloo and people in other parts of Ontario about the fact that we had extreme temperatures. During that time, the residents in many of these homes were suffering. They were hot. They were uncomfortable. There is no responsibility in this bill or anywhere else to provide air conditioning. That's been totally overlooked.

This bill does nothing to ensure that residents are being offered fresh and nutritious food. This bill does nothing to invest in capital renewal for the 36,000 long-term-care residents who, I have just said, continue to live in beds that meet only the 1972 design standards, meaning that these residents—I want to stress it again—are going to continue to live in three- and four-bed wards with no ensuite bathrooms or no wheelchair accessibility throughout the home. This is certainly contrary to the minister's claim that he is taking steps to improve the quality of life for the residents in long-term-care homes.

No, Bill 140 also doesn't look at expanding the scope of long-term care in Ontario. It contains no vision for the

future. Recently we have heard that these long-term-care homes, which were designed for our frail, our elderly and our vulnerable, are now becoming the destination for those adults who are being moved out of some of the community living and the regional homes, without any thought for the fact that these people have many different needs. They have a different need for food, they have a different need for programming, yet this government moves ahead and doesn't put these individuals, these adults, into group homes. No, they are now planning to put them into long-term-care homes. It's unbelievable how this government is prepared to treat people in Ontario.

I can tell you that we did hear from people, and I want to highlight some of the responses to this legislation. "Nursing Home Bill Falls Short, Critics Say." This was in the *Toronto Star*, Wednesday, October 4, 2006. This was lawyer Amani Oakley, who represents the family of Guiseppa Robino, a 96-year-old woman who died two years ago after she was assaulted by a fellow resident at the Villa Colombo nursing home in North York. She says she's "a little tired" of the government's spin on how it is improving things inside homes. She said, "When I hear something like a residents' bill of rights, it makes me laugh."

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Then we have an article from the North Bay Nugget on Friday, October 6, this year: "Health Aides...." It quotes Cathy Carroll, secretary-treasurer of the Service Employees International Union, Local 1: "The Ontario government's new long term care (act) introduced Tuesday does nothing to improve the amount of quality of care nursing home residents receive." She is dead on. It doesn't.

Margaret Mather, a health care aide, said that the whistle-blower protection to curb abuse of residents is redundant because Leisureworld has had a zero-tolerance approach to the issue for years. Again, this government pretends that's new. There is so much in this bill that is not new.

Then we have another article in the *Toronto Star* on Friday, October 6, entitled "Seniors Deserve Better."

"Three years ago, Ontario Health Minister George Smitherman promised 'a revolution' after the *Star* reported on a widespread problem of shoddy care, neglect and even abuse in the province's nursing homes....

"But the reforms to date still fall short of Smitherman's goal of 'a revolution' in nursing home care."

We have a letter to the editor in the *Toronto Star* on Wednesday, October 4, entitled "Elderly Deserve Better than This."

"Patients already have two baths per week. Nothing new there."

"Registered nursing care' is misleading. Most of the nursing care is done by caregivers, not by registered nurses. This will not change."

"Gaping holes in the quality of life for nursing home residents will persist until many other regulations are changed."

For example, we have this letter from Janet Seabrook in Mississauga, who says, "There's no limit on how hot it can be in patients' bedrooms. So while we were cranking up the air conditioning in July, seniors in the long-term-care homes were cooking in their beds. It's legal, and it looks to remain so. Our elderly and frail deserve better than this bill looks to be giving them."

Now, the legislation not only received a cool response from the media and those who work on the front lines with the residents in these homes, but also from the Ontario Long Term Care Association in their press release on October 3: "The new Long-Term Care Homes Act falls far short of its goal to create resident-centred home environments for the over 36,000 residents"—that's 50%—"who live in the 350 older B- and C-classified homes in communities throughout Ontario."

"Without significant changes and a commitment to a capital renewal program, these residents will be denied the same physical comforts, privacy and dignity already being enjoyed by residents in newer homes. Most of them will be forced to continue to call a three- or four-bed ward room 'home.'"

Then we have the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors. In a press release on October 3, they say that they wish to remind the current government of its commitment to increase operating funding by \$6,000 per resident. They also say that their preliminary review of the bill has caused them serious concern, including implications for the not-for-profit sector—the administrative and financial burden of compliance. In fact, they tell us that Bill 140 is all about micromanagement. They have concerns about the fixed-term licensing provisions. They say that Bill 140 stands out as highly detailed, prescriptive and punitive.

Then we have the Ontario Nurses' Association press release on October 3. These are the individuals who are on the front lines, providing compassionate care to these residents on a daily basis. They say that the long-term care legislation misses the key elements. They go on to say that they are urging the government to add minimum staffing standards and other provisions. Of course, they're looking for hearings on the legislation, and I would agree. They also go on to say that registered nurses working in long-term-care facilities—this is in a press release of October 17—are paid less than their hospital colleagues, that they face horrendous workloads—I've certainly seen that first-hand—and they lack safe equipment. So we need to keep their concerns in mind, and they are certainly important concerns to keep in mind.

It's interesting, because the minister, in a rather intimidating fashion, sent out a letter to the long-term-care home operators on October 3 which wasn't much appreciated by them. He tries to say, "This legislation is a cornerstone upon which we build a long-term-care system that will be a model for the rest of the country." I would say to the minister that the foundations for the long-term-care system were put in place by our government in 1998, when we made a commitment and

followed through to build 20,000 new beds, to renovate all 16,000 D beds, and to ensure that all of these beds were built to the 1998 design standards, which did mean that people were going to be accommodated with dignity and with comfort.

I'm proud to have been a part of a government that had a vision for long-term care in this province and a government that backed the vision by making unprecedented investments in long-term care in the province of Ontario. I'm pleased to say that we did it after consultation with those in this province and, certainly, people in the long-term-care sector.

I would also say to the minister that if he thinks this is a cornerstone upon which the system for the rest of the country is going to be built, he's too late. The rest of the country has plans to eliminate the last of their four-bed wards for residents, and this minister has no plan whatsoever.

Let me go back to 1998 and April, when we announced that we were going to be investing a total of \$2.1 billion. We were going to be opening new homes, we were going to be investing in community-based programs, and we made our announcement of 20,000 new beds. In that year as well, we released our new mandatory design standards, which came into effect on April 1, 1998. This superseded all prior structural standards and guidelines, which meant that all residents—and that is about half of the residents in the province of Ontario—would now actually be able to live in the dignity and the comfort that they deserved. They would no longer have to live in three- and four-bed wards. They would now have wheelchair access throughout the entire home. They would have ensuite bathrooms and they would have dining and recreational facilities within their home area. That is one of the biggest differences that our government put in place: the fact that these people were able to live in these new areas that were limited to 32 people in a home-like setting.

We provided the capital funding for the new beds. Then we announced that the D beds also were going to be renewed, and we had a plan in order to ensure that that was going to happen. Unfortunately, this Liberal government has not continued with the plan for capital renewal, so we now have half of the beds, about 35,000 to 36,000, that are still only meeting the design standards of 1972.

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When our government made the long-term-care bed expansion, it represented the largest-ever investment in health services in Ontario's history. It also represented a big shift and a big commitment on the part of the government, unlike the fact that, for 10 years prior to this, the Liberal government and the NDP had added absolutely not one more bed.

I want to start now and take a look at some of the content of Bill 140. Some of the points that are made are basically smoke and mirrors. There are actually some things here that are not true. I think the most significant new item in Bill 140 that is not totally true is the limit of

the operating licences of homes. The people and the communities in this province are being told that this limited licensing is “good for you.” It’s good for the future of access to long-term-care beds. They’re being told, “Be happy. There’s nothing to worry about.”

This is a blatant attempt by this government to hide the facts from the people in the province and to continue to duck their responsibility, which they have for over three years now, to commit to provide the capital funding required to renew the older buildings. I’ve talked about the 35,000 beds. We would all hope that residents in this province can have a home to live in that would meet the new design standards. Well, I’ll tell you, these new licensing limits are not going to help us achieve that goal.

All of the minister’s rhetoric, and the government’s printed material, talks about operating licences of up to 25 years. This leaves families, residents, staff and communities left to assume that their home and their community is going to have an operating licence of up to 25 years. The reality is, it’s not even close to that. In fact, of the over 600 long-term-care homes in this province, only homes that have not yet opened—and this government has actually not announced any more than about 300 to 400 beds in more than three years—will have an operating licence of 25 years.

When this legislation is passed, all private, not-for-profit and charitable homes in Ontario will receive a transitional licence for a defined period of time that is, in fact, less than 25 years. Indeed, the largest group of these homes, over 300 in fact, where almost 30,000 residents live and which are mostly in communities in rural Ontario, will all be given licences that expire in 10 years—a far cry from 25. I don’t think that people in the rural communities are aware of this, and it certainly will create some uncertainty.

There’s also a group of charitable and not-for-profit homes that from a design point of view are very similar to new homes, including having only two people in a room, and they will be given licences that expire in 15 years—again, a far cry from 25 years.

Even many of the new state-of-the-art homes that have the highest design standards in the country that were built as part of our government’s 20,000-bed expansion and the D-bed redevelopment programs will not be getting 25-year licences. In this bill, the countdown for these homes started the day they admitted their first resident and, for some of them, this was 2001, meaning they get a licence that expires in 20 years, according to this bill. There is not even any plan—and this is, I think, what is most disconcerting when you take a look at how this government plays politics with people’s lives—for what happens at the end of the transitional licence period.

In fact, the way this legislation is written, the government can decide to do anything it wants with the home three years before a licence expires. They can decide to take away the licence, and the home in that community will close. They can take away the licence and move the beds and the residents to another community, miles away from their loved ones, their family,

their friends. They can ask the operator to rebuild to the new design standards to keep their licence, knowing full well that that would be impossible for any operator to do from a financial point of view if the government’s not going to provide some financial capital funding. Or they could ask the operator to invest hundreds of thousands, or even millions, of dollars to do upgrades to their home that will not even address the core issues of resident comfort and dignity by continuing to have residents live in three- and four-bedroom wards. Or they can expect the operator to do all of these things with no guarantee that the licence will still be renewed or for how long. I can tell you, given this uncertainty, people such as those who manage financial institutions or people who make contributions to charitable organizations just might be more reluctant to provide financial support in the future.

Again, the government can decide to renew the licence with no changes because it is the politically expedient thing to do, or the government can decide just as easily that this community does not deserve a new home—maybe it’s not in a Liberal riding—or if the decision is not to renew the licences, not bother to tell the operator, the residents, their families, all of which, by the way, is actually allowable under subsection 101(3) of this bill. Note that subsection 101(5) gives them the ability to not even provide reasons for deciding not to issue a licence.

OANHSS has said, “The fixed-term licensing provisions will increase financing costs for long-term-care homes and complicate refinancings.

“Fixed-term licences with licence renewals tied primarily to compliance with building design requirements (for which there is no commitment to governmental financial support) can be expected to complicate financing for all long-term-care homes and increase their cost of money for long-term financing. It is likely that lenders will attach a premium to cover the risk of non-renewals (or renewals with expensive conditions attached) and will make the negotiation of new financings more difficult.

“The inability of not-for-profit homes to sell their licences to anything other than another not-for-profit (with exceptions specified by regulation) reduces the market value of those licences which, in turn, will reduce their value as security interests for mortgages and other types of financing.”

They go on to say that they’re also studying the implications of fixed-term licences for charitable gifts, and they pose the question: “Will donors give long-term funding through endowments and multi-year commitments to charitable institutions that now have fixed-term licences, especially in the latter years of those licences? To what extent will fixed-term licences disadvantage the charitable long-term-care-home sector relative to other sectors?”

While municipal homes are excluded from the deadlines of the minister’s licensing scheme, because they will continue to have approved and not licensed beds, their communities, their residents and their families are not excluded from the uncertainty that has been created. Under this bill, it appears that the government could

force any municipal home to use funding from the municipal tax base to require renovations, additions or alterations. However, can they rebuild to the new design standards, and is there capital funding assistance from the province? Obviously, nobody has any idea.

1700

Far from being reassured, families, residents and communities across Ontario obviously are concerned about what is contained in this bill. Obviously, the minister has not spoken about the true facts. In fact, rather than doing this, the minister has continued to obscure the facts and talks about planning flexibility for the future, which means Big Brother government knows best.

The biggest planning flexibility provided by the licensing scheme is that the government can arbitrarily close beds wherever they choose in Ontario. This is what planning for the future means to this government, when the people of Ontario recognize that they need more beds. Just ask the people in Simcoe county or Sudbury or Ottawa. It is difficult to reconcile this planning flexibility rhetoric with the minister's own statement that long-term-care beds are an integral part of the plan to improve hospital waiting lists in communities across Ontario.

Perhaps this desired planning flexibility is the flexibility the government will have to move existing beds around. This is a planning principle that may sound good in downtown Toronto, but I can tell you it is very scary and it's very worrisome for rural Ontario. Having grown up in rural Ontario, we have lots of small communities with many small long-term-care homes. They have been an integral part of the social and economic fabric of that community for decades. Also, the people are able to live in a home close to their family, close to their friends who continue to visit. Well, this planning flexibility the government has would place that home in that small community, and the support that is provided to that home, at high risk.

I want to give you an example. The minister can now decide in seven years that having a 50-bed home in each of two or three small towns that are in the same region is simply not necessary and that that region can best be served by merging those two or three homes into a single, larger home that could be built somewhere else, perhaps not even in one of those three communities.

I come from Huron county and we have a home in Hensall, we have a home in Zurich, we have a home in Exeter. We have residents who live there and are happy to live there because their friends and their family can come and visit them. In fact, in wintertime, it's a short drive and on good days their older friends and their older family can still get in the car to visit. On the sunny days, their family and friends can even walk to visit. What if this government decided to close the home in Zurich, the home in Hensall, the home in Exeter and just have one big home up in Clinton? I can tell you, that would not allow these residents to continue to live with the same quality of life, the same dignity, the same comfort, because they would be isolated from their family and friends, who on many occasions wouldn't have access or

transportation to visit that elderly family friend or that resident. But this is what this bill would allow the Liberal government to do.

There is a reason why having a 50-bed home is good public policy. It is because part of making a long-term-care facility truly a home is making sure that it is close to the homes of a resident's loved ones and friends. Better planning flexibility would in fact be if you could tell the people when they're going to get a new state-of-the-art home in their community, not leaving them, as this bill does, worrying about when they're going to lose the home that they have.

If planning flexibility to meet the needs of current and future long-term-care residents in communities across Ontario was the goal of Bill 140, then this government would not be telling the 35,000 residents in older B and C homes that they will continue to live in three- and four-bed wards, that they will continue to not have ensuite washrooms, that they will continue to line up their wheelchairs to eat in crowded dining rooms for at least the next decade. This government would be removing the uncertainties they have created in this licensing scheme, and they would be committing to fund a capital renewal program in order that the remaining 35,000 residents in those beds would all have the benefit of the 1998 design standards and truly be living in a home-like setting with their own dining room and their own recreational room. The residents in those older homes, the families, the communities, want to know today how they can begin to plan now, not seven years from now, to rebuild to the new design standards. Instead, what they have been given is an operating deadline. They have been given more uncertainty about their future than they have ever had before.

This government seems to be totally unaware of the fact that one of the greatest pressures that our health system faces at the present time in the province of Ontario is the number of people becoming older, and those numbers are going to expand. But as these individuals become older, they are also more frail, they're more vulnerable. We need to look at innovative programs and services, and obviously homes, that can provide for these residents. That's totally missing from this bill.

If this government is like the previous Liberal government, they're going to leave that whole question about new homes, new beds, unanswered, instead of now developing effective public policy to allow those B and C homes to rebuild every year starting next year. We've already experienced how the Liberals deal with planning. When we took office in 1995, we inherited a long-term-care system where the Liberal and NDP governments had not added one bed in over a decade. Is some future government, after the next election in 2007, going to inherit a long-term-care program, or a decade from now, where 300 homes in this province are going to have their licences expire and none of them will have had the chance to rebuild to the new design standards? This is certainly possible as a result of the lack of vision and planning in Bill 140.

The government is creating this uncertainty and demonstrating its lack of vision at a time when the health care needs of seniors will be at their highest. From 2016 to 2026, the time when the majority of existing long-term-care home licences will expire, Ontario's senior population will be at its highest. In fact, the population of Ontarians over 75 years of age will grow from 776,000 in 2006 to 947,000 in 2016. That's almost one million people. And it's going to grow to 1,340,000 in 2026, and by 2031, the population over 75 years of age will have doubled. Many of them will be able to continue to live at home with supports, but there will be a group who will desperately need long-term-care home support, and it is the responsibility of the provincial government to make sure that that type of home is available to them. This government has so far not developed a plan for the renewal of these homes to meet the demands of the aging population.

While the government is trying to duck its responsibilities to commit to fund the structural renewal of older homes, they have in fact opened up the issue by placing a deadline on their future. The problem is, they don't have a plan for what to do about it or what to tell the residents, family, staff and operators they can expect next, so they try to obscure the details and tell them not to worry, just be happy.

1710

Interestingly, while this bill chooses to ignore the financial realities of the structural renewal issue, the minister does acknowledge in his statements that this is in fact the case. He acknowledged it in his recent RFP for new beds in Kingston and Hastings, where he will provide capital funding to assist with building these new homes to state-of-the-art design standards.

However, the government's failure to understand the reality of the long-term-care program and the funding model and their lack of vision to address the comfort and dignity of residents in older homes is now being explained as a budget issue. All they're doing is reinforcing the uncertainty to which they're subjecting residents, families and communities. The minister has provided no assurance that this issue will be addressed in the next budget.

Instead of trying to hide the facts of the licensing scheme, the minister would have done well to have first asked residents and their families about their expectations when they go into long-term care. We did that 10 years ago, in 1997, and do you know what they told us? One of their priorities was that they wanted to stop living their final years in dormitory-style accommodation: the three- and four-bedroom wards. In fact, they said, "Even university students have better accommodation than we do now, as they live in private and semi-private rooms." They said they wanted to stop having to back their wheelchairs into the washroom. They wanted to stop sharing that washroom with at least eight other people—they couldn't even turn their chairs in a circle to reach the sink. They said they wanted to stop having to line up to catch the elevator to get to lunch a half-hour before

lunchtime, only to wait in the basement for another half-hour to get into the dining room, where they could enjoy a meal.

We listened in 1997 to the residents and their families, and that's why we announced those 20,000 new beds and why we announced that 16,000 of the D beds would be rebuilt to the new design standards. We developed a deadline for when this had to happen, and it was a success. We had a plan for success, and now, less than 10 years later, working in co-operation with residents, families, people in the sector, we have 36,000 residents in this province, half of them living in new and rebuilt long-term-care homes in the province. They have private or semi-private bedrooms. They have ensuite washrooms with a turning circle to accommodate their wheelchairs. They have on-unit dining rooms, where no more than 32 people eat their meals in peace and comfort and avoid the lineup and the elevator ride. They have fully twice the square footage of space per resident, compared to older homes. I ask this government to plan in order that the other half of the sector can also appreciate the same quality of life.

Let's take a look at this bill now, under the heading Nothing New. Despite the minister and the Premier defining Bill 140 as a major piece of legislation and revolutionary, there's very little, in fact, in the bill that was not already in place before. Certainly, long-term-care homes have been legally bound in many ways through their annual service agreements with the ministry. The following are just some examples.

There are current regulations, policies and standards already in place with regard to zero tolerance for abuse and neglect. There are in place the same things for whistle-blower protection.

Ms. Smith: Where?

Mrs. Witmer: It's in the Nursing Homes Act.

There is already a requirement that a registered nurse be on duty in the home 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Also, there are in place, certainly, some restrictions on the use of restraints with appropriate safeguards.

Requirements for assessing resident care needs, planning care, staff qualifications and training are simply restatements in law of 13-year-old program standards and regulatory requirements.

The requirement for resident councils is in the current legislation, and all of us who visit long-term-care homes know that these have been common in the homes for over a decade. The family councils program came into existence in 2002 and is now available and operating in over 70% of the homes across the province.

There are also tens of thousands of volunteers providing hundreds of thousands of hours of service each year in all homes, including for-profit homes. Long-term-care homes have been welcoming local community service clubs, cultural organizations and spiritual care providers as partners in efforts to enrich the lives of the residents for years. This is nothing new.

The reporting and investigation by inspectors of alleged abuse and risk of harm and of written complaints

received by LTC home administrators has been policy for over a dozen years. Unannounced inspections, public reporting of inspection reports, posting inspection reports and financial information are also not new requirements.

What has happened is that the government has moved much of what was existing policy into the new legislation, and where they have made changes, they have tinkered at the edges with what has already been in place. The question I would ask is, did it really take three years and a new act to do this?

The government's effort to paint this bill as something new and revolutionary has had a very negative impact on providers and staff. We've heard from individuals who have felt quite insulted and demoralized by what the government is doing. The minister keeps saying that the vast majority of homes do a good job, and I would agree. They do. Then he stands in the House and gives them no credit for the things they have been doing for years and sends a letter to residents and families to reinforce his message. It was, I will tell you, an insult and demoralizing to the providers and staff of those homes.

Let's now take a look at the broken promises. We had an exhibition in this House a few years ago—tears. The minister stood up and he was going to fix long-term care. Take a look at Bill 140 and it clearly demonstrates that the government was not able to diagnose the problem. Now, with this bill, we know that they don't know how to fix it.

Everybody knows that the issue in long-term care is lack of operating funding to provide the level of care required to meet the growing needs of these long-term-care residents who have a higher level of acuity. The current Canadian standard is three hours of care per resident per day and above, while Ontario provides around 2.5. Instead of addressing this need, the government has put forward a series of provisions with no additional funding, which is simply going to increase the operating costs of all these homes. There is no additional funding for staff training. Additional funding is going to be required to meet the regulatory requirements. It's simply going to put a strain on an already overstrained long-term-care health system.

Today, I hear, and I know my colleagues on this side of the House hear, from families and residents about the lack of time that staff and management have to spend with residents. They sympathize with the staff, who they say are compassionate and caring, but they recognize that these people have to complete all these reports and these processes. What this bill now does is to require the home's management team and staff to do even more reporting and go through more processes, without any additional money. Really, this bill, I would say, is one where the government has decided to abdicate their responsibility to address the issues.

The bill outlines detailed accountabilities for the licensee regarding abuse, neglect and risk of harm, and that's fine, but nowhere in this bill does it talk about the accountability of the ministry to provide the resources for the homes to reduce the risk for these situations to occur.

The desired level of monitoring cannot be provided when staff are rushed off their feet to try to meet just the basic care needs: less than 10 minutes to get one of these residents up, to dress them, to take them to the bathroom and to the dining room for breakfast. Unbelievable. I can't do that; I don't know how these individuals can be asked to do that for these vulnerable citizens.

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OANHSS calls this approach "command and control." They say, "The biggest challenge our members face is the chronic underfunding of the sector by governments; and the current ... failure ... to fulfill its \$6,000 'election promise' for direct care and services made during the last election campaign." They talk about the fact that "the additional regulatory and administrative burden imposed by Bill 140 will exacerbate the funding challenges we already face." They say, "Accordingly, we are very disappointed that the government has ... not accepted our long-standing recommendation to entrench in the legislation a commitment to adequate, secure, multi-year funding."

Instead of upholding their responsibility to provide the resources where the homes, the resident councils and the family councils could work together as partners to enhance the quality of care for the residents, this bill, absolutely unbelievably, now forces the resident and family councils to become part of the ministry's inspection regime. In legislation, they will now be held responsible for reviewing inspection reports, financial statements, the operation of home dispute resolution, and watching out for abuse, neglect and improper care. In fact, OANHSS is very concerned about the volunteer directors. They say, "The substantial increase in the duties, responsibilities and liabilities of directors and officers of corporations operating long-term-care homes (section 67) will be a significant barrier to recruiting and retaining high-quality directors in the not-for-profit sector. Section 67 makes individual directors and officers personally liable to ensure compliance with 'all requirements under the act.' Failure to comply could result in a conviction for a quasi-criminal offence." They go on to say, "We have serious concerns with this move to impose such a pervasive standard of due diligence and skill on unpaid volunteer directors who give freely of their time to serve on not-for-profit boards."

I want to quote from Miller Thomson. They say, "In introducing" this "legislation, the Ontario government has focused on the enforcement aspects...."

"While these are important, does the proposed legislation strike the right balance, or does it create an overly restricted environment in its efforts to prescribe standards for care, service, staffing, training, operations and the like? In practical terms, will it be possible to comply with the requirements of the act?" It goes on to say, "Do the long-term-care homes have the required resources to fulfill these obligations, especially in light of the potential liabilities for failing to meet these requirements? Finally, should it go further to address systemic issues, such as access to long-term-care beds and examining the role of long-term care within the health care system?"

You can see there are many concerns coming from many stakeholders throughout the province.

Let me say that this bill places the onus on the courts to determine what is reasonable for long-term-care homes to provide in respect to residents' rights and wishes, determined through satisfaction surveys. Again, I come back to the question I asked before: Where is the responsibility of the ministry and this government to ensure that long-term-care homes have the capacity and the financial resources to meet the residents' rights and wishes? The ministry's grand transformation plan identifies its new role as a steward of the health care system. However, if we take a look at this bill, when it comes to long-term care they have totally abdicated their responsibility to the courts, resident and family councils, volunteers, contractors who work in the home—anybody but this government.

I want to talk about mismanagement of the health care system. This bill flies in the face of the minister's rhetoric about the importance of long-term-care homes to the future development of Ontario's health care system. That's what we introduced. When we introduced those 20,000 new beds and we started renovating and rebuilding the old ones, we said that this was part of a continuum of care that starts with promotion and primary care, the hospitals, community care and long-term care. If you take a look at the administrative weight of the provisions here, the deadlines on the homes, the lack of vision around the renewal of older homes, it has effectively removed long-term care as a health system partner in any continuum of care at the provincial and local level.

This bill creates increased onerous legal requirements for information and reports on the director, inspectors and placement coordinators. It leaves no flexibility for rationalization or alignment with other health care providers. How are these people supposed to attend the LHIN meetings? And this bill decreases the flexibility and responsiveness of long-term-care homes.

I would say to you, this bill is certainly another example of a government that is prepared to say anything to get elected and then turn around and break their election promise. In this case, what is most important to the residents is the fact that they would have that ability to move into new homes that meet the new design standards, that provide them with an enriched quality of life, comfort, safety and dignity, and also that the \$6,000 that was promised by the Premier for each resident in order that they could get 20 minutes of personal care would be provided. It is regrettable, but I say that our frail and elderly deserve better than this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms. Martel: In response to the remarks made by the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, it is true: The bill of rights was already enshrined in the three acts that we currently operate under, and there haven't been significant changes in terms of the individual provisions that are outlined in each of those acts with respect to that bill of rights. It's also very true that residents' councils have

already been provided for in existing legislation and have been since 1993.

What's really of concern to me, frankly, is what's missing from this legislation. It took the minister two years to finally get this bill here after the first time he promised it, and yet, even though it was an opportunity to really ensure that we are protecting and enhancing the quality of life for residents, so much is missing.

Where are the standards, for example, with respect to temperatures in long-term-care homes? We had a terrible situation in the riding of my colleague from Hamilton East this summer, where residents tried to talk to an operator of a long-term-care home about the sweltering heat in that long-term-care home and got absolutely nowhere. There's nothing with respect to standards around temperature in this legislation.

There's nothing in this legislation with respect to hands-on care. I have to say that it was the Conservatives and the Conservative government who cancelled the minimum standards of hand-on care that had been in place under New Democrats. That was a huge mistake, and I will speak at length about that in my remarks. But what's even more troubling is that Liberals, who promise to reinstate those standards, don't do that in this legislation either, so shame on both of you.

I also want to say that there isn't anywhere in this legislation a clear statement of support for not-for-profit delivery in long-term care. I go to a brief that's given to us by the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors, where OANHSS says the following: "Health care statutes such as the LHIN legislation" and Bill 8 "contain clear statements in support of not-for-profit health care delivery. It is both remarkable and disappointing, therefore, that Bill 140 contains no statement in favour of the not-for-profit sector in light of its special status in health care delivery." I agree with OANHSS in that regard, and I look forward to participating more in the debate a little later on.

Ms. Smith: It would take me at least an hour to decipher some of the misconstrued notions of the former minister with respect to her presentation on Bill 140, but let me just address a few. One of the concerns she raised on numerous occasions was the lack of standards around air conditioning, while touting over and over again her state-of-the-art standards in her new homes that she built. In fact, there is no standard requiring air conditioning in her new homes, so the member for Kitchener–Waterloo will have to address that in her own mind.

With respect to whether or not we have zero tolerance policies, they're not required in our homes now. This is new in the legislation, as is whistle-blower protection. It was present in one of the three pieces but not in all three, and this is new.

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Not all homes were giving two baths a week, minimum, for our residents, because your government removed all minimum standards. We are putting those standards back into place. Your government removed minimum care standards.

I would note that you spoke at length about planning and the ability to have beds in the proper places. From the 2002 auditor's report: "In our 1995 annual report, we noted that, although it was aware of significant growth projected for the population aged 65 and over, the ministry"—I believe that was your ministry at the time—"did not have a strategy for dealing with the anticipated increase in demand for long-term-care beds. We also noted that it did not have a systemic plan to determine where beds were most needed and to eliminate the wide variations in bed supply to make it equitable throughout the province."

You also spoke about the fact that we were, I think you said, ceding the territory on compliance and enforcement to a number of entities. In no way is that the case. I would ask you to look at sections 19 to 23 and pages 94 to 105, the compliance and enforcement inspections—you may have missed them—and the abuse and neglect sections. You may want to look at those.

I would note that the auditor, in his report in 2002, noted that "between 1997 and 1999"—and I believe those were your glory years, as you referred to them—"fewer than half of the facilities were inspected annually." Wow. That's something to be proud of.

I just note that—

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): Time.

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to wait his turn.

Mr. Yakabuski: I just noticed that the clock ran out.

The Acting Speaker: As did I, and I didn't need your assistance, but thank you very much.

Questions and comments? The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was just keeping an eye on the clock. We're keeping an eye on this one, too.

This is quite a long bill, 127 pages. The minister thought so much of it that he spent, what, about three or four minutes talking about the bill and ducked out. He's probably gone to work on one of those propaganda ads. He'll be distributing that throughout the province—

Ms. Smith: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: We've already addressed this issue before and the member knows he has violated the rules of this House. I think it should be addressed again. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. I'll return to the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. Yakabuski: I'll continue: So the minister is likely out working on new propaganda ads to disseminate throughout the province, telling the public—

The Acting Speaker: The member for Brant.

Mr. Levac: On a point of order, Speaker: My understanding is that the tradition of this House is not to mention the attendance of members' in this place, whether they're here or they're not here. It's been done twice now.

The Acting Speaker: Well, I'll clarify it. I would ask all members of the House not to make reference to the

absence of the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care or any other member who may be absent. I'll return to the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So the minister is working on propaganda ads, wherever he may be. Maybe he's sitting there. I don't think I mentioned that he wasn't sitting there.

However, the point is that the bill is a smokescreen. It's a smokescreen for what they're not doing in long-term care. When you visit long-term-care centres throughout this province, the people who operate those centres and the people who work in them are not impressed by a huge bill that is not going to give them any more ability to provide services to the residents of those long-term-care centres. This government made a promise of an additional \$6,000 per resident in long-term-care centres. It has not followed through on that, and continues to pretend that it's doing—

Ms. Smith: Time.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): Time.

Mr. Yakabuski: Mr. Speaker, am I going to get some additional time?

The Acting Speaker: I think you've made your point and I thank you very much for your intervention.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I tried to listen intently to the member for Kitchener–Waterloo because, as always, she is a former minister. She is a minister who had this file and oftentimes what she has to say is quite revealing.

I must state at the outset that I found it a little disconcerting when she was talking about the standards, because I was in this House during the last government. I was here for some two years of the last government, sitting in this almost identical place and watching while her government dismantled much of the long-term-care facilities and the standards that were there. I remember some of the horrendous debates.

Notwithstanding that, she has made some very good points. Perhaps in her rebuttal she might comment on what her government chose to do before and whether in fact it was a good thing. But she has talked about what I think are important points, and that is the continuing closure of the B and C wards, the B and C units that exist in the province and the updating of the long-term-care facilities. I know members probably have had an opportunity to go into some of the newer facilities in their respective ridings or around the province and to also see some of the older ones. I do have to tell you that some of the C facilities are really, really not up to snuff and they ought to be closed. She's made a very good point on that.

She also made a very good point about the lack of funding contained within this bill. I do remember the heady days of 2003 and the election promises that were being made. I do remember the Premier quite eloquently stating that there was going to be some \$6,000 available per resident for care. When I look at the provisions of this bill and what is being said, not only by the minister

but by his parliamentary assistant, there is nothing there that gives me any cause for comfort that the \$6,000 that was promised is within the body of the bill or will be forthcoming in the next budget. I find that that is perhaps what ought to be looked at in more detail.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, who has two minutes to reply.

Mrs. Witmer: I would thank the member from Beaches–East York, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, the member from Nickel Belt and of course the PA, the member from Nipissing. I appreciate the comments that have been made.

I would just hasten to add, again, that I think this bill, regrettably, falls far short of the government's commitment to revolutionize and to develop a plan and vision for long-term care. This bill does not continue to move forward with the provision of additional funding, the \$6,000 that was promised by Premier McGuinty in the last election, the \$6,000 that was going to provide the additional 20 minutes of care. As I said before, it is totally impossible to provide only 10 minutes of care to help people with dressing, getting them ready, with toileting; it's just not possible. It would be so much more humane if this government would live up to its obligations.

This bill also does not move forward with allowing individuals to live in what I would consider to be a true home-like environment. It does not continue with the rebuilding of the B and C beds, beds that at the current time only meet the design standards of 1972, which means that in the immediate future, despite the fact that these individuals are paying similar compensation, they are still in three- and four-bedroom wards without ensuite washrooms, without buildings that are wheelchair accessible, and they're still lining up in the hall or the elevator to get into the dining room. I ask this government to be compassionate and do what you can for these residents.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Martel: It's a pleasure for me to participate in the debate. I recognize that I am not going to finish my lead today, and I'll be back another day to do that, because I do intend to speak for an hour.

I want to begin, however, by acknowledging some of the folks who are in the gallery: Lawrence Walter, Vicki McKenna, Rozanna Haynes, Victoria Thomas, Sandra Kravets, Bernadette Lamourie, Marie Haase, Leah Payette, Carolyn Edgar and John Van Beek. All of the above, except for John, are with ONA, and five of those are registered nurses who work in long-term-care homes. I thank them very much for their commitment and their dedication and the tremendous work they do in long-term-care homes every day for the frail and elderly. John Van Beek is here, and he is representing SEIU. I thank him as well for his participation.

Before I express the serious concerns that we have with this bill, I want to reiterate that the NDP expects full, province-wide, public hearings on this bill. I said in my response to the minister's statement when he announced this bill two weeks ago, and I'll say it again,

that we expect province-wide hearings. I don't know why it took the Liberals two years to get this legislation here, two years from the first time the minister said that he was going to have this legislation, and that was in the fall of 2004. Regardless of that long delay, I certainly don't expect the government to come now and say, "We are going to have condensed hearings or shortened hearings," or "We're only going to be Toronto because we have to rush this bill through." It's not my problem if it took the Minister of Health two years to get this bill here, but I can tell you we're not going to give short shrift to a piece of legislation that, from our perspective, will not improve the quality of care for residents who live in long-term-care homes right across the province.

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We are supported in our demand for province-wide hearings by OANHSS. In their brief, which I'm sure a number of members have, they say the following: "The standing committee conduct the hearings across the province, not only at Queen's Park, given the impact of the bill on the more than 600 homes across the province as well as the residents, families and communities the homes serve and the health care professionals and staff who work in them."

OANHSS also makes the following additional important point about public hearings. It's their request that the review of Bill 140 by the standing committee—that is, the public hearings—"be deferred until at least February or March 2007 to provide reasonable opportunity for the new municipal councils to review the legislation, assess the implications for the homes they operate and provide their recommendations." I think that is a very worthy request.

I want to deal with the very serious concerns that New Democrats have with the bill. I want to say it's a pleasure for me to participate in this debate on Bill 140, which would more appropriately be named the no minimum standards for seniors bill, because that is the reality of this bill. I know the government members don't like to hear it, and don't like to hear New Democrats characterize this legislation in this way. But the matter of a mandatory minimum standard of hands-on care is absolutely essential if we are going to guarantee the frail and elderly in our long-term-care homes that they can rely on some standard of hands-on care every day. This is really the crux of the matter.

I heard the minister say, when he introduced the bill, that the bill was all about ensuring that residents of long-term-care homes are going to be treated with dignity and compassion. I have to tell you that's just nonsense. If you can't even guarantee a minimum standard of hands-on care per resident per day, then you can't assure them of dignity, you can't assure them of compassion and you can't assure that they'll get the care they really need every day in those homes. That's not a function of staff not wanting to provide that care; that's a reality because there isn't enough staff in our homes and because there isn't a standard that operators have to work to to make sure there will be the staff to ensure that the care is delivered.

I want to read into the record a promise—a very specific promise—that Dalton McGuinty made regarding standards of hands-on care per resident per day before the last election. Local 204 of the Service Employees International Union sent a questionnaire to the Premier before the last election. They asked this question: “Will your government establish a minimum number of care hours nursing home residents must receive on a daily basis? If so, what should the number of care hours be?”

Here is what Mr. McGuinty promised on June 11, 2003, when he responded to Mark Ortlieb, president of Local 204: “Yes, Ontario Liberals are committed to reinstating the standards of care for nursing homes that were removed by the Harris-Eves government, including a minimum 2.25 hours of nursing care daily and three baths a week.” That is a very specific promise that was made to a number of employees—workers in our long-term-care homes.

But it wasn't just in the questionnaire that Mr. McGuinty made the promise that he did. The Liberals also made that promise in election leaflets. I have a copy of a lovely little Liberal election leaflet right here that specifically promises the following: “Ensure residents get more personal care, including a minimum 2.25 hours of daily nursing care and three baths a week.” So it's clear that the promise Mr. McGuinty made to SEIU wasn't a one-day wonder, as much as he might like it to be now, but Liberal candidates went out in their election leaflets and reiterated that promise to residents in long-term-care homes, to their families and their friends, and to staff in those long-term-care homes as well. It doesn't get any clearer than that, in terms of the very specific promise that was made by Mr. McGuinty.

However, when I read the bill, the no minimum standards for seniors bill, do I see that provision reflected in this legislation? No, I do not. Not anywhere does the promise of reinstating a minimum standard of 2.25 hours of hands-on care per resident per day appear in this bill. That's why it's so aptly named the no minimum standards of care for seniors act.

I look at the promise about three baths a week—it's been reduced to two. Isn't it interesting that that didn't make it into the legislation either? It is true that it's in regulation, but that specific requirement didn't make its way into this bill either. If the promise of hands-on care is not in this bill, a bill which has taken two long years to get here from the time the minister first promised it, then I know that this promise by the McGuinty Liberals is never going to see the light of day, and that is completely unacceptable to New Democrats.

I want to spend some time on this critical issue of standards of hands-on care for each resident in each home. Under the NDP government, there was a regulation regarding hands-on care. That regulation stated that each resident in each long-term-care home was to receive a minimum—a minimum—of 2.25 hours of hands-on care per day. Everybody recognizes that some residents, given their state of health, given their state of well-being, will undoubtedly require more than 2.25 hours of care every day. In fact, I would argue that while

2.25 hours of care would have been acceptable 10 years ago when it was in place under New Democrats, clearly now, given the acuity of long-term-care residents, given how many more frail and elderly residents are entering long-term-care homes, their needs are even greater and of course the standard now should be much higher.

The point is, there was a regulation requiring a standard of care, and the reason for that is, if you have no standards, then some operators are always going to work to the bottom, to the worst standards, and the losers in that regard will always be the frail and elderly themselves, the very people we are supposed to protect.

Along came the Conservatives in 1995, and by 1996 the Minister of Health of the day decided that he was going to do away with that regulation regarding hands-on care. I don't know what the rationale was around that. I don't know why that government cared so little about the frail and elderly that they thought it was appropriate to remove that standard, but they did. Removal of that standard doesn't make sense now, it didn't then, and it certainly doesn't make sense that this government, through this legislation, isn't reinstating it, especially after Mr. McGuinty made such a clear promise.

But I think the real proof of the very negative consequences of not having even a minimum standard of care came in the form of a study that was done in 2001 by PricewaterhouseCoopers. That study compared the level of care being received by Ontario residents with residents of long-term-care homes in seven other jurisdictions, including Canada and the United States. Here is a copy of the summary of the PricewaterhouseCoopers study right here. I will make sure that a copy is delivered to the parliamentary assistant, who asked me to name those jurisdictions. Here's a copy of the whole report right here.

But what I really want to do first is read into the record the recommendations, because the reality is that in every category of care that was provided, Ontario residents ranked dead last in terms of the care they were receiving. Let me read into the record some of the key findings. This is by PricewaterhouseCoopers.

“Levels of Service—Key Findings

“The results of this study indicate that residents in Ontario long-term-care facilities receive less nursing and therapy services than similar jurisdictions with similar populations.

“Ontario LTC”—long-term-care—“residents have some significant differences in terms of their levels of depression, cognitive levels and behavioural problems which indicate higher needs for service levels to meet higher care requirements.

“Receipt of Nursing Services

“In addition to the findings related to lower levels of nursing service:

“The proportion of care that is provided by registered nurses in Ontario LTC ... is less than other jurisdictions”—11% less.

Let's look at “Receipt of Specific Nursing Interventions.” The PricewaterhouseCoopers study says the following:

“Restricted range of motion is an important problem in the long-term-care population. Given the high levels of those with arthritis (30%) in Ontario LTC facilities and stroke (22%)—the study uses the word “facilities”; I’m quoting directly from the study, I say to the parliamentary assistant, and I’ll make sure she gets a copy of it—“passive and active range of motion is an important part of disability limitation and activation which can be provided by nursing and aide staff.

“The data indicates that 68% of Ontario LTC residents do not receive nursing rehabilitation and a further 24% receive one intervention in a seven-day period. The data further demonstrates that 67.1% of the Ontario LTC population have ROM”—restricted range of motion—“yet only 32% of this population ‘in need’ actually receive any range of motion exercises.

“Receipt of Mental Health Services

“Ontario LTC residents had the highest proportion of both mental health disturbances (61%) and problems (40%). These residents with mental health disturbances and/or problems would be considered those in need of mental health services.

“Less than 6% of Ontario LTC residents had any intervention related to evaluation or ‘talk’ therapies while 31% received an anti-psychotic or restraint....

“Given the high proportion of residents in Ontario LTC with cognitive problems related to Alzheimer’s or a dementia (53%), this presents a high resource demand for care providers in the Ontario LTC setting.

“Receipt of Rehabilitation Services

“The percentage of people with rehabilitation potential based on the MDS 2.0 was reasonably similar across settings, with Ontario LTC ... at about 14%, about 10% in Saskatchewan and 5% in Manitoba.

“The service level for Ontario LTC is lower than in Manitoba (13%) and substantially lower than in Saskatchewan (38%)”—38% lower than in Saskatchewan.

These findings are shocking. They were shocking at the time they were first revealed. What was very clear is that in every category of care that was being received by residents in Ontario long-term-care homes—every category of care—Ontario residents ranked dead last, at the bottom, right at the end in terms of their comparison to other long-term-care jurisdictions as well.

In a province that is as rich as ours, that certainly is an indictment, but I think it speaks very clearly to the need to have standards of care regulated and in place, because what is clear is that without the standards, the level of care being provided to the frail and elderly declined in every category through the year of the study.

I thought it might be that study that prompted the Liberals to make the election promise they did, which was to very clearly reinstate those minimum standards of care. I, for the life of me, can’t understand why, in the face of this report and its findings—a report, I want to tell you, that was paid for by the Ministry of Health as well. It is amazing to me that the government of the day wouldn’t make sure that its election promise found its way back into this particular piece of legislation, the no minimum standards of care for seniors act.

The study, however, must have had some impact on at least one Liberal member, and that was the former leader of the Liberal Party, Ms. McLeod, because she had a resolution in this House on November 7, 2002, about this very matter of establishing minimum standards of care. But I think I will leave the resolution and the comments made by some of the Liberal members for another day because I’m hoping some of them will actually be in the House so I can read their comments into the record when they’re here.

The Acting Speaker: It being quite close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until later on this evening at 6:45 p.m.

The House adjourned at 1754.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
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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
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Thornhill	Racco, Mario G. (L)
Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Mauro, Bill (L)
Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Council, Minister of Research and Innovation / premier ministre et président du Conseil, ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior- Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L) Minister of Health Promotion / ministre de la Promotion de la santé	Timiskaming–Cochrane	Ramsay, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Ottawa–Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Ottawa–Vanier	Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	Toronto Centre–Rosedale / Toronto-Centre–Rosedale	Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L) Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / vice-premier ministre, ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Toronto–Danforth	Tabuns, Peter (ND)
Parkdale–High Park	DiNovo, Cheri (ND)	Trinity–Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Parry Sound–Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Vaughan–King–Aurora	Sorbara, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (L) Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre des Finances, président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
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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)		
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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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Tim Hudak, Phil McNeely John Wilkinson,
Jim Wilson, David Zimmer
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Règlements et projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Kuldip Kular, Jeff Leal,
Rosario Marchese, John O'Toole,
Shafiq Qadri, Khalil Ramal, Kathleen O.Wynne
Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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Michael Prue, Monique M. Smith,
Norman W. Sterling, Kathleen O.Wynne
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

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