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**Jeudi 16 novembre 2006**

Speaker  
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président  
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF ONTARIO**

Thursday 16 November 2006

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
DE L'ONTARIO**

Jeudi 16 novembre 2006

*The House met at 1000.*

*Prayers.*

**PRIVATE MEMBERS'  
PUBLIC BUSINESS**

**SAFE NEEDLES SAVE LIVES ACT, 2006**

**LOI DE 2006 SUR L'UTILISATION  
D'AIGUILLES SÛRES  
POUR SAUVER DES VIES**

Ms. Martel moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 30, An Act to reduce the incidence of needlestick injuries / Projet de loi 30, Loi visant à réduire les incidences de blessures causées par des piqûres d'aiguille.

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

**Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** I want to begin by acknowledging Linda Haslam-Stroud, president of ONA, who is in the gallery today. She is here with a number of health care workers, making their way in, who are represented by ONA, SEIU, OPSEU and UFCW. I want to say to all of you as you come in that this bill is about your right to be safe at work. It's also about the right of other workers and the general public to be safe from harm, if and when unsafe sharps and medical devices are improperly disposed of.

This is the second time this bill has been debated at second reading. Last March, the bill was sent to committee but never saw the light of day after that. I'm hoping that this time the bill will be passed so that we can truly protect workers and the general public.

Bill 30 will protect workers and the public from needlestick and medical sharps injuries. These injuries result from medical devices that have points or blades capable of puncturing the skin. The most common sharps injury is the skin puncture by a needle attached to a syringe. A worker punctured by a point or a blade may then be exposed to more than 33 blood-borne diseases, including very serious or deadly ones like hepatitis C or HIV/AIDS.

SEIU, ONA and OPSEU estimate that some 33,000 needle-stick injuries occur in the health care sector in Ontario every year. Of that number, some 17,000 occur in the acute care sector. From April 2005 until this month, one Toronto area hospital alone had 64 injuries involving sharps. Each needle-stick injury, on average,

costs the health care system \$2,000 in testing and treatment, although for those suffering from serious or deadly diseases, the costs far exceed that.

In Ontario, some \$66 million are spent every year on workers who have had needle-stick injuries. This doesn't include the WSIB costs associated with lost-time claims, and it doesn't include the emotional cost to workers and their families as they undergo months of testing to determine if they have contracted a disease from a used needle.

The fact is, workers don't have to suffer from needlestick injuries. The technology exists to replace conventional needles and sharps with safety-engineered medical devices that have been approved by Health Canada. They have built-in features that, when engaged, prevent the blade or point of the device from coming into contact with the user of the device or another person. While the safety features differ, they all eliminate the possibility of injury by contact with contaminated blood in or on the device.

My bill would make it mandatory for employers in prescribed workplaces to provide for and ensure the use of safety-engineered medical sharps in any circumstances where a worker is required to use a medical sharp. The employer must consult with the joint health and safety committee on the selection of the safety-engineered device and must provide training in the use of those devices. In workplaces without committees, the employer must still provide training in the use of these devices. The bill includes sections from Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act regarding inspectors, inspections, orders, whistle-blower protection and penalties for non-compliance by employers. The provisions make it clear that needle-stick injuries are serious health and safety issues and have to be dealt with as such.

I've reintroduced this bill for two reasons. First, it's clear that the use of safety-engineered medical devices and sharps reduces injuries and saves money. In the United States, the Needlestick Safety and Prevention Act came into effect in 2001. Although it is federal law, it applies to state jurisdictions. Twenty US states have also enacted their own, even more stringent, legal requirements involving safety-engineered sharps. In 2003, a study of the impact of the federal law was published by researchers at the International Health Care Worker Safety Center at the University of Virginia. It showed that after only one year of implementation, with only one quarter of workplaces in compliance, there was a 51% reduction in needle-stick injuries.

But an Ontario example is also valuable in this regard. At Toronto East General Hospital, a detailed audit of sharps-related injuries in the workplace showed an urgent need for best practices to deal with this serious health and safety issue. The hospital identified blood collection, patient injection and IV insertion as the areas with the highest risk. The joint health and safety committee presented a proposal to senior management to move in a staged way to safety-engineered devices. The original goal was to reduce sharps injuries by 20% in the first year, but this was easily surpassed when the hospital went from 41 reported sharps injuries in 2003 to eight in 2004. Injuries during blood collection were completely eliminated that year as well. Not only were the injuries reduced, but so were the costs associated with needle-stick accidents. In 2001, with conventional needles and sharps, accidents cost the hospital \$28,000. After 2004, these costs dropped to \$8,500.

#### 1010

The second reason I have reintroduced this bill is because Ontario lags far behind other jurisdictions, and it's embarrassing and shameful that this government can't get the message about what needs to be done. In 2004, Alberta implemented safety sharps legislation. On January 1, 2006, sharps regulations went into effect in both Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Nova Scotia's sharps regulations will be implemented on January 1, 2007, and British Columbia's regulations take effect on January 1, 2008. But in Ontario, the McGuinty Liberal government has done precious little, even though the unions representing workers who are most at risk have made it clear that this is a priority for them. In three different meetings with the former Minister of Health, the health care Health and Safety Action Group told the minister that mandatory use of safety-engineered medical devices was essential. In a November 19, 2004, letter to the minister, the group said:

"First, we need legislation to ensure that safety-engineered medical devices are introduced within the next year to health care workplaces across the province. Over 33,000 health care workers suffer needle-stick injuries every year in Ontario.... A regulation requiring the mandatory use of safety-engineered needles and other medical devices will not only eliminate up to 90% of such devastating injuries, but will actually result in a net savings of precious health care dollars."

This government's response was a one-off, one-time-only announcement of some \$11 million to hospitals in March 2005 to help them buy some safety-engineered devices and sharps. When the money was gone, workers were put at risk again with the use of conventional needles. How silly was that? The Sault Star had it right. In an editorial it ran on March 14, 2005, which was carried two days later in the Toronto Star, it said:

"Ontario's Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has taken a step in the right direction by earmarking extra cash for hospitals to buy safer medical equipment this year, but it's not good enough....

"The government should make instruments such as safety-engineered needles mandatory in all hospitals and

clinics—and funding for the equipment should be allocated as part of every facility's annual operating budget rather than a one-time infusion of \$11.6 million....

"Health care workers put themselves into dangerous situations every hour of every day to help the people of Ontario, and it is unconscionable to subject them to ... unnecessary risks when a ready solution exists.

"Needles also pose a danger to everyone who might come into contact with the instruments until they are safely destroyed or buried. That includes hospital custodial staff, refuse collection personnel and even members of the public.

"Ontario already suffers a dearth of health care providers in many disciplines. Every effort must be made to protect them from infection that can remove them from the front lines temporarily or, even more tragically, permanently.

"This one is a no-brainer: Replace all conventional needles with safe versions, the sooner the better."

Regrettably, 20 months to the day since the Toronto Star said this was a no-brainer, here we are again, trying to convince the McGuinty Liberals to do the right thing. No doubt, this morning, some government members will defend their lack of action by noting that in September 2006 the current Minister of Labour appointed a permanent health and safety advisory committee to provide advice on protecting health care workers. No doubt a government member will say that this committee should look at this issue, and if the members recommend the mandatory use of safety-engineered devices and sharps, then maybe the government will finally do something on this front. This is not good enough. The mandatory use of safety-engineered medical sharps is a serious health and safety issue in Ontario. No one has to suffer a needle-stick injury, because the technology exists to replace conventional devices with safe devices. Five other provinces have seen the wisdom of making safe devices mandatory in their workplaces. When will the McGuinty government get serious about protecting our workers and the general public too?

In closing, I want to thank SEIU, OPSEU, ONA and UFCW for their support of Bill 30. Most importantly, I'd like to thank the workers who are here today. This bill is about what we can and should be doing to protect you when you go to work. I hope we can get Bill 30 to and through committee so it will become the law in Ontario.

*Interruption.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** I would remind our guests in the gallery that only the members on the floor are to participate in the proceedings. Thank you.

Further debate?

**Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing):** I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill today. Of course, all members of this Legislature are very much concerned about the safety of our front-line workers. I want to join Ms. Martel in welcoming the SEIU and ONA representatives who are here and our other front-line workers. Oh wow, we've got a whole crowd moving in up there. Great. Nice to see you all here today. We certainly appreciate the work you're doing on the front lines.

As most in this House know, this is the second effort by Ms. Martel to introduce this legislation; it was first introduced as Bill 179. We do have some concerns with this particular piece of legislation, while recognizing that there is a need, of course, to protect all of our front-line workers across the province.

One initiative that the government has undertaken in order to ensure the safety of our front-line workers was, as Ms. Martel, the member for Nickel Belt, indicated, the introduction through the Ministry of Labour of a new special committee that will be looking at different ways to ensure the safety of our front-line workers in the health field in particular. I think this is an important initiative. It's important that we receive a great deal of input from our front-line workers directly on how we can better protect them and how we can ensure their safety in their work on a day-to-day basis.

In her submission, Ms. Martel referred to other jurisdictions and the fact that, in her view, we are lagging behind. I'd just like to set the record straight. Manitoba may have introduced their legislation in 2004, but it only came into effect in January 2006. As well, the Saskatchewan legislation that she referred to, which introduces the use of SEMDs in some circumstances, came into effect in July 2006.

I would like to point out that with respect to the legislation in other jurisdictions, they differ from the member from Nickel Belt's bill in that they are taking a very limited approach by identifying only high-risk activities for the first stage of implementation. In fact, Bill 30 would apply to all medical sharps right from the beginning. So I wonder if, in her response at the end of her submissions, the member for Nickel Belt perhaps would reflect on a more staged approach in the implementation of these requirements as opposed to the immediate approach to all medical sharps and, as well, reflect on the wisdom of the other jurisdictions in taking this staged approach.

We recognize that there has been some study done in this area. Certainly the Toronto East General Hospital example is a good one of where we've seen a reduction in sharps injuries with the introduction of an SEMD program. However, there is much variation on the actual cost of the introduction of that program at that hospital, and I think it is one of the factors we do need to look at when we look at the introduction of this kind of initiative.

I'd also like to ask the member for Nickel Belt a few specific questions about her legislation. In her legislation she talks about medical sharps, and it's a very broadly defined word. It could be interpreted to include almost any sharp equipment that's used in a hospital or a medical facility. I would like to ask her what her position is on defining that perhaps a little more narrowly.

As well, I understand that there is some concern in the sector about a certification system for safety-engineered medical devices, and the fact we don't have such a certification system, so that any manufacturer could call any of their products an SEMD without any assurance that in fact they are an SEMD or that they meet the requirements or the safety standards in any medical facility.

Also, SEMDs may not be available to substitute for some current sharps, such as spinal taps, bone marrow, and surgical instruments such as suture needles and acupuncture needles. That's my information, and I wonder what provisions the member for Nickel Belt would see putting into place in order to address some of those concerns.

We have in fact made some headway with respect to this issue in the medical field. In 2005, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care announced an investment of \$11.6 million for hospitals to purchase SEMDs. That's a substantial amount of money. It was to improve the health and safety of our front-line workers.

We've made substantial investments in a number of areas to improve the health and safety of front-line workers over the last number of years, in both long-term care—which of course is near and dear to my heart—and in our hospitals. We've invested in lifts in order to assist our front-line workers and to assist some of those front-line workers to continue their careers longer than they had possibly planned.

Our goal, of course, is to ensure a safe workplace for all Ontario health workers. We certainly value the good work that's being done by all representatives of the health care field across the province. I again would like to acknowledge those who are here today supporting Ms. Martel and this bill.

I look forward to hearing from Ms. Martel on those specific issues that I raised with respect to her legislation and hearing what remedies she would see moving forward.

**1020**

**Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington):** I'm pleased to have a few moments this morning to speak to Bill 30, An Act to reduce the incidence of needlestick injuries, which was introduced in this House by the member for Nickel Belt back on November 15, 2005. I understand that this bill was introduced previously, in a previous session of this Parliament. The member is bringing it forward again because, unfortunately, the government did not see fit to allow it to move forward at that time.

I want to begin by complimenting the member for Nickel Belt. I've worked with the member in committee over the years from time to time, and certainly in this House for the past 16 years. I see her as a very effective and smart member of this Legislature who is passionate about her beliefs, committed to her philosophy and hard-working in the pursuit of her objectives. I know that next year the member will be celebrating 20 years in this Legislature. I'm not sure if she's going to be celebrating or not, but that's quite a feat, certainly, especially given the youth of the member. I happen to know exactly how old she is. To have served in the Ontario Legislature for 20 years is something that is commendable indeed.

I also wish to recognize and thank the people who are here representing front-line health care workers for their presence and their interest in this bill. Hopefully the government will take note because of your presence.

This bill, Safe Needles Save Lives Act, 2006, is a bill for which I want to express strong support in this

Legislature this morning. Our caucus in the past has expressed support for this. I think it's a bill that needs to be passed by this Legislature this morning and sent to committee for further discussion. I know that the member for Nipissing in her presentation this morning, speaking on behalf of the government, expressed a number of issues that she sees. Surely we can address those issues at committee so as to allow this bill to move forward. I hope that the government won't get caught up in the technicalities of this in such a way that it prevents the bill from moving forward, because this bill is certainly needed, from what I understand.

I'm told that every year in Ontario there are more than 33,000 health care workers who are accidentally stuck with needles. Obviously, in every single one of these cases the people who are affected by these accidents would go through a period of severe concern for what might happen after that because of the contagious diseases that they're confronted with every day in the course of their work. We have to be sensitive to this, obviously. The member for Nickel Belt has talked about the fact that in a number of other provinces, and even in the United States, there has been progress on this issue in a way that demonstrates that Ontario is lagging behind, so we have work to do in that regard.

Private members' business is an important opportunity for MPPs to bring forward issues that otherwise the government of the day is unwilling or unable to address. This bill certainly falls into this category. It's an important issue that needs to be accepted by the government and allowed to move forward.

I believe in private members' business. Right now I have four private members' ballot items before the Legislature: three resolutions and one bill. The resolution that I introduced almost a year and a half ago calls upon the government to instruct the standing committee on finance and economic affairs to immediately begin an investigation into Ontario's industrial and economic competitiveness to develop an action plan to maintain and expand our domestic and international markets in the coming years. Today I was informed that Lear Corp. in Kitchener, which is an important manufacturing plant in Waterloo-Wellington in the Kitchener part of my riding that I've visited many times, is going to be losing 111 jobs as a result of a restructuring. It's something that obviously concerns me as the MPP, concerns the city of Kitchener and concerns the union that represents these workers, as well as the company. This again underlines the need for dramatic action on the part of the government by instructing the standing committee to come up with a jobs plan. I'm going to be talking about this in the coming weeks, certainly, in the Ontario Legislature.

I also have a resolution which calls up on the government of Ontario to establish a fund to support the families of first responders such as firefighters, police officers, paramedics and medical personnel who lose their lives in the line of duty, providing a benefit of at least \$500,000 to the families of these fallen heroes. I had a chance to discuss this issue with my friends at the Ontario Profes-

sional Fire Fighters Association lobby day yesterday and at their reception last night, and a number of them are very interested in this issue as well.

I have another issue which I've called upon the House to address, and that is the fact that we don't get enough opportunities, as private members, to discuss issues in this Legislature on Thursday mornings. Most of us, as private members, perhaps get an opportunity once, on average, every 18 months, and I'm suggesting and proposing that we begin private members' business at 9 o'clock every Thursday morning so that we can do three private members' ballot items each week. I believe that is a relatively modest reform, but it would dramatically increase the number of private members' ballot item opportunities that members of this Legislature have. In all likelihood, I believe we'd then have at least one chance every year instead of one every year and a half. I think that would be of benefit in enhancing the role of the private member, and it's something I've called upon the government to do for quite some time.

I also have a private member's bill, which most members are aware of—certainly the members who served in the previous Parliament—An Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Waterloo-Wellington, I remind you that we're discussing Bill 30 this morning.

**Mr. Arnott:** Yes, I'm certainly aware of that, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate your assistance in that respect. I want to talk about Bill 30 in the context of the other private members' ballot items that all of us bring forward in this Legislature.

My Bill 44 would protect double-hatter firefighters, who, as we know, are full-time professional firefighters who work for a fire department, typically in a city, but may live in a small town nearby and want to serve their home communities as volunteer firefighters. Of course, there is a need for legislation to allow them to do that without the threat of expulsion from their union. I continue to advocate for that issue as well.

You're quite right, Mr. Speaker. I need to get back to the health care issue. Bill 30 is an important issue, not just in hospitals but also in nursing homes. Last week, during constituency week, I had the opportunity to address a fairly large group at the Chateau Gardens nursing home in Elmira, and they were very concerned about the government's Bill 140 and the need to have an upgrade program for the residents who live in B and C nursing homes. Something like 35,000 residents live in older nursing homes, and they have asked me to bring forward concerns in the Legislature and to encourage the government to make renewal of a home's licence dependent on what matters most to residents, families and communities: the home's performance in meeting the act and taking away the cloud of uncertainty by not linking the licence renewal to the structural classification of the home. Instead, they are asking that the government introduce a new section in the act that empowers the minister to establish an appropriate capital renewal

program with mandatory time frames for operators to complete this renewal.

This is a very serious health care issue in my riding, as well, I know, as in other ridings across the province. I would expect that most MPPs were approached by long-term-care homes in their ridings during constituency week. Of course, this comes into the broader health care issue, but I wanted to bring that to the attention of the House today. I appreciate the response I have received from members today to the issues I have raised.

I want to congratulate, once again, the member for Nickel Belt for the good work she is doing on this issue and implore the government to support it, to allow the bill to go to committee and have meaningful hearings, and to bring the bill back to the House and allow a third reading vote so that the bill can become law.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park):** There's a famous quote by Burke that goes: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good people to do nothing." I think you've witnessed—and I welcome our visitors here today—a little bit of that nothing and how it happens. You heard from our colleagues across the floor the way things don't happen here—that is, you constantly make excuses or poke holes at small portions of a bill so that the bill stagnates or doesn't pass—and over here you heard an eloquent discussion, not of the bill on the floor but about every other bill that is before the House.

I'd like to actually talk about the bill and Shelley Martel's brave act in bringing it forward, because we're not talking about anything here; we're talking about an act that will actually save lives, and when we don't pass it, lives are lost. It's that simple and it's that serious.

What caught my eye this morning, in looking over the information about this act, was this Vancouver Sun article, where "Two grade 3 boys were on their school's playground with little more to worry about"—it says—"than their free time running out before the Tuesday morning bell rang.

"Now one of the boys will need to endure blood tests, anti-viral medication and a long six-month wait to find out if he's been infected with a communicable disease from the poke of a dirty syringe.

"When the Ten-Broeck elementary pupils found the two used needles in their play area, one boy picked up the needles and jabbed the other in the shoulder." Children at play. What do they know?

"The pierced pupil was tested for HIV and hepatitis B and C." Children. Now, that's not you; that's not OPSEU members; that's not SEIU members; that's not nursing staff who have to ensure this, day in and day out; these are children in a playground who are affected by the lack of this legislation.

**1030**

I want to bring my own story from Parkdale–High Park, my own riding, about a wonderful individual who has now passed away. This individual was part of our Sunday afternoon drop-in and dinner program. He, like many in that program, had mental health and addiction issues. This particular individual had the addiction issue

of heroin abuse and used needles all the time, and, trust me, they were not safe. He took it upon himself to do a little bit of good Samaritan work in our riding, such as he could. What he would do is he would walk around the neighbourhood, particularly around the schools, and pick up used syringes and take them back for recycling. I want to repeat that. He would walk around schools, walk around the riding, and pick up used syringes. These were syringes used by heroin addicts and others. These were not clean syringes; these were syringes that carried all sorts of disease, around schools.

I remember sitting at a wonderful restaurant on Queen Street, Mitzi's Sister—and if you sit at Mitzi's Sister and look out the window, you can see a driveway there next to an abandoned old building on Queen Street and you can watch drug deals going down every hour. You can watch people disappear into the alleyway, and they come out, and they disappear, and they come out. They're also using drugs and they're also shooting up in that alleyway. Then, if you stay there long enough, past 3:30, you can watch the children from Parkdale high school and other schools in the vicinity coming home from school, walking through that same alleyway.

I went out on a drive-around with 14 division—it was an honour—on Friday night and saw what they have to do for a living. That morning I met with parole officers and saw what they had to do for a living. I asked the staff sergeant on Friday night about this very issue, and he said, "We have 20 cars for 200,000 people. We can't even do the calls that we need to make—the assaults in progress, the B and Es in progress—never mind take time out of our cruisers, take time off our bikes, to look around the dirt in the alleyways in Parkdale–High Park to see if we can find syringes lying there."

It's not just the alleyways, of course; it's the lakeshore. Anybody who likes to run—and I like to run—along the lakeshore will know that if you go out early enough, you'll see the same thing: littered syringes. This is not only true, of course, of Parkdale–High Park; it's true of many areas in this city.

So it's not only about people who are in the field, those who risk their lives for us in delivering health care and keeping our correctional facilities open; it's also about those little children who just happen to be walking home from school one day or the average passerby just wandering along who picks up the wrong thing at the wrong time.

I just wanted to run past the stats again in case we missed them, because these are horrific. They're not just figures; they're lives. Sometimes when we debate business in this House, one would think we were talking about widgets and not people. These are lives we're talking about.

Thirty-three thousand is the estimated annual number of needle-stick injuries in the health care sector. Sixty-four million dollars is the estimated annual cost of testing and treating needle-stick injuries in the health care sector. Thirty-two million dollars is the estimated annual cost of testing and treating needle-stick injuries in acute care.

Twenty-two million dollars is the estimated cost to completely convert all acute care workplaces in Ontario to safety-engineered devices—so there's a difference there. Four million dollars is the estimated amount the Ontario government will save by replacing conventional needles in acute care after realizing an 82% drop in injuries. Sometimes when you read these figures, you have to pause—an 82% drop in injuries. That's what we're talking about, as well as saving money. Two thousand dollars—a piddling amount, but still—is the minimum cost of testing and providing preventive treatment for each worker who suffers a needle-stick injury, multiplied by thousands. One hundred and ninety is the estimated number of needle-stick injuries every day. Again, I bring that number home to this House—190. As we're speaking, as we're listening to why we can't do something, as we're listening to other bills that have no relevance over this bill, 190 people right now are wondering whether they're going to be HIV-infected, whether they have hep B or hep C. They're waiting, their families are waiting and suffering along with them, until they get that result—190 people. It's interesting that this debate lasts an hour. It would be interesting to break it down. How many people at this time, while we're debating this bill again in this hour, are suffering and waiting for that result? Interesting. What will the result be? What will the effect on their lives be?

To continue along, it's not like we don't have examples of other bills. I heard my colleague Ms. Smith talk about some of the problems, let's say. Well, we have legislation. Where do we have it? We have it in Manitoba. We have it in Saskatchewan. We have it in Alberta. We have it in Nova Scotia. We have it in British Columbia. Surely, we have examples already of legislation that has been passed that managed to make it through. Surely, with those examples, we can rework this in any way necessary. I'm sure Ms. Martel knows this. She has encountered this before. This is no reason not to pass this now. This is no reason not to save the next 190 people who will have to go through this tomorrow. Here's one, Bill 13, given royal assent on July 14 in Nova Scotia. They managed to do it. Manitoba managed to do it. Saskatchewan managed to do it. British Columbia managed to do it. Alberta managed to do it. Why can't we?

Just to conclude, I'll remind everyone about that quote. It's a quote that offers some hope to me when I think of myself as a good person some days, and that is, "All it takes for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing."

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr. Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the chance to comment on Bill 30, introduced by the member from Nickel Belt. I believe she tried to introduce it before, under a different number, I think Bill 179.

I was listening to many different members speak in the House and of course the member from Nickel Belt when she was explaining why she wants to pass that bill. It's a very important issue. We talk about the front-line work-

ers in the health professions, and we see a lot of people giving their life. As you know, many of those workers are subject to many different diseases, to different obstacles that might hurt them, that might cost them their life. I was one of them at one time, in a previous life. I used to work at a big facility. I was also exposed to many different diseases and different objects. I think it's very important to create safety around the people who work on the front line. We have a lot of people from the health sector with us here today in the gallery. I want to welcome them. I believe they do an excellent job on behalf of all of us in the province of Ontario.

I was listening to the member from Nickel Belt when she was talking about it and also was listening to my colleague Monique Smith when she was talking about there being no definitions about the sharp objects. As you know, we have to define which objects we are talking about. It's very important for all of us to know which objects are the most dangerous ones. I have strong faith in the people who work in that field to choose the best and the most effective instrument to deal with their clients on a daily basis. We don't take safety in this province lightly, especially in health care. When we took office in 2003, we had the lowest number of inspectors in that field in the whole nation: 3.8 for every 100,000 health care workers. When we took office, we hired more than 200 health care inspectors to make sure that safety was being applied in many different spots in the province of Ontario.

Also, in order to maintain safety in health work, the Minister of Labour has a round table of the people who work in that field to advise on a regular basis. It's important for all of us to create a safety mechanism for all the people who work in the health professions. I myself and my colleague visit many long-term-care homes in the London region and many different spots in Ontario on a regular basis to make sure all the workers use the right safety equipment. Also, the Minister of Health invested a great amount of money to supply many long-term-care facilities and homes with safe and new equipment to help the workers to lift the clients and not injure themselves. We invested more than \$12 million in that field to supply the hospitals and clinics and many places in the province with tools to deal with their clients in a safe way.

**1040**

Also, as I mentioned, we pay a lot of attention to health care in Ontario, and we want to make sure that all the health workers on the front line are safe and using safe equipment. It's important for all of us, because those people, the health workers in Ontario, maintain our health, maintain our capacity to go back to work, and we want to give them the chance, the capacity and the tools to continue to work and to serve the great people of Ontario.

We don't take this issue lightly. We have faith in the hospitals and the health professionals to use safe equipment. We believe that if they have any concerns, any issues, they have a right to have all the tools and mechanisms, to ask the Minister of Health to equip them with



the best and the most sophisticated equipment being used, not just in Canada but maybe in the whole world. We have great faith in them because they provide the best and most advanced health care, not just in Canada but probably around the globe.

I think this is an important bill. It's an important issue, to create awareness about safety in the workplace. That's why we debate this issue all the time, because all of us, from both sides, care about it. We care about the safety of everyone, not just health care workers but anyone who commits himself or herself to serve the community, especially in the health care field.

I'm here to listen for more comments, and hopefully in the end we will create awareness, not just among ourselves but also send a great message to all the people of this province.

**Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock):** It's a pleasure to stand this morning and speak in support of Bill 30, brought forward by the member from Nickel Belt, the Safe Needles Save Lives Act, and to compliment her on the work she does in the Legislature, her strong advocacy on many issues, especially health care.

I welcome the members in the gallery who have supported her and helped her bring forward this legislation for the second time. Welcome to politics. It takes a while sometimes to get things done, but we all try to do the right things for the communities in private members' bills. As my colleague from Waterloo–Wellington mentioned, it is a non-partisan type of morning where we can bring forward issues that we could all benefit from.

We certainly support the legislation and did support it before when it was brought forward. From a personal perspective, I was actively a nurse for 20 years. I still have my licence. You never know in politics; you may have to go back to a former profession. There's not a lot of job security. I still have my licence and am still in quite close contact with many of my nursing colleagues.

The member from Nickel Belt certainly also personally understands the importance of the concept of safe needles and protection for our health care professionals, protecting our front-line workers. You're always surprised. I worked in the industry 20 years before there was any type of safety-engineered needles, back in the old days, and I saw the evolution of technologies as they advanced and what we can do. The technology is there; we just need to do some more active regulations to enforce it so we can protect everyone.

The provinces have been mentioned, and the US, that have already brought in this type of legislation to protect workers. It's surprising that Ontario is as behind as it is, but that's why we're here. That's why the member from Nickel Belt has been a strong advocate and why we are also supporting this bill before you today.

It's obvious that nurses in the field are in direct contact, but sometimes you forget the doctors who are involved, the nurse assistants, the health care aides, the people in training in programs, and of course you forget the hospital staff: the janitors, the cleaning crews, the volunteers, the auxiliaries who are in the hospitals work-

ing alongside the health care professionals. They are all in contact. Yesterday we had the Ontario firefighters' association here. So I think we should include emergency medical personnel, paramedics, firefighters, police services, professionals and people who are simply just trying to care for others who are in need of care. This would help protect us all.

I know that the Ontario Nurses' Association had some interesting statistics. Annually, there are 33,000 needle-stick injuries that occur in the health care sector alone; 17,000, of course, occur in the acute care sector, which is the sector that I worked in. The cost associated with needle-stick injury—it's all part of education; we're educating the public—is \$2,000 in testing and treatment, although for those suffering from the seriousness of deadly disease, the costs far exceed that. But it also includes the patients. So if a needle stick occurs, the health care worker or whoever has been stuck gets all the blood work etc., but patient also has to go through the blood work and all the process that's involved. Because we have the technology, we should be using it. The estimate in Ontario alone is that \$66 million is spent every year on workers who have needle-stick injuries.

It's interesting. You get caught up in a lot of big headlines in the health care industry, and yes, there's not enough funding and it needs to be changed, and accessibility to health care—you can go on and on. This is something that, sure, is going to cost something, but the costs are definitely worth it, and it's protecting our health care workers. They don't need another reason to leave the system. We need front-line health care providers, and there are things we can do that show that they are appreciated, they're respected, that we want to protect them and we want to work with them. This is an example of one of the things we can do.

Ms. Martel has been an excellent advocate on health care issues, in her tenacity in sticking with this—don't mind the pun; we try to have a little humour in politics—to see this go through. The political process, say, to bring this to committee to debate, whichever way possible—the government has that ability to call this bill any time they want to and to get it out to committee to discuss, to hear from all sides. We see that the sides that are here today are supportive. If we're missing something, then that's the time it's brought forward.

How do we best implement it? You have to work with the health care system. Some of the other provinces, as was mentioned earlier, are at certain stages. At least they're in stages. At least they're working; at least they are going in that direction.

The bill provides awareness. The bill provides protection. We need to prevent these injuries from happening, and we have the heightened responsibility to do this. As I say, it's a small cost. It's what should be done. My colleague from Waterloo–Wellington mentioned long-term-care facilities. I think that you really have to educate the public, and it's becoming more so. They have the patient councils in long-term-care centres. Make as many people aware of the issues as you can, because public pressure is

what drives us to bring in bills that are going to protect all of us. Again, it's the awareness, the moving it along this process. I always say that in nursing things moved a lot quicker than they do in politics. You have to develop a whole new level of patience, but you get there. You figure out how to work within the system. I know Ms. Martel will soon be 20 years in the Legislature. She certainly has learned to work the process, the legislation, and knows how to get things done. I support the bill brought forward by her today.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate? The member for—

**Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York):** Beaches–East York.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I just had a block on that. Beaches–East York.

**Mr. Prue:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure and an honour to speak to this bill here today, but before I actually deal with the merits of the bill, I would like to comment on some of the statements that were made by my learned friends opposite. There were two in particular when they spoke, and, keeping in the same vein as my colleague from Parkdale–High Park, quotes came instantly to mind.

To the member from London–Fanshawe, I'm reminded first of all of Goethe. His most famous quote, at least the one I like best: What is the hardest thing for a man to see? That which is right before his very eyes.

So there it is. He questioned the definition: What was a sharp? You need go no further than the actual bill. It defines what a medical sharp is in very plain, although technical, language. It means "a needle device or any non-needle sharp used for withdrawing body fluids, accessing an artery or vein, administering medications or other fluids, or any other use resulting or likely to result in parenteral contact." It may be kind of hard language, but it's there. That's the definition; that's what is included.

#### 1050

To my friend from Nipissing, who was going on and on about the costs, again I go back to quotes. I love quotes, as members of the Legislature know, and one of my favourite ones is from Oscar Wilde in describing a businessman—I think one he particularly detested—and he quoted the guy as someone who knows the cost of everything but the value of nothing. That's what I would suggest to my friend from Nipissing. "How much is this going to cost?" she asked. How much is going to be involved from the treasury? The reality is that the value of what is being done here is not so much in terms of the costs that are going to be expended or saved but the value in the life of the people we are going to save, the value of the work that they do, and the obligation we have to each and every one of them to ensure that their workplace safety is maintained.

I started with those two quotes. I'd like to throw back to the Liberals a quote that, every time it's used in this Legislature, all I see is applause from the opposite bench, whether it be from the Premier or from Minister Bountro-

gianni, who is in charge of intergovernmental affairs. They always say that Ontarians are being shortchanged, that the federal formulas don't work, and that if you're a worker in Ontario you don't get the same monies or the same privileges as if you were a worker in any other province, especially if you're laid off, if you're on unemployment insurance, and why is it that we get less in Ontario? I would ask the same question. I hope you'll all applaud me. I'm going to ask exactly the same thing. Is it fair that a worker in Ontario has less protection than an identical worker in most other provinces of Canada? You have to ask yourself that question if you're going to be totally fair. If you're going to applaud the Premier for asking the question, you should applaud anyone else who asks the same question. Is it fair for these workers to have less protection than if they worked in Saskatchewan or Manitoba or British Columbia or Alberta or Nova Scotia? The answer is very simple: It is not fair.

All that is being asked here is that a five-step process be undertaken:

(1) That there be mandatory adoptions of safety-engineered devices. That's not that difficult. Just do it.

(2) That there should be an exposure control plan so that if these objects are available, if they're in the hospitals, if they're in the care centres, there be an exposure control plan to make sure that they are not taken out or used more often than not and that the people who use them are careful.

(3) That there has to be effective training and education, which has been done in Toronto East General Hospital, which I'm going to deal with in a minute.

(4) There needs to be a sharps injury log kept.

(5) There needs to be post-exposure protocol so that we know how to follow up and how to remedy all of that.

In the two minutes I have left, I'd like to talk about Toronto East General Hospital. That is my hospital. It's in my community. It's in Beaches–East York. We're very proud of it. It's a very innovative place.

There is a study written by Laura Visser in the *Health-care Quarterly*, volume 9, number 1, in 2006, and it talks about Toronto East General Hospital. I'd just like to quote a little bit from this. It says:

"Since the safety program was started at TEGH, sharps injuries have declined by 80%, easily surpassing the original first year goal of a 20% reduction in injuries. There were 41 reported injuries in 2003, decreasing to eight in 2004. This included the complete elimination of injuries during blood collection procedures for that year."

It goes on to quote Rob Devitt, who is the hospital's president and CEO, saying what a wonderful thing it is. But I think the important aspect is what has happened since then. The author goes on to write:

"Encouraged by this success, TEGH has now extended the program to include a needleless IV system, along with IV catheters and more portable sharps disposal containers. It is also now investigating the introduction of safety-engineered scalpels and blades to address sharps injuries in the operating room."

The will is there. What it needs is legislation so that the Toronto East General Hospital is not the only place

where this occurs. It needs to happen in every hospital, in every doctor's office, in every health care facility and in every long-term-care facility. The workers deserve the protection; the bill will make it happen.

I congratulate my colleague from Nickel Belt for bringing forward this bill and having the tenacity to bring it forward again. I ask the members opposite not to use excuses but common sense to make sure it proceeds.

**Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport):** First, let me welcome to the Legislature the front-line workers from the Ontario Nurses' Association, the Service Employees International Union and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union.

On private member's Bill 30 by the member from Nickel Belt, An Act to reduce the incidence of needle-stick injuries, I want to remind our viewers that this is private members' hour. That means we are not constrained by government policy or by a government program, and we're certainly not being told how to vote in private members' hours. I will most likely support this bill, depending on how the member from Nickel Belt answers three of my concerns.

First, the good news. As all of us know, in March 2005, the Ministry of Health announced an investment already—this is very proactive, in a way—of \$11.6 million for hospitals to purchase safety-engineered medical devices. This was identified as one-time special funding, as we know, to improve the health and safety of the province's health care workers by investing in safer medical equipment and safety-engineered medical devices at all Ontario hospitals.

My question to the member for Nickel Belt is, did she consult the following groups: stakeholders from groups such as doctors in private practice, dentists or others who may be affected by this bill and who would likely have concerns, as was said before, that it is very expensive? And does it allow the flexibility to address hazards in a manner proportional to this risk?

Second, if this bill proceeds, will there be consultations? Has the member consulted with health sector stakeholders, such as the health regulatory colleges, health professional associations, the Ontario Association of Medical Laboratories and the Ontario Hospital Association?

Third, my final question: Neither the Ministry of Labour nor the Ministry of Health have a reliable estimate of the expected upfront costs or of possible savings to the health care system through reduced injuries to workers, such as lost time, WSIB costs, retraining costs and so on. Please note that the Toronto East General Hospital implemented the safety-engineered medical devices program between 2001 and 2005. We saw an 80% to 85% drop in sharps injuries—congratulations—but the increased cost for the safety devices varied between an 83% increase, from almost \$1 to \$1.68, for IV catheters, and a 1,200% increase, between 2 cents to 26 cents per unit, for injectable needles.

The member from Parkdale–High Park made a good point, and that is, this is not only an issue that concerns

hospitals or health care workers as such, because many times, I know in my office, we get calls on syringes in back lanes. Good point. If members of the public want to know, "Who do you call if you see a syringe that your kid picks up on the road, on the street or in the back lane?" you call the police or the health department.

Finally, I want to simply remind you of this, which is a good point: The technology exists to produce safe devices. That, to me, is an important item.

I want to congratulate the member from Nickel Belt for bringing Bill 30 forward.

**1100**

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

**Ms. Martel:** I want to acknowledge the presence of Leah Casselman, president of OPSEU, in the gallery.

I want to say to the member for Nipissing, the bill doesn't say that we're going to have these devices in all workplaces all at once. It says, very clearly, "prescribed workplaces." It can be done by regulation in a staged approach. Secondly, she talked about what kind of sharps. It says "as approved by Health Canada" right in the bill, so you're not going to be using just anything from anybody. I forget her third concern, but I'm sure we can deal with it at committee.

Who did I consult with? These folks here, those workers up there, the people who are most at risk every day in their workplace of getting a needle-stick injury. That's who I consulted with, that's who I have been working with for the last two years, because they deserve to be protected, and we deserve to have a law in Ontario that protects them. I'm very proud of my work with these groups and with the Alliance for Sharps Safety and Needlestick Prevention. Anybody else who we want to consult with, we can do that at public hearings once we get the bill to public hearings.

The reality is this: On July 26, 2006, four union leaders who represent the majority of workers who are impacted by needle-stick injuries wrote to the Premier, the Minister of Health and the Minister of Labour and said this was a priority for them. They said, "Where is Ontario?" Your government has inspected health care workplaces, studied the situation since your election, and provided limited, one-time funding in 2005 to help hospitals purchase safety-engineered sharps. The money ran out in March 2006. What your government has not done yet is require the use of this equipment and thus reduce or eliminate preventable injuries to nurses and other health care workers.

The Minister of Labour responded in the same way that I knew the government members would today: "We set up a committee of health care workers, and we're going to look at it there." And do you know what he said? "The use of safety-engineered medical devices could"—could—"be a topic of discussion for this committee." The time for "could" is over. It's time now to have a bill in place to protect these workers. Five other jurisdictions in Canada have moved to protect workers from needle-stick injuries. We need to do that in Ontario. This should be the law in Ontario.

## LANDFILL

**Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka):** I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Minister of the Environment must confirm that the region impacted by the Green Lane landfill purchase is a “willing host”; and

That the government of Ontario must guarantee that the landfill will not be in operation after the current scheduled closing date of 2018; and

That the city of Toronto, acting as a “good neighbour,” must develop a comprehensive plan to ensure that the necessary policies and technologies are adopted and in place so that, as of January 1, 2012, the city of Toronto will no longer dispose of any waste at the Green Lane landfill site.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Mr. Miller has moved private member’s notice of motion number 31. Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr. Miller, you have up to 10 minutes.

**Mr. Miller:** I’m pleased to rise today to speak about this very important resolution. Ontario is facing a waste crisis under the McGuinty Liberals, and we in the Ontario PC caucus believe it is time we had a debate surrounding waste.

Before I outline vital steps this government should take in terms of Green Lane, I’d like to express my disappointment with the Liberal members from the London area. There are no fewer than five Liberal members who represent the ridings surrounding the Green Lane landfill. Two are ministers, and one actually represents the riding where the landfill site sits. Of these five members, only two asked the Minister of the Environment softball questions on Green Lane. Not once did we in this House hear from any of these five members when Green Lane was allowed to increase their capacity in June 2006. Not once did we hear from these members when the city of Toronto surprised us all by buying the dump.

One voice heard from is the Oneida of the Thames River. On November 9, 2006, the Globe and Mail reported that the area native band is voicing its concerns over Toronto’s garbage, and that they are looking into their options with lawyers in Toronto. The article states, “Oneida Chief Randall Phillips said he is hoping for cooperative negotiation with the city, which is scheduled to take possession on December 20. He said the band will wait no later than January before considering other tactics.”

It goes on to say, “Standing at his reserve’s town line yesterday, Mr. Phillips and other council members swatted at flies and pointed to the nearby dump. The stench eased up as the heavy early-morning fog lifted, but there was no mistaking the smell of garbage that reserve residents say plagues the Oneida’s land.”

I don’t envy those five government members. They’ll have some explaining to do to the people of London and the surrounding areas. They’ll have to be accountable for their lack of action or representation. Today’s resolution provides those five members of provincial Parliament with an opportunity to rebuild trust with their constituents.

This resolution simply seeks to ensure that some of the most basic protections that the Ministry of the Environment should have provided from the outset are indeed provided.

The first thing we want to ensure for those families who live in the area surrounding the Green Lane landfill is that they are a willing host. The concept of willing host is something that the Liberals once said they believed in. Of course, they once said they believed in a lot of things in order to get elected. Dalton McGuinty, their leader, was very clear when it came to willing hosts. In fact, he tabled a similar resolution to the one I introduced today. On October 2, 2000, Dalton McGuinty rose in the Legislature and said the following:

“Be it resolved that the Ontario Legislature demand that the Minister of the Environment use the statutory powers entrusted to him to prevent the creation or operation of a waste management facility at the Adams mine site in Kirkland Lake until the following conditions are met: a full environmental assessment has determined that there will be no negative impact on the region’s groundwater; and the residents of the region confirm through referenda that they are in fact a willing host for the shipment of waste to their community.”

That is what Dalton McGuinty said then. Flash forward to today, and we have no referenda and no debate.

The five provincial representatives who should be asking questions have failed their constituents, and because of that failure, we do not know if the region surrounding Green Lane landfill is indeed a willing host.

The resolution today takes a more balanced approach in terms of the willing host. We simply call on the Minister of the Environment to have the discussion, do the consultations and prove to the people of southwestern Ontario, Toronto and the province as a whole that the impacted region is willing to accept the shipment of Toronto’s garbage: a simple request and, quite frankly, something that should have been done before the sale was even allowed.

The second aspect of the resolution calls for a guarantee from the minister that the Green Lane landfill will cease to operate after 2018. The people of southwestern Ontario have an enormous environmental burden thrust upon them with no clear expression of interest. We in the Ontario PC caucus believe that the least this Liberal government can do is give the people of the London area an assurance that they will not be a dump forever and that there is indeed a guaranteed light at the end of Dalton McGuinty’s garbage crisis tunnel.

The third and final piece of the resolution is arguably the most important because it speaks to working with the city of Toronto to find a way for them to deal with their own waste. John Tory believes, and I agree, that fundamentally Torontonians want to deal with their own waste. They want the days of their garbage travelling down the 401 to become someone else’s problem to be over, and, until that day, they want to act as a good neighbour. The people of Toronto want to be a good neighbour by reducing their waste and finding new ways to utilize it. I

know they care about the environment, and reducing waste is the right thing to do.

The great news is that this is possible. The possibilities are endless if the province is willing to be a partner with the city of Toronto. What can we do? Take immediate, bold action. John Tory is in favour of looking at all of the new and innovative technologies that the rest of the world seems to have adopted to turn waste into energy. Newly elected Toronto mayor David Miller, in his victory speech on Monday, emphasized that he wants to see a 70% diversion rate for the city of Toronto by 2010—an admirable and ambitious goal. If we can take ideas like these and put them into action, we can begin to see significant progress.

Personally, I have a keen interest in what we can achieve through greater product stewardship. In 2005, I introduced a private member's bill which essentially called for a version of bottle return as well as a greater role for product stewardship in terms of how we manage our waste. Product stewardship works because industry comes up with the solutions. They know their business best and will come up with solutions that are cost-effective and get the job done. Deposit-return systems work because there is an incentive to return the product for the deposit, and those who end up not returning it are in fact paying for the system; the polluters pay. Of course, the Liberal government has announced something that seems to try and look like a bottle-return plan; however, the flaws in that policy by photo op are best left for another day and another debate.

**1110**

In terms of better dealing with our waste, we can also learn from other jurisdictions around the world. I mentioned earlier that John Tory supports looking at advanced technologies, such as energy from waste, that are being used across the world. But it isn't just energy from waste. There are best practices to be found in many countries, such as Sweden. There's an area in southern Sweden which has so many advanced ways of diverting and dealing with waste that at the end of the day, less than 10% ends up in a landfill. The Swedish Parliament has established 15 environmental quality objectives, such as clean air and good-quality groundwater, to guide Sweden towards a sustainable society. The 15 environmental objectives will function as benchmarks for all environment-related development in Sweden, regardless of where it is implemented and by whom. The overriding aim is to solve all the major environmental problems within one generation. Sweden is taking bold steps, with definite deadlines, and they are seeing real results. The Ontario Liberals could learn from that example.

By encouraging the city of Toronto to act as a good neighbour and to work towards stopping the shipment of waste to Green Lane by 2012, we are proposing a deadline, one that is close enough that the people in and around Green Lane can take some comfort in knowing that their concerns have been heard and acted on, but also far enough away that the city of Toronto can realistically make the necessary changes to meet the deadline.

If the city of Toronto were to succeed in this task, it would be a win-win-win situation. The city would win because it will finally accomplish a goal that residents and politicians alike have wanted to achieve for years. The people in the area surrounding Green Lane will win the right to breathe a little deeper when they go to get their paper in the morning. Finally, the province of Ontario will win because it will have drastically decreased the amount of waste going to landfill.

In conclusion, I want to make a few items perfectly clear. This resolution calls for three simple things: proof that the region surrounding Green Lane landfill is a willing host; a guarantee that Green Lane landfill will cease to operate after 2018; and, finally, a call for the city of Toronto to work towards stopping shipments to Green Lane by 2012, all the while acting as a good neighbour. This resolution respects the rights and jurisdiction of the city of Toronto, which we know wants to move towards dealing with its waste. Finally, this resolution gives a voice to those who have had the misfortune of having five silent members as their representatives.

This is an important resolution and I look forward to seeing our friends in the Liberal caucus supporting it, especially the members from the London area.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough):** It's a pleasure for me to have the opportunity to spend a few minutes this morning talking about this particular situation in southwestern Ontario.

First of all, I would like to get a few remarks on the record based on some letters I have here. The first one I have is from James McIntyre, the mayor of the township of Southwold, which is the location of the landfill site. It says:

"Attention: Mayor David Miller..."

"Through various media sources, the township of Southwold understands that Toronto council has authorized proceeding with the acquisition of the Green Lane landfill located within the corporate limits of township and county of Elgin.

"It is further understood that the city of Toronto has provided assurances to media outlets and to the city of London that it intends to work with affected municipalities in ensuring that the public interests, benefits and objectives respecting waste transport and disposal are met.

"On behalf of our municipality, we welcome these initiatives and look forward to an initial meeting and discussions with representatives of the city as the matter of acquisition progresses."

This is signed by James McIntyre, the mayor of the township of Southwold.

A letter back to the township regarding this matter:

"Thank you for your letter of November 3, 2006. In order to meet your requested response date of November 10, I am responding on behalf of the city....

"Toronto is intending to acquire only the landfill itself, but not the collection operations, so the obligations assumed by Toronto will relate to disposal. Having said that, it has always been the city's intention, assuming it

reaches an agreement with the vendor, to accept waste as provided under all current municipal waste collection contracts with Green Lane and to work with local municipalities for the life of the landfill. Toronto also intends to meet existing commitments related to the Green Lane community trust fund and will, of course, respect all the terms and conditions of the certificate of approval.

“We would be happy to meet with representatives of Southwold as we proceed with the acquisition, which we hope will be completed on February 1, 2007.”

Indeed, my five colleagues from this area have, on numerous occasions, been meeting with municipal officials in Southwold and certainly working with them, spearheaded, of course, by my colleague the Minister of Labour, the Honourable Steve Peters, the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London.

To look at a number of options, the current government has made some changes to the EA process to look at some alternatives for handling waste management. Indeed, Rod Bryden in Ottawa has a pilot project with plasma gasification to see how that will work in terms of handling waste management. We’ve made some changes to the EA process to allow those pilot projects to move forward and collect the data, and to make sure that any emissions from these operations meet the air quality standards in the province of Ontario, which are among the highest in the world. Indeed, if these alternative technologies prove successful through the pilot projects, they will then be subject to the full environmental assessments that we go through in Ontario to provide waste management approaches.

My friend from Parry Sound–Muskoka mentioned Sweden. Just recently, I had the opportunity to review a comprehensive report done by the federal government in Sweden looking at waste management. Of course, in that jurisdiction, landfilling is the last of the three options that they pursue.

The Ministry of the Environment is certainly working on product stewardship. Mr. Speaker, you’re just recently a new grandfather, and you will inevitably be buying a number of gifts for that new grandchild. And when you look at the product—I’ve had this experience myself—the toy you get, it’s about that large, and the packaging is about this large. Often it’s those blister packages, which are made of material that is not recyclable, or the cardboard in that package is of a material that can’t be recycled. So inevitably, that goes into a landfill site.

We have announced just recently—it will occur early in 2007—an opportunity through Brewers Retail to have a deposit-return system in place for bottles that are sold with various spirits and wines through the LCBO system. We know that the Brewers Retail is probably the most successful recycling operation in North America. We know that the participation rate, the return of bottles to that organization, is some 96% to 97%. We’re certainly hoping, as we put the final details in place for the LCBO return, that individuals will take the opportunity to recycle wine and spirit bottles.

I know that’s been welcomed by AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. I just had the oppor-

tunity yesterday to talk to Doug Reycraft, who is the new president of AMO, and he certainly is very supportive of that decision and that approach, as municipalities have been struggling for a long time. Not only does it create workplace problems for individuals collecting material, because often blue boxes get shuffled around, bottles get broken and employees have to pick them up, but there hasn’t been, over a long period of time, a real market for those bottles. Inevitably, they end up in landfills or they become part of asphalt.

I just got the signal and I’m going to conclude, but I wanted to get those remarks on the record dealing with this particular issue.

**1120**

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford):** I rise to speak in support of the motion brought forward by my colleague. I’m happy to speak to the resolution, but I’m really somewhat concerned that the resolution is necessary. Had this process been followed appropriately, in my mind, this resolution would not have been necessary. The process of approving landfill sites and the Environmental Assessment Act and the process of approving expansions relate to waste management in general, not just whether it’s a good place to put the garbage.

First of all, I just want to go to the first part of the resolution: “That, in the opinion of the House, the Minister of the Environment must confirm that the region impacted by the Green Lane landfill purchase is a ‘willing host.’” I just quickly wanted to touch on that. It’s important to recognize the word “region.” For those watching who are not aware of where the Green Lane landfill site is—I see the government side shaking their heads, but they definitely know where it is—it’s right on the edge. It is in Southwold township, in Elgin county, but in fact it’s right on the edge of the city of London. As you drive down the 401—and I’m sure, Mr. Speaker, you go by there on a regular basis—you will find that the interchange going into London is right on the corner of where the Green Lane landfill site is located. That is important, because I think it’s important to recognize that the region and the host area that’s going to take the waste from Toronto is aware and is accepting of that fact.

I recognize that the approval was granted and the expansion is there, so it’s not the city of Toronto that has inappropriately purchased the landfill site. The problem is that the Ministry of the Environment, in their approval process, did not do due diligence to make sure that they knew what they were approving it for. When the news came out in the newspaper about the purchase by the city of Toronto, there were a lot of comments from the local members of the area, including, I see here with us, the member from London–Fanshawe. All the comments were, “But this doesn’t mean we’re going to get Toronto waste here. Of course I will do everything I can”—I think this was the statement, and the member across can correct me if I’m wrong—“to stop it from happening, but I’m not sure I can do anything.” That was the comment that was in my local paper, called the London Free Press, and I think it covers the same area that the member is from.

That's really the problem here. That situation would not have arisen had the city of Toronto had to go through that process on their own to get that expansion. I think it's important to recognize, as we deal with that expansion and the approval process, that in 2005 the city of Toronto was also approached about purchasing or utilizing the Green Lane landfill site, and they decided it wasn't for them. They decided not to do that. They made other arrangements. Of course this year, when they were approached again, they decided they liked the idea, so they bought the site. One has to ask, what changed between the 2005 and the 2006 process? We realize what changed was that the minister had approved a large expansion for the landfill site, so all of a sudden it looked more appealing to the city of Toronto. I think that would be why they purchased it.

We also know that had the city of Toronto purchased it themselves in 2005 and had to go through the environmental process, they would have had to deal with their total waste management plan. They would have had to commit to the amount of waste that would be removed from the waste stream. They would have had to look at alternative ways of disposing of their waste before they could get approval to expand the site. They would have had to go through that in the environmental assessment. While they were doing that, they also would have had the public involved to talk about waste diversion, to talk about the other alternatives for waste disposal, but of course none of that was required when the operator or the owner of the landfill site prior to Toronto went for the application. Of course, that's when the government should have been addressing it. The minister approved the expansion of the landfill site, and at that time the members were all quoted as suggesting they didn't know it was being done for Toronto waste, that this was just an expansion for one of our local landfill sites. I find that hard to believe.

The expansion, the permit, is for 10 million tonnes of waste—somebody applying for an expansion to deposit 10 million tonnes of waste. I think the minister would have to look around and find out why someone would want that size of an expansion. Of course, the minister would immediately see that there is only one municipality in the province of Ontario that would generate that amount of waste that would require that expansion.

The member for Elgin–Middlesex–London, the member for London–Fanshawe and the members for London North and London West would all, at that point, have been aware that this application was coming through, that there was an approval process the minister was dealing with. Two of those members were, of course, sitting at the cabinet table with the Ministry of the Environment as these types of decisions were made.

To put it in context, in 1999 those municipalities—Elgin and Middlesex counties and the city of St. Thomas and that area—produced 30,000 tonnes of waste, and the minister approved this expansion for, as I said, 10 million tonnes. If it wasn't for the city of Toronto garbage, the minister-approved capacity in this landfill site would last

333 years for the present users before that space would be occupied. They would have landfill space until the year 2339. That's how much capacity was there. So I think it's unreasonable to assume that the minister thought that's what the approval was for.

I don't think that, realistically, the minister approved it for that purpose. I suppose that, in the news release announcing the expansion, the minister said it was good news for municipalities “that are seeking disposal capacity within the province rather than sending it to Michigan.” So I guess, if we look around now at the municipalities that are sending their waste to Michigan, we'll find that there is only the main one, of course the city of Toronto, and some of the 905 municipalities that are sending some there. I think it would be very difficult to assume that the members representing that area, who at the time said the expansion had nothing to do with Toronto waste, said later on, “Oh, my gosh, if we'd known this, we wouldn't have let it happen.” I find it hard to fathom that, when you look at those figures.

The member for London North said, “Where we have waste, let's look for the most environmentally sensible place to put it. Green Lane is as good as any, I understand.” Again, it is kind of hard to relate that to, “We are opposed and we will do whatever we can to stop it from going there,” when we have resigned ourselves to the fact that there it is going to go.

It's important to recognize that a municipality that applies for an expansion has to study more than whether the site is safe. As I said, they have to look at all the other alternatives to get rid of their waste, and not just where it is going to be buried.

If Toronto had gone through the process, the fact that the McGuinty Liberals had not lived up to their 60% diversion or recycling promise would have been highlighted, because obviously they would have had to show how much waste they were going to divert from the waste stream and they immediately would have seen, and the public immediately would have seen, that they were never going to need it.

Also in a recent poll, 60% of Torontonians believe that they should be looking after their own waste. Again, that is why I think it is so important that the resolution have a timeline on it.

The member of London–Fanshawe actually questioned why the city of Toronto isn't exploring new technologies to deal with their waste. He said, “Why haven't they already done that?” I agree with the member from London–Fanshawe, and I think he, as a member of the government, should have been forcing the city of Toronto to look at that, as opposed to sitting back and watching this happen and not telling anyone about it. If Toronto had gone through the proper process, if the Liberals hadn't created the back-door way to avoid it, then perhaps we would have had an energy-from-waste pilot project right here in Toronto now. We will never know. The answer is that the Liberal Minister of the Environment has made it so that they don't have to. That's why I object to this landfill decision and I support the resolution on behalf of my fellow member.

## 1130

**Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** It's a pleasure for me to participate in this debate at this time. Today's private member's motion, if nothing else, confirms that irony is alive and well in Ontario, because we have a motion before us that has been introduced by the opposition Tories that, among other things, requires the Minister of the Environment to determine whether or not London and its surrounding area is a willing host to Toronto's garbage. If that sounds familiar to some members in this House, it should, because in substance it mirrors a Liberal opposition motion that was advanced in October 2000 which sought to ensure a community receiving a another community's garbage is a "willing host."

We've heard the text of the Conservative motion today, but I want to read into the record the Liberal opposition motion from October 2000 for the benefit of those communities that are facing massive dump expansions courtesy of the McGuinty Liberals. This is a quote from Mr. McGuinty, October 2000:

"I have an opposition day motion which reads as follows:

"Be it resolved that the Ontario Legislature demand that the Minister of the Environment use the statutory powers entrusted to him to prevent the creation or operation of a waste management facility at the Adams mine site in Kirkland Lake until the following conditions are met: a full environmental assessment has determined that there will be no negative impact on the region's groundwater; and the residents of the region confirm through referenda that they are in fact a willing host for the shipment of waste to their community;

"Be it further resolved that the Ontario Legislature demand that the Minister of the Environment keep his promise not to extend the operating licence of the Keele Valley landfill site."

Back on October 2, 2000, when this motion was introduced, Dalton McGuinty had this to say about one community exporting its trash to another: "Our motion also calls for the residents of the region to have a say. We want a referendum to determine that they are in fact truly willing hosts." That's from Hansard, October 2, 2000.

I want to read into the record as well some further information that talks about "willing host." This comes from comments that were made by Premier McGuinty at the time that his colleague the member from Timiskaming, now the Minister of Natural Resources, introduced a private member's bill also talking about "willing host." This is what the now Premier had to say with respect to the idea or the principle of a willing host. It's a long quote, but I want to read it all into the record:

"The second principle the bill embraces is that of a willing host, and I guess there's some looseness with respect to the definition of a willing host. The principle here is that no community can be compelled against its wishes to take another community's waste. I think that is eminently supportable as well. It's one thing to have to take responsibility for your own garbage, for your own

waste, but it's quite another to have to assume responsibility for someone else's.

"In the former case," said Mr. McGuinty, "where you are required to assume responsibility for your own garbage, your own waste, it's only right and fitting and just and all those good things, and there is a real obligation on the part of a community to take that kind of responsibility. It provides a real incentive to reduce the amount of waste you are producing within your community.

"But in the latter case, where a community is being asked to take in within its borders, within its boundaries, somebody else's waste, that's a different matter altogether. In that case, I would argue there is no obligation on that community to do so. Secondly, that very option being made available to the community which is getting rid of its garbage can act as a very real disincentive to reduction of waste production. It's only appropriate that in that case that community, that proponent which is asking that its garbage be sent elsewhere, seek the consent of the recipient community or willing host. That's only fair and reasonable," said Dalton McGuinty.

"The member puts forward that one way of ensuring we have a willing host is to hold a referendum. That is clearly a means by which we can determine whether or not the community is willing. He is not creating any kind of unfair burden. It's simply a majority of the members. With respect to this issue of how wide we ought to spread the net, who ought to be entitled to cast a vote in this referendum, that's a subject of some fair debate. But I don't see why that subject could not be addressed more fully at committee. I don't see it as something fatal. We hardly want to involve our American cousins in that kind of consideration. I don't think that was the member's intent. Surely we can all agree on that.

"In brief, what the member"—Mr. Ramsay—"is trying to do here is eminently supportable. The bill is sound. He's embracing a couple of principles which, in fairness, have been embraced by governments of all political stripes during the past 25 years or so, one of those principles being that if a community is going to receive waste from another community, it ought to do so of its own accord; it ought to be willing to take the garbage in. Otherwise, if not, we should not be able to compel it to do so."

"The second principle is that an environmental assessment ought to be heard in these kinds of cases where we're dealing with landfill sites. The member has a particular concern related to his own constituency, a very valid and legitimate concern. In that particular case, we're not talking about a small operation; we're talking about a very large operation. It's important that a full, complete environmental assessment be heard and that the community there be found to be truly willing to receive that waste. I have no reservation whatsoever in lending my full support to the member for his good work, as contained within this bill."

Extensive as it was, that is from the Premier, Mr. McGuinty, in support of a private member's bill that had been put forward by one of his own, the member from



Timiskaming–Cochrane, now the Minister of Natural Resources, with respect to a willing host, who was a willing host, and why a full environmental assessment was important on these matters.

This begs the question: Did the Premier—or the Minister of the Environment for that matter—ask the people of London and the communities surrounding the Green Lane landfill if they were in fact willing hosts? Second, did the Premier or the Minister of the Environment call a referendum in London and its surrounding communities to see if they were willing hosts? Not a chance. Instead, what the people of London and the surrounding communities got was a mega-landfill expansion based on a deficient environmental assessment that was started by the Harris Tories and rubber-stamped by the McGuinty Liberals—an environmental assessment process, by the way, that Dalton McGuinty while in opposition described as “guttled” by the Harris government. That can be found in Hansard on October 2, 2000.

#### 1140

At the end of private members’ business today, we’re going to witness a rather bizarre spectacle whereby the opposition Tories will be supporting a motion that is substantially the same motion they voted against while in government, and the McGuinty Liberal government will be voting against a motion that is substantively the same as the one they introduced and supported in this House when they were in opposition. It’s been quite a morning.

Such a role reversal would be comic if it wasn’t for the communities across the province being forced to accept the environmental risks associated with the misguided waste management policies of the Harris-Eves Tories and now the broken waste diversion promises of the McGuinty Liberals.

The failure of Dalton McGuinty to live up to the waste diversion principles that he held so strongly in opposition and the promises he made during the election in 2003 is not funny to the citizens of London and the surrounding communities who have had a mega-expansion of the Green Lane landfill forced on them against their will.

It’s not funny to the residents in Carp, Ontario, also facing a massive landfill expansion, when Dalton McGuinty promised to ban the landfilling of organics but has done nothing about it.

The McGuinty government’s failure to keep its promise to divert 60% of waste from landfills is not funny to the residents of Sarnia and Warwick township who are now facing a proposed mega-expansion of the Watford landfill site by Waste Management Canada.

It’s not funny to the residents in communities that face the prospect of a new garbage incinerator springing up in their backyard thanks to the McGuinty government’s embracing of incineration and proposals to reform the Environmental Assessment Act to make incinerators easier to site.

The fact that less than 30% of waste is presently diverted from landfills, despite Dalton McGuinty’s promise to divert 60% by the end of 2007, is not funny to the people of Simcoe county who are now fighting a

mega-landfill known as site 41. It was just one month ago, on October 20, that the McGuinty government gave provisional approval to site 41 despite the fact that the aquifer under the proposed landfill has been scientifically shown to contain among the purest water on the planet. In fact, it turns out that the water under site 41 contains levels of two heavy metals that are five times lower than even 5,000-year-old Arctic ice. According to Bill Shotyk, director of the Institute of Environmental Geochemistry at the University of Heidelberg in Germany, one of two laboratories in the world that are capable of conducting such an analysis, the water under site 41 “could well be the cleanest groundwater on earth.” That was a quote by Bill Shotyk, the Toronto Star, April 6, 2006. The McGuinty government’s response: Approve a massive landfill directly over the aquifer.

In opposition, Dalton McGuinty had a lot to say about mixing garbage and water. For example, during the Adams mine debate he stated that “one would assume that the government would now move heaven and earth in an effort to protect Ontario’s water, in an effort to make sure that poison doesn’t get into the water in the first place. But instead of moving heaven and earth to protect our water, the Mike Harris government seems hell-bent on moving southern Ontario’s garbage up north in a scheme that does not go nearly far enough to protect our water.” That quote is from Hansard, October 2, 2000.

But now in government, it’s clear that the McGuinty plan is no plan: no plan to keep the election promise of 60% waste diversion across the province by the end of 2007, no plan to ban organics in landfills as promised, just mega-landfill expansions, new incinerators, and approval to pump the cleanest water on the planet out of an aquifer so that the resulting hole can be filled with garbage. Does that sound like the Adams mine?

New Democrats and those communities that are impacted across the province want action on waste diversion. We want action on reducing packaging and we want action to protect communities’ source water from contamination. What we don’t want is a rehashing of the failed waste management policies of the Tories now carried out under the McGuinty Liberals as a result of their broken election promises.

Speaker, it’s been a pleasure for me to participate in this debate.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the chance to speak on an important issue that is dear to my heart. I have spoken about this many different times on several occasions.

I heard the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka talk about the resolution. I know he is bringing this resolution forward not because he believes in it, but just to score a point for political gain. But we are here to debate a very important issue. I’ve said it before, I say it today and I will say it tomorrow: My thinking about waste is that we should deal with it in a modern way, where we use technology to deal with waste. Many different countries in Europe—Belgium, Sweden, the Netherlands—have already introduced great technology to deal with waste.

I want to tell the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, the member from Oxford and the member from Nickel Belt that my colleagues and I don't take this issue lightly. As you know, Mr. Speaker, many people went before me who are ministers of the crown. They know that so many applications, so many requests come to the ministries, especially the Ministry of the Environment. The Ministry of the Environment, or any ministry, has standards; they have requirements. Any person or any request that meets those requirements gets approval or gets a licence.

Specifically, we're talking about the Ministry of the Environment here. First, Green Lane has been in existence since 1978. That company has been a great neighbour to the municipality surrounding that site. They respect all the environmental rules and regulations on a daily basis. When they applied to increase their capacity to the Ministry of the Environment, I believe they went through very rigorous conditions and requirements. When they met those requirements, they got a licence to expand and increase their capacity.

I believe the Ministry of the Environment receives on a daily basis many requests in many different parts of the province from many different landfills in Ontario. They request an expansion, and not all these places get a licence or get permission to expand. But Green Lane got permission because they met all the requirements which had been put forward by the Ministry of the Environment. I believe there are very rigorous conditions, which they met.

Having said that, I don't believe the city of Toronto should send their garbage to Southwold, where Green Lane is, or to northern Ontario or to western Ontario or to eastern Ontario. I believe strongly that the city of Toronto should deal with their own waste, not bully any small municipality or send it to any spot in the province of Ontario, because they have the capacity, they have the potential, they have the financial ability to follow many cities in Europe which deal with their waste by technology.

What I've said many different times is that I'm against Toronto sending their garbage to the Green Lane landfill in the Southwold area. But as you know, Mr. Speaker, it's a private deal, done by a private company and the city of Toronto. This issue is totally a municipal issue. I cannot interfere in this capacity. As a matter of fact, I've talked to the municipalities many different times and I've told them, "I'm there to support you, for whatever you need me for and whenever you need me." I work with them closely on a daily basis. I'm still working with them. So when they need me to support them and support their actions, I'm there for them.

**1150**

I also sent a letter to the mayor of Toronto, David Miller. I urged him to change his direction, to pursue a different avenue, not to send the garbage to Southwold, to Green Lane. This is my position. This is our position, on this side of the House, to convince all the municipalities across Ontario to deal with their own waste within their own boundaries. It is very important to all of us in order to create harmony and peace between the

communities. We should work closely with them and help them to divert their own waste in a professional and modern way. I believe that Toronto is doing it. They reached an important target; it was almost 54% diversion. I know they have a rigorous goal to reach: about 70% by the year 2010.

I want to tell the members from Oxford and Parry Sound that we're not quiet about this issue. We want to urge the municipalities. We are supporting any way to help the municipalities deal with their own waste within their own boundary. As he knows, this issue is a municipal issue. This issue is done between a private company and the city of Toronto. We cannot interfere with any deal that goes between private to private, because we'll have a chaotic situation in the province of Ontario. If, every time a private company wants to do something and meets all the requirements—the legal requirements and the conditions and terms put up by any ministry—and we want to stop them because that isn't good for our political gain, that would be a chaotic situation.

Therefore, Green Lane applied to the Minister of the Environment and they met the conditions and terms which were set out by the ministry. That's why they granted the expansion. We don't know what is going on, whether this company is going to use it for their local area people or to host any different municipalities.

As a matter of fact, we went and talked to the municipalities. We met with the Southwold mayor—the honourable member from Peterborough mentioned his name several different times—and we talked to him. He told us that this Green Lane has been a great neighbour. They respect and honour all the terms and conditions set out by the ministry. They meet with them on a regular basis. The Oneida reserve, which is close by, also believes these conditions are being met and that the requirements that Green Lane is obligated to respect are being respected. That's why the Minister of the Environment gave them permission.

Before I finish I want to say that I still wish that the city of Toronto changed its direction to deal with their own waste within their own boundary because they have the financial capacity and the ability to be a leader in the province of Ontario.

I want to tell the mayor of Toronto—hopefully he's listening to me today or somebody will listen to me—that I hope he will not send their garbage to that area. It's not good for Toronto. It's not good for anyone. We don't want to keep burying garbage. We have to deal with it.

**Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock):** I'm pleased to stand in support of the resolution brought forward by the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka that "must confirm that the region" of London—this is what we're talking about—"impacted by the Green Lane landfill purchase is a 'willing host'; and

"That the government of Ontario must guarantee that the landfill will not be in operation after the current scheduled closing date of 2018."

It's been interesting to listen to the various debates this morning and to hear what Mr. McGuinty said on November 24, 2003, when he was Leader of the Oppos-

ition. Let me quote: “We are going to get serious about waste diversion in the province of Ontario”—Liberal platform, page 9 of *Growing Strong Communities*, in big, bold, promise-breaking, Liberal red ink. “We will divert 60% of waste from landfills within five years.”

We asked the Minister of the Environment many times about what’s happening with that 60% diversion rate. She said, “Well, there is a little bit of doubt. It is a very high hurdle.” But they said they would do it in their platform and they didn’t do it.

That leads us in part to the resolution that’s before us here today. The member from Perth–Middlesex said, “You know, we have an amazing plan to meet that promise of 60% waste diversion.” Well, where’s the amazing plan? We’ve asked so many times, we’re getting tired of waiting, and they’re kind of saying, “Well, maybe it’s not going to happen”—again, saying anything to get elected, breaking promises, but it doesn’t seem to matter to them. I don’t know if there’s any other place in the world where keeping a promise means so little. Here the present Liberal government makes all these promises, but, “It’s okay. We’re not going to keep them. People will forgive us.” Well, they shouldn’t forgive you. You shouldn’t have said it. You knew better. You’re not giving municipalities the tools to work with, in this case, with waste diversion.

That’s the situation today in the Green Lane landfill site near London. It’s in the community of Southwold, where the Minister of Labour is the MPP—a minister sitting at the cabinet table where these decisions are made.

There’s a press release right here from the Minister of the Environment. I was looking for a photo op; I couldn’t find it, but I’m sure there has to be a photo op out there. This press release is dated June 28. It’s promoting the fact that the Minister of the Environment has approved the expansion of landfill capacity of the Green Lane site. It says, “The expansion is good news for municipalities and businesses in Ontario who are seeking disposal capacity within the province rather than sending it to Michigan.”

The line about Michigan is very interesting, in light of a few things. Firstly, I think it’s no secret to anyone here which cities currently ship their garbage to Michigan. Secondly, in the approval letter, which I have over here, sent by the minister to the Green Lane group, the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London was also notified of this approval in the region. Thirdly, not so long after, we heard that Toronto city council approved the purchase of the Green Lane landfill site shortly after the minister made an agreement with Michigan to reduce its shipments of garbage. It’s an interesting turn of events, and I thought it was important that we put that on the record. I’m wondering if the city of Toronto would have been interested in purchasing Green Lane prior to the expansion that was approved by the Minister of the Environment.

My colleague from Oxford mentioned what some of the Liberal members from the London area said in response to the Toronto purchase of Green Lane.

The member from London–Fanshawe, who just spoke, said, “I am willing to choose any path, legal path, whatever possible path to block it.” Shortly afterwards in the same article, he said he’s not sure if there’s anything he can do to stop this deal.

I can see that some members of the McGuinty Liberal government are feeling helpless, so how do you think the residents of their communities are feeling? Well, they’re feeling pretty darned helpless that Toronto trash is trumping their trash. Toronto votes trump all other votes for the McGuinty Liberals, I guess.

Today my colleague brought this forward to try to protect Ontario and all the hard-working, taxpaying residents of London and the surrounding areas. It will be interesting to see in just a few minutes how those members on the government side are going to vote on this.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

Mr. Miller, you have two minutes to respond.

**Mr. Miller:** I’d like to thank the member from London–Fanshawe, the member from Nickel Belt, the member from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, the member from Peterborough and the member from Oxford for contributing to the debate today.

The Liberal government members from the London area have been strangely quiet on issues regarding the Green Lane landfill.

This is what the Premier said, when he was in opposition, to do with the issue of a willing host. He said, “It’s only appropriate that in that case that community, that proponent which is asking that its garbage be sent elsewhere, seek the consent of the recipient community or willing host. That’s only fair and reasonable.” That’s Premier McGuinty.

He goes on: “It’s important that a full, complete environmental assessment be heard and that the community there be found to be truly willing to receive that waste.”

That was then; this is now.

I want to emphasize the three key intentions of this resolution for the members of this House. They’re simple, really, and very important to the people of London: first, the concept of a willing host; second, a guarantee that Green Lane will cease to operate after 2018; third, an assurance from the city of Toronto to work toward ceasing shipments to Green Lane by 2012, while acting as a good neighbour.

This resolution respects the rights and jurisdictions of the city of Toronto. We understand that they want to move toward dealing with their waste. We know they care about the environment for all Ontarians. Finally, this resolution gives a voice to the people of London.

I’m surprised that not all of the London government members spoke to this resolution today. As they have in the past, they’ve been very quiet on the issues to do with Green Lane landfill site.

I hope that all my colleagues on all sides of this House will support this resolution.

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

## SAFE NEEDLES SAVE LIVES ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR L'UTILISATION  
D'AIGUILLES SÛRES  
POUR SAUVER DES VIES

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** We'll first deal with ballot item number 59, standing in the name of Ms. Martel.

Ms. Martel has moved second reading of Bill 30. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

**Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** Speaker, I would ask that the bill be sent to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Ms. Martel has asked that the bill be sent to the standing committee on regulations and private bills. Agreed? Agreed.

## LANDFILL

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** We shall now deal with ballot item number 60, standing in the name of Mr. Miller.

Mr. Miller has moved private member's notice of motion number 31. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

*The division bells rang from 1201 to 1206.*

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

## Ayes

Arnott, Ted  
Barrett, Toby  
Brownell, Jim  
Chudleigh, Ted  
Elliott, Christine  
Hardeman, Ernie  
Hudak, Tim  
Leal, Jeff

McMeekin, Ted  
McNeely, Phil  
Miller, Norm  
Mitchell, Carol  
Munro, Julia  
Ouellette, Jerry J.  
Ramal, Khalil  
Runciman, Robert W.

Ruprecht, Tony  
Scott, Laurie  
Tascona, Joseph N.  
Wilson, Jim  
Yakabuski, John  
Zimmer, David

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

## Nays

Delaney, Bob

Levac, Dave

Marsales, Judy

**The Deputy Clerk (Ms. Deborah Deller):** The ayes are 22; the nays are 3.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

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

*The House recessed from 1208 to 1330.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

## WILLIAM BELL

**Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges):** It is my privilege to publicly acknowledge the many and important contributions to the community of Richmond Hill and to the province of Ontario by His Worship Mayor William Bell, who will retire from public office on November 30, 2006.

Mayor Bell has served our community with distinction for more than a quarter century, both as councillor and, for 18 of those years, as mayor, having been elected mayor of Richmond Hill in 1988. In addition to his many civic responsibilities, Mayor Bell has served as the chairman of the York region transportation and works committee, as honorary chair of the Sport for Kids Foundation, as honorary trustee of the York Central Hospital, and as honorary director of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind in York region. His principled and inspired leadership and genuine concern for the people of our community have been recognized and acknowledged by all levels of government, and I have considered it a privilege to work with him on behalf of our shared constituency.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Mayor Bell's wife, Jackie, and his two daughters, Julie and Kate, for their steadfast support of his public service. We recognize the many personal sacrifices they have made as a family for the benefit of the community their husband and father has served with such distinction.

On behalf of all members of the Ontario Legislature, I am pleased to extend to His Worship Mayor William Bell and his wife, Jackie, our gratitude for their service to Richmond Hill, to York region and to the province of Ontario. I know that all members of the Legislature will join me in extending our sincere best wishes for many years of health and happiness and for success in their future endeavours, whatever they may be.

## OTTAWA SWIM CLUB

## CLUB DE NATATION D'OTTAWA

**Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans):** On Friday, November 10, I had the privilege of presenting a grant for an organization that not only fosters the growth and well-being of youth in Orléans, but also sparks their competitive edge, fostering in them a sense of self-confidence.

At the Ray Friel complex in my riding, I presented a cheque for \$16,200 from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to the Ottawa Swim Club, a non-profit organization that provides an open and transparent swim environment where young people of all ages can develop their swimming ability. The goal of the club is to be the centre of excellence for competitive high-performance swimming in the Ottawa area. This type of competition instills in young people the importance of physical activity and leading an active lifestyle at a young age. Competing in a

sport like swimming shows how healthy living can help you to excel in other areas of life.

La Fondation Trillium de l'Ontario, organisme relevant du ministère de la Culture, reçoit chaque année du gouvernement 100 \$ millions provenant de l'initiative des casinos de bienfaisance de la province.

La fondation accorde des subventions aux organismes de bienfaisance et aux organismes sans but lucratif admissibles oeuvrant dans les secteurs des arts et de la culture, de l'environnement, des services sociaux et des sports et loisirs.

The grant that I presented on Friday will be used to provide training to coaches and swimmers, allowing them to compete at their very best. They will also purchase new exercise and monitoring equipment which will track the underwater performance of swimmers during competitions.

I was proud to present this grant to the Ottawa Swim Club and I look forward to attending their swim meets to cheer on our Orléans athletes.

#### TOM TAYLOR

**Mrs. Julia Munro (York North):** I rise today to pay tribute to Tom Taylor, who is retiring this year as mayor of Newmarket.

Tom Taylor was first elected to Newmarket council in 1962. He has served as a town councillor and regional councillor and, for the last nine years, as the mayor of Newmarket. As councillor and mayor, he has always been ably supported by his wife, Kate, and their four children.

A founding director of York region Habitat for Humanity, Tom Taylor also served as the first chair of Housing York Inc., which operated more than 1,700 non-profit housing units.

Many of Tom Taylor's key struggles in public life have been to help manage the incredible growth of Newmarket while preserving the quality of life and of the environment for Newmarket residents. He has worked hard on many environmental concerns, including the Oak Ridges moraine, the Holland River, and fighting against pollution.

Tom may be retiring as mayor, but we all know that his commitment to the betterment of the lives of local residents as a private citizen will continue. On behalf of all of my constituents in York North, I would like to thank Tom for his service and dedication to the people of Newmarket. Congratulations on a job well done.

#### VISITORS

**Mr. Tim Peterson (Mississauga South):** I rise to recognize two people in the gallery, Mr. Terry Butt and Mr. Dave Cook. Mr. Dave Cook has written two books on the Dixie area, the most recent being *From Frozen Ponds to Beehive Glory*, which details in great accuracy the history of that area and is one of the great examples of community-building in Mississauga South. Mr. Butt is

with him today as the financier and the promoter of these books. Thank you for allowing me to introduce them to the House.

#### FIRST NATIONS CHILDREN

**Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa):** I rise today to recognize and give thanks to a number of groups and organizations, of which there are so many in Oshawa, for a project recently completed.

Over a year ago I had the opportunity to meet with Treaty 7 Grand Chief Stan Beardy, where we discussed the opportunity to have organizations from Oshawa aid distressed youth in the Nishnawbe Aski Nation. Chief Beardy was deeply concerned that far too many First Nations children, especially in rural communities, had developed severe social problems at a very young age and were becoming severely troubled and/or distressed. He demonstrated that in many of these communities children are not often given the opportunity to participate in quality recreational activities because of the lack of resources and/or accessibility to equipment to take part. We agreed that if more access to recreational equipment was realized, this could go a long way in assisting the troubled youth in these communities.

My staff and I, and a large number of Oshawa organizations, worked hard over the summer and the fall. I'm glad to say we were able to send nearly a transport truck load of equipment to aid youth of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation and give them opportunities: hundreds and hundreds of pairs of skates, over 100 full sets of team hockey jerseys, sticks, pants, gloves, helmets, dozens of pieces of goalie equipment and numerous other sports equipment as well.

I would like to take this opportunity personally to thank Rockbrune Bros. Moving for moving the goods to the north, Dave and Jill and all at Crow's Sports for their hard work, the Oshawa Minor Hockey Association, the Oshawa Lady Generals and all the individual donors who contributed to such a great cause.

Lastly, remember, as I say in hockey: Never mind the luck. Give it your best and the luck will take care of itself.

#### LOUIS RIEL DAY

**Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York):** Today, November 16, is the day that people come from all across Ontario, the Metis people in particular, to celebrate Louis Riel Day here at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Today, in spite of the rain, there were more than 100 people who showed up, and I'm proud to say that speakers came from all three parties to address that multitude.

The people who were there from the Metis associations talked about the struggles of a people that continue after more than 120 years and that there seems to be no end to the struggles and what is happening to them. The speakers talked about the injustices of the Metis going back 120 years, most famously, of course, of

Louis Riel, a learned and educated man, a man who wrote poetry, a man who was the father of his people, a man who is today recognized as a father of Confederation, and who was hanged. They talked about the fact that the Parliament of Canada denied him, in spite of the fact he was elected three times, an opportunity to take his seat. They talked about Ontario and this Legislature's role in putting a bounty on his head.

But they also talked about the present and about what is happening to the Metis people and the continuation of their struggle for aboriginal rights. I was most appalled to hear that Canada is one of only two nations on earth which have voted against the UN resolution on aboriginal rights. They are continuing to struggle, and we are all with them.

#### LIGHTHOUSE PROGRAM

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce):** At the beginning of November, I had the opportunity to visit one of the schools in my riding for another important announcement about education in the province of Ontario. Port Elgin-Saugeen Central School was named one of Ontario's Schools on the Move under the Ministry of Education's Lighthouse program. This is the second school in Huron–Bruce to receive this honour, joining St. James separate school in Seaforth, which was announced earlier this year. These schools were selected, along with 21 other Ontario elementary schools, for outstanding literacy and numeracy results over the past three years. These 23 schools will now play an important role in boosting student achievement across the province by sharing their best practices and strategies with other schools.

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The Ministry of Education has provided resources and support to all of these schools to assist in developing and sharing its unique lessons, materials and other resources with educators. Throughout the current school year, teachers from these schools will assist others across the province by delivering presentations, participating in model classroom programs and exchanging information during in-person visits and through virtual visits using Internet technology.

This program is one of the many that the McGuinty government is supporting in an effort to continually improve Ontario's once-faltering education system. Helping successful schools share their best practices with other schools across the province is part of this government's strategy to ensure that 75% of the students meet provincial standards in reading, writing and math by 2008.

**Mr. Dave Levac (Brant):** On a point of order, Speaker: It's a little unorthodox, but I believe the member from Mississauga South made a slight mistake by not asking for unanimous consent or seeking a point of order to introduce somebody in the gallery. It ended up being a rotation. I seek unanimous consent to have the rest of the rotation back the way it should be.

**The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown):** Is there unanimous consent to continue the rotation? Agreed.

#### KINDERGARTEN

**Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex):** Calling All Three-Year-Olds: This is the name of the kindergarten registration program created through a wonderful partnership by the Perth county health unit, their sister organization in Huron county, and both the Avon Maitland District School Board and the Huron Perth Catholic District School Board. It is entering into a second successful year.

Those of us who are parents know the incredible ability of our children to overcome challenges, most especially if these potential problems are caught as early as possible.

This creative joint program provides a free cognitive evaluation for all children registering for JK to determine areas in which they may need extra help. Moreover, parents are given contacts to community services where help can be found.

The Ontario government has invested a total of \$17.5 billion in education this year. Much of this has been targeted at early learning, ensuring that class sizes for children in kindergarten to grade 3 are limited to 20 students by 2007-08. I'm proud that both school boards are provincial leaders in this regard. Smaller class sizes build on the skills parents develop with their children at home. Teachers in smaller classes are able to give greater attention to each individual child, focusing on early literacy and numeracy skills, preparing them fully for further education.

I applaud the efforts and success of the Perth county health unit, our neighbours in Huron county and both the public and separate school boards which I share with my friend the member for Huron–Bruce. Combined with the groundbreaking investments of the Ontario government, we are together ensuring a brighter future for children in my riding.

#### LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

**Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh):** Unlike the leader of the official opposition, who is still convinced that my riding is striving for one hospital when in fact we have three hospital redevelopment projects on the go, I believe in doing research. I know what the McGuinty government stands for: good government that works with the people and that believes in delivering in terms of infrastructure, education and health care.

In trying to determine what John Tory stands for, apart from rhetoric, I have been reading some of his party's material. Unfortunately, there isn't much there. One thing I did read and note with interest was their white paper A Prosperous Ontario. Here is a quote from that paper: "A strong economy creates the prosperity that enables us to invest in the services that are important to all of us, services such as health care and education."

This stands against what Mr. Tory has said. He has stated in this House his intention to cut \$2.5 billion from health care and to take money out of public education to promote private schools. Under the McGuinty government, my riding is finally starting to recover from the neglect it suffered on these fronts in the past. We do not want to take a step backwards when so much progress has been made.

I would like to invite the Leader of the Opposition to admit that he has made a mistake, that cutting funding to health care and education will harm the people of Ontario and my riding of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh, and to publicly commit to supporting our economy by investing in services, not cutting them.

Of course, Ontario always has a leader committed to these things, and his name is Dalton McGuinty.

#### GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

**Mr. David Oraziotti (Sault Ste. Marie):** I rise in the House today to speak about a number of key areas where the McGuinty government continues to demonstrate strong leadership: in particular, health care, education and infrastructure.

For the first time in Ontario's history, our government is tracking wait times on key procedures. This allows more Ontarians to receive the medical assistance they need when they need it. We've provided funding for the hiring of well over 4,000 nurses, while the previous government spent their time firing them and the NDP simply tore up their contracts.

The previous government closed 28 hospitals, while our government is building new ones and expanding others, including a commitment to fund an unprecedented 90% of capital costs for a new hospital in Sault Ste. Marie.

Our government has focused on reducing class sizes, improving ESL programs and getting resources to students. As a result, test scores are up, graduation rates are up, and there's now peace and stability in our schools.

Our ReNew Ontario strategy will provide \$30 billion in funding by 2009-10 for Ontario's aging infrastructure, which includes improving vital resources such as hospitals, roads and bridges.

Let's be clear: If the members opposite had chosen to make the necessary investments when they were in government, Ontario would not have the infrastructure deficit it faces today. The average family in Ontario can now look and see evidence of our investments in their communities and in our children's futures. I'm proud of our government's record and of the progress we have made to date for all Ontarians.

#### VISITORS

**Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour):** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: I'd ask all members in the House to welcome the students, staff and parents from

Faith Christian Academy, St. Thomas, in the riding of Elgin–Middlesex–London. Welcome to Queen's Park.

### REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

#### STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

**Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln):** I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on estimates.

**The Acting Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum):** Mr. Hudak from the standing committee on estimates reported the following resolutions:

Resolved that supply in the following amounts and to defray the expenses of the following ministries and offices be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007:

Ministry of Education, vote 1001, ministry administration—

**Interjection:** Dispense.

**The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown):** Dispense.

#### STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

**Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton):** I beg leave to present a report on child care activity from the standing committee on public accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

**The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown):** Further debate?

**Mr. Sterling:** As I said yesterday when presenting another report, the public accounts committee reviews the recommendations of the auditor and asks that the deputy minister, in this case, Ms. Judith Wright, come forward and explain to the committee how the ministry is going to meet the objectives and observations of the auditor.

The committee noted, as did the auditor, that a big part of the problem with regard to child care in Ontario relates to knowing what the needs of various different communities are. This relates to a problem with regard to the information systems which the ministry has in place. There is a disparity amongst the various different parts and regions of the province as to how information is kept with regard to waiting lists for child care spaces. There also is no information as to how many of those child care spaces that are being waited for are for subsidized or for full-paying child care.

The bulk of the report of the public accounts committee relates to recommendations as to how these systems should be improved and calling on the ministry to report to the committee how those improvements are taking place.

With that, I move adjournment of the debate.

**The Speaker:** Mr. Sterling has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

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#### VISITOR

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park):** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I want to introduce a guest we are proud to have here. This is Shannon Hogan. She's from the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association provincial office, a long-time best friend of yours truly and a professor at York University. We're proud to have her.

### STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

#### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues):** Earlier this morning, I was privileged to meet a group of grades 7 and 8 students from St. Michael Catholic School in Toronto and was very happy to have Ms. Hogan at our event as well, representing OECTA. They joined me to participate in the launch of a new public education campaign. This public education campaign is part of our \$68-million domestic violence action plan. It outlines our commitment to better support the victims of domestic violence and prevent abuse from happening in the first place. It's a groundbreaking campaign.

Governments have not traditionally been involved in public education on this subject matter, but it's a crucial component to the eradication of domestic violence. It recognizes the importance of healthy, equal relationships to the future success of our children and youth. It's a campaign that will help boys and girls understand that abuse is not okay.

Statistics also show that 37% of spousal assaults are witnessed by children. Unfortunately, some learn at a very early age the abusive patterns of behaviour that can be difficult to reverse. Boys who see more violence in the home are likely to grow up to be abusers, and girls are more likely to be victims. That's why we're launching this public education campaign. It's part of an early intervention strategy that fights violence at its very core.

The campaign is focused on youth between the ages of eight and 14. We were struck by the information that was elicited from the focus groups that we held, which told us that at very young ages our boys and girls are already getting quite seated in their attitudes about the difference between genders and who plays the stronger role. It really is something that we need to work on very early. This is the time to instill positive values and attitudes about relationships. It teaches boys and girls that they are

fully equal in all relationships. It teaches them to reject violence and to choose healthy, respectful relationships throughout their teenage years and as adults.

The campaign includes a website called EqualityRules.ca. The website is designed specifically for young people aged eight to 14. I will add that fortysomethings also could have great enjoyment at the website. It is interactive and full of important information that will help young people identify abusive behaviour and know what to do. It tells them where to go for help. I urge all young people, and adults who influence them, to visit EqualityRules.ca. Look for the television ads that are being launched by us to drive people to this website, which talks about the kinds of healthy relationships that we have to insist on for our young people and for our adults. Let's stop the violence before it begins.

#### STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT RENDEMENT SCOLAIRE

#### **Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education):**

The McGuinty government is providing new funding and resources so that thousands of elementary students at almost 800 schools will receive intensive support in reading, writing and math. This is consistent with what we have been doing so far. Our government realizes that every child learns differently, that every child benefits from individual attention and that schools need specialized resources so they can help each student reach his or her full potential. That's why we're committed to providing Ontario schools with proven tools and resources that help kids excel in reading, writing and math.

Our government's \$25-million investment will particularly target elementary schools where at least two thirds of the students have achieved below the provincial standard on Education Quality and Accountability Office tests over the past three years.

Cependant, toutes les écoles de la province auront accès aux ressources et aux approches novatrices éprouvées qui amélioreront le rendement des élèves.

The Ontario-focused intervention partnership, or OFIP, combines the literacy and numeracy secretariat strategy with the successful turnaround team's approach, which substantially improved student achievement in many schools. In the first phase of the turnaround program, 84% of schools showed dramatically improved results.

My ministry's literacy and numeracy secretariat has developed a made-in-Ontario strategy based on proven practices in international jurisdictions such as Australia and Great Britain. Some of these strategies that have maximum impact on student achievement are uninterrupted blocks of time for reading, writing and math, using common assessment tools and providing professional learning support for staff.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, the government has set a target of 75% of grade 6 students meeting or exceeding the provincial standard in reading, writing and math by



2008. In fact, nearly 900 schools, or a quarter of elementary schools in Ontario, had at least 75% of students achieving at the provincial standard in grade 6 reading and writing in 2005-06. In 2002-03, fewer than 450 schools met the provincial standard in reading, so we've come a long way in three short years. Indeed, province-wide tests from the 2005-06 school year show that, overall, 64% of Ontario students are meeting or exceeding the provincial standards in reading, writing and math. That's a 10-percentage-point increase, up from 54% in 2002-03, which was the school year before we took office.

Il est évident que les élèves profitent déjà des initiatives prises par notre gouvernement pour aider un plus grand nombre d'élèves de l'élémentaire à réussir.

We have provided funding to hire 3,600 teachers. This will reduce the number of students in JK to grade 3 classes to a maximum of 20 in 90% of classes by 2007-08. We are providing a more well-rounded education with funding to hire 1,600 elementary specialist teachers in areas such as music, phys ed and the arts, and we have trained more than 12,000 teachers and principals in shared reading and 1,600 in differentiated instruction.

We're building on the tremendous improvement Ontario kids are making in reading, writing and math. EQAO tests do not capture the whole story of learning, but these additional resources will ensure that each of our students will have a firm foundation for becoming well-rounded citizens, ready and well-prepared for the future.

## ALPHABÉTISATION DES ADULTES

### ADULT LITERACY

**L'hon. Christopher Bentley (ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités):** Notre gouvernement a fréquemment confirmé qu'il existe un lien entre la réussite de notre province et la réussite de notre population. C'est pourquoi nous avons effectué d'importants investissements dans l'éducation élémentaire, secondaire et postsecondaire ainsi que dans l'apprentissage et la formation.

Today, I want to emphasize our government's efforts to improve adult literacy for two reasons: First, we want to give all people a chance to reach their potential by helping them access opportunity to upgrade the basic skills they need to prosper; and, second, because Ontario will only reach its potential when every Ontarian reaches theirs.

When Ontario boosts its overall literacy, our economic growth and overall productivity goes up as well. Strong literacy and numeracy skills help workers to perform at a higher level, thereby enhancing our workforce and our economy. In fact, a 2004 Statistics Canada study found that a rise of 1% in average literacy scores is associated with an eventual 2.5% increase in productivity and a 1.5% increase in gross domestic product.

Our government is committed to providing all Ontarians with the opportunities they need to reach their

potential. That's why I'm pleased today to announce that we're expanding our support for adult literacy with two important initiatives.

First, our government is investing \$10 million this year in academic upgrading, more than doubling our investment so that we can provide enhanced services. Through our literacy and basic skills services, we help adults who have left school gain the literacy, numeracy and essential skills they need. Academic upgrading is part of this program. It provides an alternate route to higher education and training for people who have left the school system. It helps them prepare for success in college and apprenticeships, and it gives people who might otherwise be stuck in low-paying jobs new hope for advancement and a brighter future.

### 1400

The new funding announced today will add community organizations and school boards to the community colleges who are already our partners in delivering this program. It will enable us to include customized program content to accommodate various learning styles. It will allow us to support learners in rural or remote locations or those who cannot access in-person services by providing more resources for online learning, in addition to classroom and group sessions. Overall, these enhancements will help us better reach groups that face barriers getting employment and training.

This morning I visited the Alexandra Park Neighbourhood Learning Centre in Toronto. This centre is located in an area where there's a high rate of youth unemployment, and one of the issues in the community is the need to help single mothers. Thanks to our new initiative, Alexandra Park will partner with George Brown College to deliver academic upgrading services targeted to single mothers who left school in grade 9 or 10 and to unemployed adults. The government will provide \$57,000 to them to introduce and run the program, including funding to offset the costs of child care services to accommodate learners. This is in addition to the almost \$120,000 the centre is receiving to offer literacy and basic skills programming.

This year, the McGuinty government is investing close to \$70 million province-wide in literacy programming, which means that 49,000 learners will have the opportunity to receive literacy and basic skills services, and of those, 4,200 will participate in academic upgrading.

Our government also wants to enhance the importance of adult literacy through a community-based initiative called Celebrating Literacy. Local boards in 10 communities across Ontario are being invited to bring together literacy program providers, employers, unions and learners to develop local campaigns to raise awareness of the value of literacy in building both a healthy community and a healthy economy. Each Celebrating Literacy campaign will encourage innovative new partnerships and the development of best practices in building literacy awareness and providing literacy services.

Lastly, I want to note that all of Ontario's adult literacy services are now accessible through Employment

Ontario, the province's new integrated training and employment network, which strengthens pathways to post-secondary education, apprenticeship and employment. Through Employment Ontario, we're providing better access to more opportunities for people to choose and train for careers that are in demand and for employers to find and train the employees they need.

With the help of our dedicated and growing community of people providing literacy services, we're working to ensure that everyone in Ontario has the tools they need to prosper in the economy of the 21st century.

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

#### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby–Ajax):** I'm pleased to respond on behalf of the PC caucus to the minister's announcement of the government's new initiative for youth, EqualityRules.ca. There's no question that educating our children to be strong, independent and assertive young citizens is extremely important; therefore, I commend the minister on recognizing this as an important priority.

I also commend the minister for targeting some of this education towards the prevention of domestic violence against women and children. Early education is important in curbing violent behaviour among youth in our schools and preventing abusive behaviour later in life. I'm very happy to see that this government has taken a step to address this very important issue.

I will say, however, that I will be anxiously awaiting evidence that this initiative actually produces appreciable results. From a government famous for photo ops and re-announcements, this could just be another day, another website. Between the government's wasteful spending of taxpayer dollars on self-congratulatory television ads and a wait times campaign that does nothing to actually reduce wait times, it's not unreasonable to be wary of the fact that this could simply just be window dressing. I'm hoping that this is not just another waste of taxpayers' money but an initiative that actually serves to educate our children.

#### STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

**Mrs. Julia Munro (York North):** On behalf of John Tory and the PC caucus, I'm pleased to respond to the Minister of Education's comments today. Clearly, we stand on the side of literacy education, but I would like to begin by quoting a statement from the minister's press release today: "The government's \$25-million investment will target elementary schools where at least two thirds of students have achieved below the provincial standard on Education Quality and Accountability Office tests over the past three years."

My question is, how does the minister know this? The answer is simple: because of the work of the EQAO.

The EQAO was established by the former PC government as an independent, arm's-length organization

to develop, administer and report on the province-wide literacy tests for Ontario students.

On October 19, 2005, the words of Dalton McGuinty's special adviser on education on standardized tests were quoted into the record as follows: "Eight years after standardized tests in Ontario, there is mounting proof that scores are providing schools with the power tool to pinpoint how to help children learn."

The former PC government had the foresight to implement these tests to ensure that we could indeed identify where improvements need to take place. It is because of these standardized tests, which the McGuinty Liberals have so strenuously opposed since day one, that the government, the schools, their principals and parents can focus on where to make improvements in our education system, and that we can put the appropriate resources behind the teaching of these classes and into the classroom.

The minister's statement today is an admission that the standardized province-wide tests that the former PC government implemented to improve education in this province are indeed vital to the education system, and that without them the minister would not be making her statement today.

#### ADULT LITERACY

**Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey):** I'm happy to respond to the minister of Training, Colleges and Universities' statement. I think you'll find that all members of this House would support initiatives to enhance adult literacy here in Ontario. While I commend the minister for today's announcement, I hope it's not just a diversion from some of the other issues the minister has failed to address in his portfolio.

As usual, the minister and his cohorts keep wandering the province claiming they have spent \$6.2 billion in post-secondary education when in reality you are going to spend half that amount before the next election and you know it. This is the government that promised to freeze tuition fees, but now we see tuition fees going higher and higher on their watch.

As the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance correctly pointed out recently, "A detached look at the numbers reveals that the public should not be left with the impression that all is well with higher education."

Yesterday, I met with the Ontario Colleges and University Faculty Association, and they expressed a number of concerns, which included the ability for universities to effectively manage the need for postgraduate spaces in our universities and to provide the faculty needed to teach those classes.

They have announced that they are going to open up to 14,000 additional spaces for graduate students, but they have not put one penny toward hiring new faculty, and you're going to see the student-faculty ratios go through the roof like nothing we've ever seen before. I think the most astounding thing the minister and his cohorts in the Liberal Party in the province keep saying is that their

student access guarantee will make sure every student has access to an Ontario college or university. Yet in estimates, he admitted that 20,000 students in this province—

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

#### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park):** It's always a pleasure to respond to another Liberal website and another Liberal web campaign, and it's a pleasure to respond to Ms. Sandra Pupatello, who, as a so-called feminist, led a smear campaign against myself—one of her sisters—in the last by-election.

To get on to how we produce equality, here's how we do it: First of all, we have a \$10-an-hour minimum wage, a living wage, in Ontario.

*Interjections.*

**Ms. DiNovo:** Time, please, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York):** No, no. Just keep going, keep going.

**Ms. DiNovo:** A living wage for dignity and security; a living wage that allows mainly women—single mothers—to have some dignity to pay the rent and feed the children.

Second, we want the \$300 million this McGuinty government promised for child care.

Third, and this is so important, we need guaranteed mandatory women's studies in high schools. I was sitting with my colleague Ms. Shannon Hogan in that very members' gallery over a year ago with the Miss G\_\_\_ Project, which wants women's studies in high schools but still hasn't got funding for women's studies. We need that.

Last, of course, we need an end to the clawback of the national child benefit supplement, because without that, our poorest children are still poor.

And I love the fact that Ms. Pupatello is not even listening; I love it that she is not even listening. Shame, shame.

#### ADULT LITERACY

**Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth):** I rise to respond to Minister Bentley's comments about adult education and adult literacy.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, adult education in this province is in turmoil, and the cuts keep happening. There's no grant for adult general interest and seniors' programming in Ontario's education formula. Across Ontario, this means these programs are being cancelled because boards don't have the funds to keep them going. The Canadian Adult and Community Education Alliance notes that fees for general-interest adult courses have risen 115% in the past five years, forcing many seniors to opt out.

Here's a short list of school boards that have made cuts to adult education in this past budget year: the French public board for southwestern Ontario, the Keewatin-Patricia District School Board, the Algonquin

and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board, and the Toronto District School Board. When trustees at the Dufferin-Peel Catholic board refused to cut adult education, the McGuinty Liberals kicked them out, took them out of their jobs, and are now making the cuts themselves.

People for Education report a 17% drop in the number of continuing education programs over the last decade.

Jack Henshaw, of Citizens for Lifelong Learning, said that the Ontario Liberals rallied with seniors in 2003 to protect adult education from cuts by the previous Conservative government. Three years later, these programs remain unfunded by the province, and seniors are again fighting to protect them.

This government has no reason to have any pride whatsoever in its record on these matters.

#### STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

**Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York):** It's my privilege today to respond to the Minister of Education. I listen very carefully to what she has to say, as I try to listen very carefully to every member. But I also listen very carefully to what the teachers of Ontario have to say about the EQAO as well. What they tell me is virtually at dead odds to what the minister has to say. They tell me that this test has everything to do with politics and virtually nothing to do with learning. The teachers of Ontario tell me that the marks are rising, not because the kids are learning more but because the test keeps getting easier and easier every year. The teachers of Ontario tell me that they are forced to teach to the test and not to what is best for their students. The teachers of Ontario tell me that the EQAO is neither independent nor transparent.

What I would like to hear personally from the Minister of Education is something that she has long promised to do and has failed to do so far. I'm looking forward to the day when she will stand up and make a real announcement in this House, and the real announcement I want to hear is that she and her government are finally going to fix the flawed funding formula, something that she campaigned on in the last election, something she has talked incessantly about, something that needs to be done. That's what really needs to be talked about in this House. When is the minister going to fix the flawed funding formula so that schools have specialist teachers, so that they have teaching assistants, so that the system actually—

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

#### VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown):** We have with us in the Speaker's gallery a parliamentary delegation from the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, led by Mrs. Nguyen Thi Hoai Thu, the chairwoman of the committee for social affairs of the National Assembly of Vietnam. Join me in warmly welcoming our guests.

## DEFERRED VOTES

### MINISTRY OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES CONSUMER PROTECTION AND SERVICE MODERNIZATION ACT, 2006

### LOI DE 2006 DU MINISTÈRE DES SERVICES GOUVERNEMENTAUX SUR LA MODERNISATION DES SERVICES ET DE LA PROTECTION DU CONSOMMATEUR

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 152, An Act to modernize various Acts administered by or affecting the Ministry of Government Services / Projet de loi 152, Loi visant à moderniser diverses lois qui relèvent du ministère des Services gouvernementaux ou qui le touchent.

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

*The division bells rang from 1414 to 1419.*

**The Speaker:** Mr. Phillips has moved second reading of Bill 152, An Act to modernize various Acts administered by or affecting the Ministry of Government Services.

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

#### Ayes

Bartolucci, Rick	Jeffrey, Linda	Phillips, Gerry
Bentley, Christopher	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Boutrogianni, Marie	Kular, Kuldip	Pupatello, Sandra
Bradley, James J.	Kwinter, Monte	Qadri, Shafiq
Broten, Laurel C.	Levac, Dave	Racco, Mario G.
Brownell, Jim	Marsales, Judy	Ramal, Khalil
Bryant, Michael	Martel, Shelley	Ramsay, David
Cansfield, Donna H.	McGuinty, Dalton	Ruprecht, Tony
Caplan, David	McMeekin, Ted	Sandals, Liz
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	McNeely, Phil	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Meilleur, Madeleine	Smitherman, George
Crozier, Bruce	Milloy, John	Tabuns, Peter
Delaney, Bob	Mitchell, Carol	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dhillon, Vic	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Watson, Jim
Dombrowsky, Leona	Oraziotti, David	Wilkinson, John
Duguid, Brad	Parsons, Ernie	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	Peters, Steve	Zimmer, David
Gerretsen, John	Peterson, Tim	

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

#### Nays

Chudleigh, Ted	Miller, Norm	Scott, Laurie
Elliott, Christine	Munro, Julia	Tascona, Joseph N.
Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Wilson, Jim
Hudak, Tim	Runciman, Robert W.	Yakabuski, John

**The Deputy Clerk (Ms. Deborah Deller):** The ayes are 53; the nays are 12.

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

**Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services):** I would ask that the bill be referred to the standing committee on social policy.

**The Speaker:** So ordered.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### GOVERNMENT SPENDING

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville):** To the Premier: Yesterday, we launched wastebusters.ca as part of our campaign to blow the lid off McGuinty government waste. In the last 24 hours alone, we've received dozens of stories from Ontarians upset at how this government mismanages their tax dollars, outraged at how this government daily breaks its promise to spend dollars wisely.

Yesterday, we heard about a \$2.5-million commercial—one commercial—this government ran about education, and, again in the Ministry of Education, we heard about a 1,277% increase in spending on consultants, despite a promise from you not to use consultants, and \$1.2 million spent on hotels; all money not spent on students. Now we find out there's nearly \$4.5 million spent by the Minister of Education on spin doctors.

Premier, \$4.5 million would wipe out the deficits of the Limestone District School Board and the District School Board Ontario North East. Why are you spending the money on spin doctors rather than in the classrooms?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation):** I'm sure that my good colleague opposite will be interested in a few facts by way of comparison between what we've been doing in our government through expenditures in comparison to the previous government. When it comes to consultants, we've reduced the use of consultants by 34%. That's a savings so far to the people of Ontario of \$225 million. When it comes to government advertising, on average, ministry spending on advertising is down 34%. Expenses for Conservative ministers and parliamentary assistants: We have spent 21% less than the previous government did. When we combine my office, the Premier's office, together with the cabinet office, we are down 19%. I'll put our expense record up against the previous government's any day.

**Mr. Runciman:** The Premier is treating—

*Interjections.*

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

**Mr. Runciman:** The Premier is treating hard-working taxpayers with disdain by thinking he can slough off his own promises made to get elected. Spin doctors, commercials and consultants are the education priorities of the government. In addition to the money spent on spin doctors, consultants and commercials, the government spent nearly \$1.2 million on hotels. Watching this government try and justify that yesterday was like watching

an excerpt with the Keystone Cops. The Premier says, "They have to travel because we don't want them holed up in the Mowat Block at Queen's Park." Then we find out they're Toronto hotels, and the minister says, "Well, we want them to travel because we're holed up at the Mowat Block."

Seriously, they're obviously not getting their money's worth from their spin doctors. Why do they insist on trying to justify this wasteful mismanagement of taxpayers' dollars? Why aren't you putting this money into classrooms? Answer that question.

**Hon. Mr. McGuinty:** Again, I hope these figures are placed on this new website. Our expenditures on consultants are down 34% in comparison to the previous government. Government advertising expenditures are down by 34%. Conservative ministers and parliamentary assistants: our expenditures are down 21%. The Premier's office and cabinet office: my expenditures are down 19%. If the people of Ontario want to know who the waste busters are, they're sitting on this side of the House.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Runciman:** Well, with a \$17-billion increase in spending in the history of this government, I don't think they're waste busters at all.

Let's put this \$1.2 million spent on hotels in context. In order for this government to spend \$1.2 million at hotels for the period of time in which they spent it, they would have had to book 9,193 nights at these hotels: 1,181 at the Courtyard Marriott, 1,624 at the Delta, 1,194 at the Royal York, and 1,204 nights at the Sheraton hotel. In order for this government to spend as much as they've spent on hotels, they would have had to book 25 hotel rooms a night, every night for 365 straight days. It's outrageous nothing short of outrageous.

This government needs to get its priorities straight. Is the Premier still going to stand in his place and try to justify this disgusting waste of taxpayers' dollars?

**Hon. Mr. McGuinty:** I've given the figures a couple of times now, and I'm sure they'll appear shortly on that website set up by the Conservatives.

The member opposite now pretends that he's a champion of public education, and yet it is party policy to take money out of public schools, should they form the government, and put that money into private schools. That's what they're prepared to do.

We are prepared to put up our record against their record any day when it comes to public education in Ontario, whether you're talking about class sizes, test scores, graduation rates and the peace and stability that happily prevails inside each and every one of our public schools throughout the province of Ontario. No, we will not apologize for taking the necessary steps and making the necessary efforts to reach out to the broader education community so that in a co-operative and collaborative way we can improve the quality of education for all Ontario children.

## COAL-FIRED GENERATING STATIONS

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

My question is for the Premier. Premier, now that you have broken your promise to the people of Ontario not once, not twice, but three times—three times—don't you think it's about time that you're honest with them? Yesterday, when grilled by reporters about your flip-flop on your coal promise, you replied, "Be careful about the advice you get from experts." This is another classic case of Daltonian deflecto: Dodge, duck and pass the buck.

Premier, this is about your judgment and your credibility. On whose advice were you willing to rely in order to determine an issue as important as the energy future of the province of Ontario? Premier, provide those names now or just admit that you made the whole thing up because you will say anything, you'll do anything, just to get a vote.

1430

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

**Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy):** We remain committed to the fundamental goal of improving emissions and the effluent from coal-fired plants and are moving aggressively to achieve the goal of coal elimination in Ontario. It is an enormous challenge. It's one, I point out, that that party did absolutely nothing about in its eight years in power—absolutely nothing. We remain committed to moving forward on that challenge; to reducing the emissions and to the elimination of coal-fired generation in Ontario, replacing it with clean, green, renewable power. That's in the best interests of the public of Ontario. That's why we made the undertaking we did, and that remains the goal of this party and this government.

**Mr. Yakabuski:** Premier, when you guys want to trot out something that you perceive to be positive on the energy file, your energy minister stands up, puffs himself up like a rooster and says, "We're taking control of the energy file in the province of Ontario," yet when you're about to get egg on your face, you trot out one of your paid insulative agencies, like the OPA, to be the bearer of bad news, to be the ones who reveal that you have broken yet another McGuinty Liberal promise. You can't have it both ways, Premier.

Regarding your promise on coal, people close to the campaign said there was little or no analysis of this.

Premier, I'm going to ask you again. The people have a right to know. You say you've based the future of this province on expert advice. I'm going to ask you again: Please give us those names today or admit that you made the whole thing up just to get votes.

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** The evidence is clear and unequivocal: Coal-fired generation pollutes. Coal-fired generation creates CO<sub>2</sub>; it creates it in amounts that are unsafe and unhealthy. It remains good public policy to get rid of coal-fired generation.

Unlike that member and unlike his party, we will not support the increased use of coal. We will continue to

reduce the emissions associated with coal, to the eventual elimination of coal-fired generation in the province of Ontario. The downsides to coal-fired generation were then and are now a well-documented matter of public record.

I'd invite that member and his colleagues to join us as we move toward the elimination of coal-fired generation, to help us meet the challenge, because in spite of the challenge, it's a worthy objective and one that this government will achieve, ensuring the reliability of—

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

**Mr. Yakabuski:** Premier, an all-party task force came up with the date of 2015. You decided that you were going to do something different just to get votes.

Yesterday you quoted Dr. Phil, even though you reversed it. What you meant to say was: "The best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour." Well, the people of Ontario know exactly what to expect from you down the road. Do you know what? The cauldron is already cooking. You're brewing up another batch of McGuinty's marvelous snake oil because that's what you and your gang over there are going to be spreading out across the province of Ontario in 2007.

It is obvious that you will not reveal the fictitious names that are simply figments of your imagination, because those people don't exist, Premier.

Tell us once and for all that you will say anything, you will do anything, to get a vote. Shame on you.

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** This government and its Premier will do everything and anything to improve the health outcomes of every Ontarian. That's why we're building clean, green power in Sault Ste. Marie and Port Burwell and Melancthon. That's why—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. I need to be able to hear the Minister of Energy.

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** That's why emissions at coal-fired plants are down 17% in total on CO<sub>2</sub>; that's why we're going to continue to move towards the goal aggressively. They make fun of children with asthma; we think it's a serious issue. They make fun of global warming. They join their federal Tory friends and pretend that you don't have to do anything until 2050. We think we have to move aggressively. We look forward to hearing when they'll close down the coal plants, because their leader has been all over the map. First he said he'd do it, then he said he wouldn't do it, then he said at least 10 years, then he said he didn't trust the power authority and then he did. One goal, one objective: Close the coal plants and reduce the emissions for everyone.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, I will not warn you again.

New question, leader of the third party.

**Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River):** My question is for the Premier. For the last four years, you've claimed that the best way to clean up Ontario's air is to shut down the Nanticoke coal-fired plant,

Ontario's biggest polluter. But today we hear that the McGuinty government now plans to "take the focus off when the plants will close and instead talk about reducing emissions." According to one source, your government's biggest problem is "not looking like you've made a 180-degree turn." Premier, does the McGuinty government have a plan to shut down the Nanticoke coal-fired plant, or have you indeed made a 180-degree turn again?

**Hon. Mr. McGuinty:** To the Minister of Energy.

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** We asked the power authority for advice on how to close coal-fired generation. They've offered up some recommendations. We're putting those out for public discussion. And unlike the member opposite, we remain committed to closing all coal-fired generation in the province of Ontario.

**Mr. Hampton:** We discovered yesterday that when asked about the date, this is something else the Premier doesn't want to talk about. Premier, you used to sermonize about how you were going to close the coal-fired plants. Now it seems like this is just a communication message for you. But the reality is that we're in a public health crisis. The Ontario Medical Association says that 5,000 people suffer premature death every year as a result of air pollution. Nanticoke is the single largest polluter in the province, the equivalent of three million cars. For four years you preached that the only thing to do was to shut down Nanticoke. So my question to the Premier again is, do you still believe that the most important thing Ontario can do to clean up our air and reduce greenhouse gas is to shut down Nanticoke?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** I would say to the member opposite, if that's his view, why did he write to us and ask us to put scrubbers on them and keep them around indefinitely? Your letter of September 26, 2005: "Instead of paying private companies to build gas-fired generating units, why not spend money on implementing clean coal technology?" The member likes to have it both ways. The member in northern Ontario likes to say, "Keep the coal plants open," and in southern Ontario, "Close the coal plants."

We acknowledge the challenge and difficulty associated with this. We acknowledge and recognize the matrix of considerations that go into ensuring the cleanest possible source of electricity available. That's why we remain committed. That's why we asked the power authority for its advice. That's why we put out the discussion paper to get public feedback. That's why the goal will be achieved, and it will be achieved over the next few years in a diligent, responsible, prudent fashion that ensures—

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Hampton:** The Ontario Medical Association tells us that 5,000 people die premature deaths in Ontario every year as a result of air pollution, and the McGuinty government's response is to say, "Oh, we're going to change our communication message." Last year in Toronto there were 48 smog days. Seniors and children were forced to stay indoors. More children than ever are suffering from asthma as a result of air pollution.

1440

I say to the Premier, given that Nanticoke is the largest single polluter in Ontario, given that it contributes to 5,000 premature deaths, where is the Minister of Health Promotion in the McGuinty government? Why isn't he demanding a firm date to close Nanticoke instead of a new communications message?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** I respond to the member that all ministers in this government and members of this caucus are proud of the fact that nitrous oxide is down 34%, CO<sub>2</sub> is down 15% since we took office, and SO<sub>2</sub> is down 28%. I think every member of this government and caucus acknowledges that we have more to do and is committed to doing that. That's why we asked the power authority for a plan to phase out the coal-fired generation.

I would say to the member opposite, if that is truly his view, why did he say on CBC radio on March 19, 2004, "I said you can't close all the coal-fired plants"? That's you. That's you, to the leader of the third party.

It is a challenge. It is difficult. We are moving aggressively and with great commitment to eliminating the harmful emissions from coal plants, with the eventual elimination of coal-fired generation in the province of Ontario.

#### ENERGY SUPPLY

**Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River):** My question is for the Premier. In Ontario's energy history, nuclear power has proven to be expensive, unreliable and environmentally risky. Manitoba has abundant water resources capable of supplying Ontario with badly needed—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown):** Order. Stop the clock.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** Howard, can they e-mail us some?

**The Speaker:** Order. I will not warn the Minister of Health again.

**Mr. Hampton:** Yes, you will warn him again and again and again—

**The Speaker:** I will not warn the leader of the third party again.

Leader of the third party.

**Mr. Hampton:** Manitoba has abundant supplies of green, clean water power capable of supplying Ontario with badly needed baseload electricity. Yesterday, the Manitoba government announced that they are proceeding with the Conawapa hydro dam and that Minnesota has signed on to purchase some of that electricity. But there was no mention of Ontario. Premier, with so much clean, green hydroelectricity available from Manitoba, why is the McGuinty government so obsessed with a \$40-billion mega-nuclear scheme?

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

**Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy):** There was a mistake in the reporting of what the Manitoba government said yesterday, and I, unlike the member opposite, had a chance to speak with officials in Manitoba. Negotiations continue on. The extended contract was for an existing contract with the United States, and Manitoba remains very anxious to get a deal with Ontario. We are anxious to get that deal as well. And I'd ask the member opposite, why did you cancel it when you did?

**Mr. Hampton:** It's now clear that the permanent transmission upgrades in order to move Bruce A nuclear units 1 and 2 electricity will not be available. It's equally clear that the McGuinty government will have to use an expensive duct tape solution in order to avoid paying \$460 million a year to Bruce Power in penalties if they are not able to move that electricity. Also, as a result, you have capped the amount of wind power that you will accept from the Bruce Peninsula at a mere 10 megawatts, when much more is available.

My question is this. You've rejected clean, green hydro power from Manitoba. You've capped the amount of clean, green wind power from the Bruce Peninsula. Can the Premier tell us, please: Despite all your photo ops and media spin, isn't it oh, so clear that your real energy plan for Ontario is, "Go nuclear and go big"?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** It's sad that the reality can be put that way. First of all, earlier this week we announced a signed deal with Quebec: 1,250 megawatts of import capacity, clean hydroelectric. The 10-megawatt cap you're referring to is after the RFP. That doesn't include the almost 900 megawatts that are in various stages of development, and some of them are already up and running.

Manitoba is still very much alive and well, even though it was pronounced dead by that member and his government some 10 years ago. With respect to the Bruce transmission issue—absolutely right—we need more transmission. In fact, the old Ontario Hydro recommended as early as 1993, I think it was, that there should have been more transmission to accommodate the wind and biomass opportunities that were available on the Bruce. Unfortunately, you chose not to deal with it. The Tories refused to deal with it. We are dealing with it. We have a cleaner, greener supply of electricity. Next week we are going to be turning on the windmills in Sault Ste. Marie. Ontario—

**The Speaker:** Final supplementary?

**Mr. Hampton:** That's the media spin. Here's the reality: Manitoba has a surplus of clean, green hydroelectricity. Is Ontario there, making a deal? No. The Bruce Peninsula is one of the best potential sources of wind power, yet the McGuinty government is going to cap wind power from the Bruce Peninsula. Your hydroelectricity policy of driving rates through the roof has destroyed thousands of manufacturing jobs in northern Ontario. And what are we left with at the end of the day?

Despite all the photo ops, despite all the media spin, we're left with this: What the McGuinty government is really committed to is, "Go nuclear and go big," with a \$40-billion nuclear scheme. At the end of the day, Premier, at the end of all your waffling and your 180-degree turns, isn't that the reality for Dalton McGuinty: "Go nuclear and go big"?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** The reality is that this government has gone big on renewable clean, green energy in a way that no other government in the history of this province, or any other government in Canada, has ever done.

Let me just read something that the member was quoted as having said in the *Simcoe Reformer* on September 21, 2006. "In a speech to the Royal Canadian Legion in Simcoe, Mr. Hampton criticized the McGuinty government for emphasizing expensive new sources of electricity, such as wind farms, instead of making better use of the power Ontario already produces." So you are against wind. We produce a lot of nuclear power; you're right.

The final point I would make: In the integrated power system plan, Ontario's reliance on nuclear power is actually reduced. It's reduced because of the commitments we've made on renewable and because of our commitment to conservation. He cancelled conservation. He cancelled Conawapa. This government is about clean, green, renewable power and conservation. It's in everyone's health interests and it's certainly in the interest of a cleaner, better environment.

#### LANDFILL

**Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka):** My question is for the Premier. Today in the House a resolution was passed, and I would like to quote from it: that "the Minister of the Environment must confirm that the region impacted by the Green Lane landfill purchase is a 'willing host.'"

You might recall that, when you were in opposition in October 2000, you tabled a similar resolution supporting the concept of a willing host. Premier, what steps are you prepared to take to ensure that the people of London are indeed willing to accept waste from the city of Toronto?

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

**Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment):** I say to the community of Southwold, where this landfill is located, that our ministry takes very seriously the responsibility to ensure that a community is safe and healthy when it hosts a landfill operation, as it has with respect to the Green Lane landfill for more than 30 years.

This community has been host to this site for many years. The McCaig family, who operated this site prior to the purchase by the city of Toronto, has been a good neighbour to that community. All of the many, many issues associated with absolutely ensuring that this site would be safe going forward were examined in the context of a full environmental assessment, because that

environmental assessment examined a variety of issues. Many, many conditions were imposed on that environmental assessment, and that expansion was approved by me with absolute certainty that this community will be safe and protected as that landfill expands.

**1450**

**The Speaker:** Supplementary, the member for Haliburton–Victoria–Brock.

**Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock):** My question is to the Premier. Today the House did pass the resolution mentioned by the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka to clarify the uncertainty surrounding the Green Lane landfill. I can't help but think that if you actually wanted to divert the 60% of waste, we might not be in this mess.

We know that your Minister of the Environment has no plan to reach 60% diversion. We know that across Ontario the diversion rates are shockingly low. In light of the bold steps that the PC Party has taken, firstly, will you admit that you will not reach the promise you made of 60% waste diversion and say that you will now begin to work with us so that we can get things done for waste diversion for the people of London, Toronto and all of Ontario? Will you, Premier, today say that?

**The Speaker:** Minister of the Environment.

**Hon. Ms. Broten:** I suggest to the members opposite that they would be less uncertain if they took the time to read the 28 conditions that have been imposed on the environmental assessment to ensure that this community is safe and protected and the 105 conditions on the certificate of approval: those conditions requiring ground-water monitoring, air monitoring, a variety of protections that we put in place on every single landfill facility in this province, because although we are all rolling up our sleeves to ensure that we increase waste and organics diversion and expand the blue box program—we see household hazardous waste and electronics now being diverted and bottle returns, the many processes that our government is putting in place—we know that we will always have residual waste, and the Green Lane facility, as one example, is the host of such waste. We, at the Ministry of the Environment, ensure every single day that communities across this province are safe and protected, because unlike under your government, we will not—

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

#### PROPERTY TAXATION

**Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York):** In the absence of the Minister of Finance, my question is to the Premier.

Mr. Premier, your so-called property assessment freeze means that in a couple of years Ontarians are going to be whacked with whopping property tax increases. Over the next week, more than a million Ontarians are going to get their new property tax assessments. This is just a hint to them of what is in store in the spring of 2009, when they will get not one but three years' worth of tax increases in the same bill. Moreover, they'll



be forced to pay them. Will you admit that Ontarians will be whacked with this triple whammy in the spring of 2009 if you follow through on your misguided plan?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation):** To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** As the member well knows, as a former mayor, the taxes that people pay are based on two factors: one, their assessment; second, on the local rate that is set by the municipality. So if all the assessments went up in the municipality and the same amount of taxes were required for the services, the rate would come down. Assessment alone does not determine the taxes that people pay. Your statement that taxes will automatically go up as a result of a new assessment that's done three years from now is just plain and simply incorrect, and you should know that.

**Mr. Prue:** There is no sign that your government has any idea whatsoever what you are doing. You chose simply to freeze a system and not to do anything about it. Unlike your government, we came out with some ideas; you've rejected them. I understand that. But at least we have some ideas of where to go in all of this, so that homeowners will not be forced out of their properties because of out-of-control property tax increases.

You are the government. Surely you have more in mind than simply freezing the property taxes until after the next election. What are you going to do to fix Ontario's broken property tax system today?

**Hon. Mr. Gerretsen:** As the member well knows, the previous government took eight different shots at it during their years in office, and none of those bills that they passed helped the residential taxpayers or the property taxpayers out there at all.

We have a report from the Ombudsman, and MPAC is looking at that report. We're making the necessary changes so that once the tax system, in three years, is modified and brings the Ombudsman's recommendations into place, we will have a tax system we can all be proud of, and the people of Ontario will be paying their fair share of the property taxes that the municipalities need in order to provide the services they provide on an ongoing basis.

#### EDUCATION FUNDING

**Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre):** My question is to the Minister of Education. Yesterday the Leader of the Opposition said that money we invest in public education is a waste. It seems the Tories think that we should not be funding smaller classes, that we should not be hiring new teachers, that we should not be investing—

**Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie—Lincoln):** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe a statement was made that was not at all true. I ask him to withdraw that statement.

**The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown):** That is not a point of order. We don't need to play those games during question period.

The member for Scarborough Centre.

**Mr. Duguid:** Yesterday the Leader of the Opposition said that the money we invest in public education is a waste. It seems the Tories think that we should not be funding smaller classes, that we should not be hiring new teachers, that we should not be investing in new literacy programs. Students, parents and educators across this province disagree with that view and want to see the new investments that we're making in public schools. People who care about education in Ontario don't want to see the gains that we have made as a government lost by John Tory's intention to make cuts to education. Could it be that the real reason the Leader of the Opposition is upset is because we're investing in public education instead of private education?

Can the minister please set the record straight for this House and for Ontarians and explain just how the investments in public education are reaching our students in the classroom?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education):** I thank the member for the question. We are very proud that we cancelled the private school giveaway and invested that money instead in public schools. The questions that have come from the opposite side yesterday and today confirm that, like Mike Harris and Ernie Eves before him, the Leader of the Opposition does not believe in public education, does not believe in talking to educators as we're forming policy, and continues to believe that undermining public education is sound policy. We do not hold that that is the case. We are proud of our investment of \$2.7 billion in education. We're proud that our class sizes are going down. We're proud that 6,000 more students stayed in high school last year and graduated. We're proud that every student in this province is getting a shot at reading better, doing their math better and achieving better so they can move on.

**Mr. Duguid:** One of the examples of so-called waste the Leader of the Opposition cited yesterday was travel costs for the Ministry of Education. I know these travel costs include symposiums on important topics like bullying prevention and literacy initiatives. Those are important items. It's also important to keep these administration costs under control. The number cited yesterday was \$1.2 million spent last year on travel and related costs for the Ministry of Education. Since yesterday, has the minister had an opportunity to review public accounts, and can she place these travel expenditures in greater context? Are we spending more or less than the previous Conservative government on these items?

**Hon. Ms. Wynne:** I did have a chance to look at public accounts. First of all, what are being called hotel costs are actually travel costs, and the member has noted that. While the Tories said that we spent \$1.2 million in travel expenses, public accounts for 2002-03 show that the Conservative government spent \$2.5 million in travel expenses. So under the leadership of the member who sits beside the Leader of the Opposition, under Elizabeth Witmer as education minister, the Tory government spent twice as much as we spent on travel expenses.

Here's the thing: What we have done is spent 50% less, and we've done more. I can tell you, I was a parent

when Elizabeth Witmer was in office as the Minister of Education. She didn't want to talk to us; she didn't want to talk to teachers; she didn't want to talk to anyone who was interested in public education. What we've done is used that money to talk to the people on the front line to help us form policy, and we're not going to apologize for that. We're proud of that.

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### CONSUMER PROTECTION

**Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford):** My question is to the Minister of Government Services. As you know, today the Liberal majority passed Bill 152 for second reading. I hope we have meaningful public hearings, because I have hundreds of names on petitions across the province that are against Bill 152.

The McGuinty government did nothing for three years as Susan Lawrence, Elizabeth Shepherd, Paul Reviczky and others were defrauded of their homes and had fraudulent mortgages registered against their homes. Bill 152 ignores them. Why have you turned your back on these victims of fraud who relied to their detriment on a government-run land titles system that failed to protect them?

**Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services):** This is a very serious matter. I would say that we need to keep it in context. We have about 10 title frauds a year in the province out of about two million transactions. That's 10 too many, but that number hasn't changed, really, over the past few years. So title fraud, by every measure I've seen, has not gone up; mortgage fraud, we have to deal with.

The bill has some very significant moves in it. It ensures that if anyone has lost their title fraudulently or any document is registered against their title fraudulently, that transaction will be undone and the rightful owner will have their title restored and won't be responsible for the mortgage. We've got three other significant moves within the bill to deal with this.

That's not all we're doing. I've said publicly that this is an ongoing process that we, the financial markets, the financial community and the real estate community must deal with.

**Mr. Tascona:** But it's not retroactive, Minister.

You've acknowledged that the use of date rape drugs in bars is a serious problem. To great fanfare, your government has held out that Bill 152 is the cure. However, in Bill 152 you've made it optional for bars to apply for the measures needed to protect women from date rape drugs. Why is a woman's right to safety and protection so watered down in Bill 152?

**Hon. Mr. Phillips:** I thought you were going to follow up on real estate fraud, but just to assure the public: We're very much determined to eliminate any real estate fraud.

On the matter you've just raised, which is another part of the bill, I think we've got 15,000 licensed establishments in the province of Ontario. I'm not sure that we

want to say to a Swiss Chalet, "You have to comply with exactly the same regulations you might find in a very large bar." I'm not sure we want to say to our business community that one size fits all. I happen to think that maybe not every Swiss Chalet has to follow exactly the same rules as a large bar. Now, the Conservative Party may disagree with that, but I think the bill responds to the concerns about date rape, ensures that there is a process in place so that any establishment that's concerned about it can deal with it, but we don't impose exactly the same conditions on 15,000 establishments. It seems to me that that's just a proper approach to take with our business community. I think it protects women and protects our business community for making sure that they can—

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

### GRIDLOCK

**Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth):** My question is for the Premier. As you're well aware, the greater Toronto area has a growing gridlock crisis, and yet your government's capital spending on roads and highways outstrips that for transit by two to one. The TTC is starved for funding, gridlock is costing the GTA billions a year, and yet your government is not restoring funding for transit to pre-1995 levels. Will your government wake up to this gridlock juggernaut in the GTA and restore pre-1995 transit funding?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation):** We'll begin with the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

**Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader):** I think that the member raises a very good issue. A previous government downloaded public transit onto municipalities. It has since been uploaded. But at the same time they downloaded it, they significantly cut funding and support to public transit. That's why our government has provided municipalities across the province of Ontario who have public transit systems with two cents of provincial gasoline tax—unprecedented support for public transit. But in addition to that, I had the great pleasure, with the Premier, former Prime Minister Martin and Mayor Miller, to sign an historic agreement: \$1 billion in capital supports for the Toronto Transit Commission. Historic, towards steady good repair, but it didn't just end there: An additional \$1 billion in federal, provincial and municipal support for GO Transit expansion, enhancement and improvement. We have funded public transit to a level you could only dream of.

**Mr. Tabuns:** Ah, so many photo ops, so little action.

Minister, your government, your Liberal members know that gridlock is out of control. In fact, the member for Stoney Creek was talking yesterday about the cobwebs that grow on the front of cars as they inch their way down the QEW. In order to reduce gridlock, to reduce smog, to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases, you need to restore funding for transit to pre-1995 levels:

75% of capital costs from the province; 50% of operating costs. You can talk all you want about some here and some there, but you have not restored the funding that needs to be restored. You know it.

Look at the results. Gridlock is getting worse, not getting better under your watch. When are you going to restore the funding to transit?

**Hon. Mr. Caplan:** My colleague the Minister of Transportation wants in on this farce.

**Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation):** Only the member of the NDP would call \$1 billion nothing. For the last three years alone, this government has given the Toronto transit authority \$1.5 billion for transit; \$830 million to GO Transit in this year alone. By the time 2010 comes around, it would be \$1.2 billion in gas tax, the majority of which goes to the city of Toronto because of its size and its ridership. We have the GTTA, we have the fare card and we've put in place a transit authority to look at not only dealing with the movement of goods from Hamilton to Durham but the regional roads as well.

There's no question: We've got \$3.8 billion in highways and roads in southern Ontario for five years—the first time ever, that kind of strategic planning—\$1.8 billion in the north. And you have the audacity to say we've done nothing? Give me a break.

#### EASTERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

**Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh):** My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, in a recent program, Lorne Wiebe, a prominent radio commentator from my riding of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh, had this to say: “You can't just bring new high-paying companies to town unless they know beforehand that they will have the workforce ready to handle specialized jobs.” This was in reference to the situation in communities like Cornwall, Chesterville and Iroquois that have recently lost high-paying manufacturing jobs. And he has a point.

The people of my riding are willing to work, but they need to have access to the specialized training needed for positions in such fields as technology and pharmaceuticals. My riding is an ideal place for new businesses to settle, and indeed, many have started to do just that. It is important that local residents have access to the training they'll need to fill the positions available in these businesses.

Minister, what is this government doing to assist my constituents and other rural Ontarians with the education and skills training they need to succeed?

**Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities):** I'd like to thank the member from Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh not only for his question but for his advocacy on behalf of the training needs of the region. The fact of the matter is that as a result of his work, several things have happened.

First of all, he advocated for increased opportunities for apprentices to do their in-school training, and we

responded last spring with a \$240,000 announcement to strengthen in-school training in his riding. He called for a strengthening of the Job Connect process in his region. That is a very important process that provides not only counselling and support but directs people on to learning and basic skills or academic upgrading opportunities. We responded with a \$2-million investment to Job Connect in his riding and region. He asked for a change to the adjustment advisory process, and we responded by making it faster—you now get service within an hour—and by providing support for the projects. He's made an incredible difference to the region.

1510

**Mr. Brownell:** I want to express my appreciation to St. Lawrence College and to the director of the campus, my friend Pat Finucan, for their continued good work in pursuing the best education programs for young people in my riding. Specialized education is essential for those considering employment in the sorts of industries my municipal colleagues and I are pursuing for the region.

While such companies will play a big role in the future of my riding, there are many of my constituents who feel their interests lie in working for themselves by forming their own businesses. Indeed, in the wake of the Domtar closure, many former employees of the mill went on to open their own businesses and are starting to experience success.

Minister, what is this government doing to foster entrepreneurial spirit among my constituents and in other areas of rural Ontario?

**Hon. Mr. Bentley:** I refer that to the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

**Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship):** I want to thank the member for asking his question. I'm very pleased to note that most of the people wanted to open their own businesses, and I'm pleased to say that we have about 44 enterprise centres, 32 of them actually in the rural areas, that assist people in opening their own businesses. The Cornwall Business Enterprise Centre alone has assisted 53 new businesses to start in the last six months.

In addition to that, I want to say that there is no better way to start businesses than to encourage an entrepreneurship culture in our youth, and we have excellent programs on that front as well. We have a summer company program in which 307,000 students participated, and most of them were actually from the rural areas. In addition to that, we have given \$1.7 million to the Canadian Youth Business Foundation, which will help 282 students and maybe create about 3,500 new jobs.

I'm very pleased to say that we have excellent programs to encourage entrepreneurship in this province.

#### GRIDLOCK

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton):** My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Gridlock is costing the GTA billions of dollars a year, and this situation is getting worse on your watch. This morning, the Residential and

Civil Construction Alliance released its report on gridlock in the GTA. They have made several recommendations to the government to ensure that gridlock becomes a thing of the past.

The situation is critical. A solution from the McGuinty government is long overdue, and what we have seen so far from this government is nothing but announcements and re-announcements and appointments to boards where no money is flowed. The GTTA, like thousands of motorists on the road, sits idle.

Minister, you continue to dither, delay and deflect responsibility for tackling gridlock in the GTA. When are you going to stop paying lip service to this issue and actually make something happen that really addresses the issue of gridlock in the GTA?

**Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation):** Actually the report that was given out this morning is very much in sync with what the government is currently doing, and we welcome the report. Unlike members across the way who do not care for any expert advice, we welcome the expert advice we've just received.

There is no question that gridlock is a serious issue, but the fact of the matter is that we have, we are and we will continue to address the issue. Again, there's money set aside for the GTTA. We've asked, until after the election, that the people themselves can be elected or unelected. They come from the regions—Hamilton or Durham—they have a strategy in place, and the money is there to start the planning. Without question, it is there. We've given the money.

When you talk about public transit, you heard me say before: \$1.5 billion; \$1.2 billion for all the cities from the gas tax—ongoing, continual funding that is occurring to help relieve gridlock and congestion on our roads.

**Mr. Chudleigh:** I hope the minister's expert advice is better than the expert advice the Premier got on coal-fired plants.

Minister, the reality is that gridlock is choking economic growth in the greater Toronto area. According to the TD Bank, the loss from congestion and shipment delays in the GTA already totals over \$2 billion annually. Not only are your government's punitive tax policies making Ontario as a whole an uncompetitive place for jobs and investment; you can now also take credit for the demise of the entire GTA as the economic engine of Ontario that it should be.

The reality is that your failure to take any real action on the issue of gridlock in the GTA is costing us billions of dollars annually. Unless you stop dithering, delaying and deflecting on this issue, Ontario is doomed to remain the economic caboose of this country.

Minister, when are you going to stop saying things just to get elected and address the real issue of gridlock in the GTA?

**Hon. Mrs. Cansfield:** Again, I welcome the question. I guess the question back is, would you rather cut taxes or invest in the infrastructure for Ontario, which we have done to the tune of \$5.6 billion? But aside from that, if

you really want to talk about reality, the reality is that that party did nothing—I repeat, nothing—on transportation for all of the time they were in there except to download 5,000 kilometres of roads, not give sufficient support, didn't put in a strategic plan, didn't do the investment, actually cancelled public transit investments, and suddenly they are concerned about gridlock? Give me a break again. This is incredible. We've done the investment. We have the money we've put aside: \$1.2 billion in gas tax alone goes to the municipalities, much less \$830 million this year alone for GO Transit. We're working, we know the problem, we've picked up your mess, we're doing something about it, but we're doing it strategically and with sustainability in mind, so it is not a one-off like you did in the past.

#### PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

**Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** I have a question to the Premier. This morning my Bill 30, Safe Needles Save Lives Act, passed second reading and was referred to committee. Also this morning I received 1,500 signed postcards from Ontario health care workers—I'm going to deliver those to you—who want you to make the use of safe needles mandatory in the province, which is what my bill does. Premier, since you didn't have an opportunity to participate in the debate this morning, can you tell me if you support my bill?

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

**Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** It's a privilege to have a chance to talk on this subject again, and by way of supplementary, I'll put the member on notice that the Minister of Labour will want to talk about the work that labour has been doing with the front-line health care providers. As a government, I think people will note that the Legislature did pass the honourable member's bill this morning. That's very noteworthy. I had a chance on my way into the building to speak with the president of ONA, Linda Haslam-Stroud, and to hear about their desire to see more movement on this. There's the acknowledgement that we've invested \$100 million in safe needles, and also in ceiling-mounted and other bed-lift and equipment design to make our front-line health care workers healthier. We acknowledge that there is important work to be done on this point. We appreciate the efforts of the honourable member, and by way of supplementary we'll give the Minister of Labour a chance to talk about the processes that he's been leading at the ministry.

**Ms. Martel:** Premier, needle-stick injuries are a critical health and safety issue. It's estimated that 33,000 needle-stick injuries occur in the health care sector in Ontario every year. It costs the health care system over \$64 million every year for testing and treatment of these injuries. Over and above that are the WSIB costs that are associated with lost-time claims from those who suffer

from needle-stick injuries, and far and away over and above that are the emotional costs to workers and their families as they wait for months to discover whether or not they have contracted a deadly disease.

Premier, it's not good enough for your Minister of Labour to say, as he has, that his health and safety advisory committee might deal with this issue and that your government might do something as a result. What will you do to ensure that this bill gets passed, so that needle-stick injuries become history in Ontario?

**Hon. Mr. Smitherman:** To the Minister of Labour.

**Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour):** I'm very proud to stand behind our record when it comes to health and safety. We had some of the lowest numbers of inspectors in all of Canada upon taking office in 2003. We have moved forward, and we're close to the completion of hiring our 200 inspectors, with many of those inspectors dedicated specifically to the health care sector, and specifically looking out for occupational health and safety-related issues.

I would say to the honourable member that when she was in government, they had an opportunity under section 21 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act to form a committee. They did not do that. This government took action with the creation of a section 21 committee. This committee is allowing the opportunity for both management and labour to meet and talk about those issues that are of importance to the health care sector. That did not exist under her government. The committee has just met for the first time. September 12, 2006, was that first opportunity. I look forward to the recommendations in that committee because those are the front-line individuals who'll bring forth recommendations.

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#### GREAT LAKES CHARTER ANNEX AGREEMENT

**Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans):** My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. As we all know, one of our most valuable natural resources is water. Water is a shared resource, however, and it is a priority for all Ontarians. Ontario shares the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence River basin with Quebec and eight US states. It is up to all levels of government on both sides of the Canada-US border to protect and conserve the waters of the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence River basin.

Minister, could you please explain how the charter annex agreements of December 2005 complement and enhance existing protections for the waters of the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence River basin?

**Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs):** I very much appreciate the interest that the member from Ottawa–Orléans has in the environment, and specifically today, in the Great Lakes.

The charter annex for the Great Lakes provides a framework for each province and state to pass laws that put into place new safeguards for our shared waters. By

setting a high environmental standard across the basin and overseeing water uses, these agreements will help each jurisdiction build a stronger, healthier and more prosperous future for its citizens, its environment and its economy.

If you remember, we here in Ontario insisted on and achieved a virtual ban on diversions. We also achieved a stronger commitment to water conservation, an increased role for science in decision-making and a new commitment enabling dialogue and input from First Nations people.

The charter annex enhances existing protections because we have already put in place strict laws banning water diversions out of the province's three major basins: the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence basin, the Hudson Bay basin and the Nelson River basin out west.

**Mr. McNeely:** Minister, it is refreshing to hear that our province has been a leader in these negotiations that have banned diversions and strengthened water conservation.

Minister, since conservation has been on the minds of Ontarians and, indeed, the world over the past few weeks and especially this week, I thought it would be helpful if you could let us know how this agreement fits into the conservation culture in our province. Minister, what goals and objectives have been set out by the Great Lakes Charter Annex for water conservation?

**Hon. Mr. Ramsay:** Members on this side of the House are very much committed to building a culture of conservation in the province of Ontario.

Regional goals and objectives for water conservation and efficiency will be developed, and they will be reviewed every five years. Each province and state will develop and implement a water conservation and efficiency program. The provinces and states will use a consistent standard to review proposed uses of basin water. This will significantly increase the control of water uses in the Great Lakes states, as there was previously no such standard. Economic development will be fostered through the sustainable use and responsible management of basin waters.

The waters of the basin are recognized as a shared public treasure, and there is a strong commitment to continued public involvement in the implementation of this agreement.

#### EASTERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville):** I have a question for the Premier. The Premier represents an eastern Ontario riding, and he'd be well aware of the fact that many parts of that region are suffering with the manufacturing job losses and the challenges in the agricultural sector.

Earlier this year, this House unanimously passed a motion calling for the creation of an eastern Ontario secretariat, lodged within the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, to provide a window for eastern Ontarians into government. I wrote you many months

ago with respect to passage of this resolution in the House without any objectors. I've had over 100 municipalities write me in support of that resolution and that initiative. Premier, you've failed to respond to my letter. What is your position on the creation of an eastern Ontario secretariat?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation):** What I will do is undertake to the member opposite to look into this and come back to him with a response forthwith.

Let me tell you as well that I share the member's concern about ensuring that eastern Ontario is at all times on the map here at Queen's Park. It's where my home is. It's where there exists continuing tremendous potential.

I must say as well that I'm very optimistic about the recent growth that has taken place there, the job creation that has taken place there. For example, most recently I attended an event in Belleville, where there is a new Kellogg's manufacturing plant going in. That's the first new plant, they tell me, for Kellogg's in North America in some 20 years. Belleville landed that investment, and we were pleased to partner with Kellogg's, by the way, to ensure that we were able to snap that up.

I undertake to the member opposite to get back to him forthwith.

## PETITIONS

### LONG-TERM CARE

**Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the proposed Long-Term Care Homes Act is extremely lengthy and complex and requires full and extensive parliamentary and public debate and committee hearings throughout the province; and

"Whereas the rigid, pervasive and detailed framework proposed is excessive and will stifle innovation and flexibility in the long-term-care sector; and

"Whereas the additional burden, red tape and punitive measures imposed by the proposed legislation will aggravate and exacerbate the chronic underfunding of the sector to the detriment of residents of the homes; and

"Whereas the proposed legislation will have serious implications for the viability of the for-profit, and not-for-profit, charitable and municipal long-term-care sectors;

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

"We demand that the McGuinty government withdraw the proposed act, or remove the offending sections, and fulfill its commitment by a substantial increase in funding on a multi-year basis in the order of the promised \$6,000 per resident, per year."

It's brought to me by residents and staff from long-term-care centres within my riding of Haliburton–Victoria–Brock. I will hand it to page Simon.

### FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER

**Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Northwestern Ontario Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder (FASD) Diagnostic Clinic has been operating as a demonstration project since December 2004 with funds received through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care;

"Whereas this funding expired July 31, 2006;

"Whereas there is an enormous need in northwestern Ontario for regional access and accurate diagnosis of FASD;

"Whereas, without the northwestern Ontario FASD clinic, services are only accessible through a clinic in Winnipeg, Manitoba, or St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto, for which there is a four-year wait;

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

"Be it resolved that the provincial government commit to provide ongoing funding for the maintenance of the regional FASD diagnostic clinic, with two sites in northwestern Ontario."

This is signed by several residents of northwestern Ontario, and I've affixed my signature as well.

### IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

**Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport):** I'm delighted to read this petition. It's about access to trades and professions in Ontario, and it's addressed to the Parliament of Ontario. It reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

"That the Ontario Legislative Assembly urge the members of all parties to swiftly pass Bill 124, the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, and to require Ontario's regulated professions and trades to review and modify their procedures and qualification requirements to swiftly meet the needs of Ontario's

employers, Ontario's newcomers and their own membership, all of whom desperately need the very skills new Canadians bring working for their organizations, for their trades and professions, and for their families."

I'm delighted to give this to this page to bring to you, and I sign this.

#### WATER QUALITY

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford):** I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"To not pass Bill 43 (the Clean Water Act) until proper funding and amendments are in place."

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

1530

#### TUITION

**Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** I have a petition that has been signed by hundreds of students at Laurentian University in Sudbury, and it was given to me by the student association. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal government cancelled the tuition fee freeze after only two years and approved fee increases of up to 36% over the next four years; and

"Whereas tuition fees in Ontario have increased by more than four times the rate of inflation over the past 15 years; and

"Whereas a majority of Ontarians oppose tuition fee increases and support greater public funding for colleges and universities; and

"Whereas improvements to student financial assistance are undermined by fee increases; and

"Whereas the Ontario government's recent increase to student loan limits is set to push student debt to approximately \$28,000 for a four-year program; and

"Whereas per-student investment in Ontario still lags significantly behind the vast majority of jurisdictions in North America;

"Therefore we, the undersigned" call on the Legislative Assembly to do the following:

"—reduce tuition fees to 2004 levels for all students in Ontario and implement an immediate tuition fee freeze;

"—increase public funding for post-secondary education to promote access and quality;

"—expand access to financial aid in Ontario, especially for part-time students; and

"—double the number of upfront, need-based grants for Ontario students."

I have affixed my signature to this.

#### BORDER SECURITY

**Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West):** I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly on cross-border travel. I want to thank Paula Arruda, Felix Li and Lily Leung, all of Mississauga, for collecting some signatures on it. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the United States government, through the western hemisphere travel initiative, is proposing that US citizens will require a passport or single-purpose travel card to cross the Canada-US border; and

"Whereas a passport or single-purpose travel card would be an added expense, and the inconvenience of having to apply for and carry a new document would be a barrier for many Canadian and US cross-border travellers; and

"Whereas the George Bush government proposal could mean a loss of as many as 3.5 million US visitors to Ontario, and place in peril as many as 7,000 jobs in the Ontario tourism industry by 2008, many of which are valuable entry jobs for youth and new Canadians; and

"Whereas many of the US states bordering Canada have expressed similar concerns regarding the punitive economic impact of this plan, and both states and provinces along the US-Canada border recognize that the importance of the safe and efficient movement of people across that border is vital to the economies of both countries;

"Be it therefore resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support the establishment of a bi-national group to establish an alternative to the proposed US border requirements, and inform Prime Minister Harper that his decision not to advocate on behalf of Ontarians is ill-advised and contrary to the responsibilities of elected representatives in Canada."

An excellent petition. I'm pleased to sign it and to ask page Shannon to carry it for me.

#### FREDERICK BANTING HOMESTEAD

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

"Whereas Sir Frederick Banting was the man who discovered insulin and was Canada's first Nobel Prize recipient; and

"Whereas this great Canadian's original homestead, located in the town of New Tecumseth, Alliston, is deteriorating and in danger of destruction because of the inaction of the Ontario Historical Society; and

“Whereas the town of New Tecumseth, under the leadership of Mayor Mike MacEachern and former Mayor Larry Keogh, has been unsuccessful in reaching an agreement with the Ontario Historical Society to use part of the land to educate the public about the historical significance of the work of Sir Frederick Banting;

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

“That the Minister of Culture and the Liberal government step in to ensure that the Banting homestead is kept in good repair and preserved for generations to come.”

Of course, I agree with this petition. I will sign it and give it to page Sarah to bring to the table.

#### LONG-TERM CARE

**Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** I have petitions that have been sent to me by SEIU. They’ve been signed by people who live in Barrie, Cambridge and Brantford. They read as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### IDENTITY THEFT

**Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport):** Speaker, I want to tell you that I’m still receiving petitions about identity theft from the Consumer Federation of Canada. It’s addressed to the Parliament of Ontario and specifically to the Minister of Government Services. It reads as follows:

“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 ... 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” and other 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, I’m delighted to sign my name to it and send it to you.

#### MUNICIPAL PLANNING

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton):** “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas section 23 of the recently passed Planning and Conservation Land Statute Law Amendment Act, 2006, Bill 51, exempts energy projects from the municipal planning process; and

“Whereas we believe that it is essential to have more transparency and openness in the planning process, not less; and

“Whereas we believe that public consultation and municipal planning on the location of power plants is essential to ensure healthy sustainable communities;

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

“To amend section 23 of the Planning and Conservation Land Statute Law Amendment Act, 2006, to include a process for appeal.”

I’m in agreement with this and will sign my name to it, and I’m pleased to give this to page Andrew.

#### AUTISM TREATMENT

**Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** I have a petition that has been sent to me by L. Moorby of Kingston, Ontario. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas children with autism who have reached the age of six years are no longer being discharged from their preschool autism program; and



“Whereas these children should be getting the best special education possible in the form of applied behaviour analysis (ABA) within the school system; and

“Whereas there are approximately 700 preschool children with autism across Ontario who are required to wait indefinitely for placement in the program, and there are also countless school-age children who are not receiving the support they require in the school system; and

“Whereas this situation has an impact on the families, extended families and friends of all of these children; and

“Whereas, as stated on the website for the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, ‘IBI can make a significant difference in the life of a child with autism. Its objective is to decrease the frequency of challenging behaviours, build social skills and promote language development’;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to fund the treatment of IBI for all preschool children awaiting services. We also petition the Legislature of Ontario to fund an educational program in the form of ABA in the school system.”

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

1540

#### BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

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

On Monday, November 20, 2006, in the afternoon, third reading of Bill 52, Education Statute Law Amendment Act (Learning to Age 18); in the evening, second reading of Bill 155, Electoral System Referendum Act.

On Tuesday, November 21, 2006, in the afternoon, second reading of Bill 158, Public Service of Ontario Statute Law Amendment Act; in the evening, to be confirmed.

On Wednesday, November 22, 2006, in the afternoon, NDP opposition day; in the evening, second reading of Bill 69, Regulatory Modernization Act.

On Thursday, November 23, 2006, in the afternoon, third reading of Bill 50, Traditional Chinese Medicine Act.

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

##### ELECTORAL SYSTEM REFERENDUM ACT, 2006

##### LOI DE 2006 SUR LE RÉFÉRENDUM RELATIF AU SYSTÈME ÉLECTORAL

Mrs. Bountrogianni moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 155, An Act to provide for a referendum on Ontario’s electoral system / Projet de loi 155, Loi prévoyant un référendum sur le système électoral de l’Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona):** The Chair recognizes the minister.

**Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal):** Mr. Speaker, I’ll be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Brampton Centre.

I’m pleased to rise in the House today to begin second reading debate on Bill 155, An Act to provide for a referendum on Ontario’s electoral system, 2006. This bill, if passed, will enable Ontarians to have their say if the Citizens’ Assembly on Electoral Reform recommends a change to the province’s electoral system.

L’Assemblée des citoyens indépendante évaluera le système électoral existant de l’Ontario et d’autres systèmes, et recommandera si l’Ontario devrait conserver le système actuel ou en adopter un autre. Si l’Assemblée des citoyens recommande un changement, nous tiendrons un référendum pendant la prochaine élection provinciale en octobre 2007.

This is historic legislation. Regular elections allowing citizens to choose who will represent them and govern are the foundation of our democracy. For the first time in our province’s history, Ontarians are having the opportunity to participate in a full, open debate on our electoral system. This is an unprecedented opportunity for Ontarians to participate in strengthening Ontario’s democracy. No government in this province has ever given citizens this kind of opportunity to shape how their government works. This is a healthy and an exciting process.

Different electoral systems have their strengths and weaknesses and can have a significant impact on our political landscape. And our government believes that it is the people of Ontario who should decide what values are most important and how they want their government to work. With the establishment of the citizens’ assembly and the introduction of this legislation, our government is making it clear that the shape of Ontario’s democracy is a matter for Ontarians to decide.

The Electoral System Referendum Act, 2006 is being introduced to ensure that if a referendum on electoral reform is required, Ontarians will have a legitimate process in place that will provide a clear outcome. A referendum decision rule sets the level of popular support required for a referendum option to carry. A decision rule may include more than one threshold that must be met.

Should the citizens’ assembly recommend a new electoral system for Ontarians to vote on, the Electoral System Referendum Act, 2006 proposes two thresholds that would need to be met to give Ontarians the clarity that is required on such an important matter. Any change to a new electoral system in Ontario would need clear popular support beyond a simple majority—60% of all votes cast province-wide. In addition, a simple majority of more than 50% of votes cast in at least 64 provincial ridings—an equivalent of at least 60% of the province’s ridings—would be required. This is the same decision rule that the governments of British Columbia and Prince Edward Island used in their referendums on electoral reform.

A decision of this magnitude deserves to have the support of a solid majority of Ontarians across the province. This proposed legislation reflects the significance of this decision. I was disappointed when I heard that members across the floor were unhappy with the referendum threshold. The adoption of a new electoral system would represent a foundational change to Ontario's democracy, and that was the principal reason behind choosing the threshold.

John Ibbitson of the *Globe and Mail* wrote in his October 27 column that with respect to a referendum on electoral reform "50% plus one just isn't enough." He continued to write, "For a referendum to validate a major change, the result must indicate a consensus, both within the overall population and among its regions."

He continues, "We can debate whether 55% or 60% signals that consensus. But a bare majority today means opinion could have shifted by tomorrow. And even the most fervent supporters of electoral reform should agree that we need greater certainty from the public, before undertaking such fundamental change."

Bill 155 recognizes that the people of Ontario deserve that level of certainty. Ontarians will not have to make a decision of this magnitude in a vacuum.

Si l'assemblée des citoyens recommande de changer notre système électoral, nous nous engagerons à fournir à la population ontarienne les renseignements factuels et neutres dont elle aura besoin pour prendre une décision informée pendant le référendum.

The proposed legislation also establishes that if a referendum is held, cabinet will set the referendum question. This legislation ensures that the question will be clear, concise and impartial. The recommendation of the citizens' assembly will form the basis of the referendum question.

Si une nette majorité de la population ontarienne est favorable au changement, le gouvernement sera lié par les résultats et il devra instaurer le système recommandé par l'assemblée des citoyens. La loi proposée sur le référendum exige du gouvernement qu'il dépose un projet de loi avant le 31 décembre 2008 en vue de mettre en oeuvre le système électoral recommandé par l'assemblée des citoyens.

It's up to Ontarians to decide which electoral system best reflects their values. Our responsibility is to ensure that the voices are heard loud and clear. This bill supports our vision of Ontario's democracy as one where each citizen participates in building a better society, and their government takes responsibility for strengthening the voice of the citizens they serve.

I would now like to acknowledge the task currently being undertaken by the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform. We have taken historic steps to give all citizens a more meaningful voice in shaping Ontario's democracy than ever before. Encouraging meaningful participation in Ontario's democracy is the foundation of our government's democratic renewal agenda. We believe that when citizens are engaged, governments make the best choices. That's why we've established the Citizens'

Assembly on Electoral Reform. At the end of the process, the assembly will make a recommendation on which electoral system they think would best serve our province.

This legislation is recognition of the importance of the work of the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform. The citizens' assembly is investing much time and effort in making their recommendation. The threshold in the proposed legislation reflects the significance of this decision as well as the significance of the task we gave to the citizens' assembly.

The assembly is a new form of decision-making that is empowering citizens as never before. No government in this province has ever given citizens this kind of opportunity to shape Ontario's democracy.

The independent citizens' assembly is composed of 103 Ontarians and the chair, George Thomson. The members were chosen at random by Elections Ontario from the permanent register of electors. The assembly represents a cross-section of the province's population. All members are contributing their unique perspectives, their creativity, their talent and range of experience to the work of the assembly.

This is a citizen-led process of learning, listening and deliberating. Members have been attending two public weekend meetings each month, where they have been learning about Ontario's electoral system and other systems.

Beginning in December, the assembly members will lead public consultations in cities, towns and community centres across the province. Ontarians will exchange ideas about electoral reform and make their views known to assembly members. They will also be invited to submit written submissions to the assembly.

#### **1550**

The next step for the citizens' assembly will be to assess Ontario's current system and others and recommend whether Ontario should keep the current system or adopt a new one. The assembly will consider the values of Ontarians as it examines various electoral systems. In addition, the assembly has been asked to consider a number of values and principles in their deliberations. These include voter choice, fairness of representation, and stable and effective government. These are some of the important fundamentals that underlie democratic systems here and around the world. The assembly will determine the most relevant values and principles for Ontario in making its decision.

During the final deliberation period, assembly members will consider everything they have learned. The final report will outline the assembly's recommendation about whether Ontario should keep the current electoral system or adopt a new one. If they opt for a different electoral system than our current one, they will be compelled to identify clearly their preferred system. The report will be delivered to the government on or before May 15, 2007.

Because we want the dialogue on electoral reform to include the province's full range of voices, we provided support for the Students' Assembly on Electoral Reform.

This innovative project is allowing young Ontarians across the province to become actively involved in the issue of electoral reform. The Students' Assembly on Electoral Reform is a parallel citizens' assembly process for Ontario high school students. It is empowering young Ontarians by giving them a say in the electoral reform process in a way that is interactive, youth-focused and inclusive. Our coordinating partners from the students' assembly have created ways for young Ontarians to participate in the debate on electoral reform that are consistent with their values, their lifestyle and their expectations. Yesterday, I was fortunate to meet with the 103 enthusiastic students' assembly members. They toured the Legislature and met with a number of MPPs before leaving for their conference. This weekend, they will learn about the current electoral system and alternative electoral systems, and consider which systems best reflect their values.

At the same time, in high schools across Ontario, students will be learning about electoral systems using curriculum materials provided by the students' assembly project. Once they have had these classroom discussions, students will have an opportunity to cast their vote for their preferred electoral system. This initiative is designed to reinvigorate and heighten our young Ontarians' understanding of our democratic system.

The work of the students' assembly and the feedback from the classroom assemblies will culminate in a report that will be submitted to the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform in February 2007. I would urge all of my colleagues to encourage this innovative experiment in youth engagement and civic learning.

Encouraging meaningful participation in Ontario's democracy is the core of our government's democratic renewal agenda. Here are just a few of our government's accomplishments:

We've amended the province's election laws and set scheduled election dates because we believe that citizens should know when elections will be held. Provincial elections will be held every four years. Ontario's next provincial election will be held in October 2007.

We have improved the transparency of our political process by requiring real-time public disclosure of political contributions of \$100 and more to political parties and leadership candidates retroactive to January 1, 2004. This has contributed to making Ontario a leader in transparency and accountability. Our real-time disclosure is the first of its kind in Canada and allows Ontarians quick and easy access by tracking contributions through the Internet. We believe citizens should know how political parties are financed.

We have preserved 11 ridings in the north and increased the number of southern ridings from 92 to 96. As a result, Ontarians will send 107 MPPs to Queen's Park in the next provincial general election: 11 for the north and 96 for the south. We believe every region of Ontario is significant and has an important role to play in building a strong and prosperous province, and we also believe that in order to do so, every region needs to be represented in this Legislature.

Today, we are talking about legislation that requires a referendum on electoral reform to be held if a change is recommended by the citizens' assembly.

Toutes ces mesures améliorent le fonctionnement de la démocratie de l'Ontario. The various initiatives we are undertaking and have undertaken are a testimony to our trust in the Ontario people and our belief that, working together, we can make Ontario's democracy stronger.

This legislation is about our trust that the people of Ontario will make the best decision for the province. We trust the people of Ontario to approach this historic task thoughtfully and carefully and to choose a course of action that will ensure that Ontario continues to have a strong, vital democracy for the future.

I'm very proud to introduce this bill today and urge my colleagues to join me in supporting it.

**Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre):** As the parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for democratic renewal, it is my pleasure today to rise in support of Bill 155, the Electoral System Referendum Act, 2006.

The bill that is being debated here today will ensure that if a referendum is held on electoral reform, we will have a legitimate process in place that will provide Ontarians with a very clear outcome. I'm very proud to speak on a piece of legislation that so closely illustrates our government's belief that the shape of Ontario's democracy is a matter for Ontarians to decide.

A key goal in developing this proposed legislation was to set a decision rule that was fair and transparent to all Ontarians and suitable for our province. This legislation does not presume any outcome. We do not know whether any change will be recommended by the citizens' assembly or what any recommendation might be. The decision rule proposed in this piece of legislation recognizes the foundational significance of this decision.

This legislation, if it were passed, would make it possible for Ontarians to determine which electoral system best reflects their values. Our responsibility in this Legislature is to ensure that citizens' voices are heard loud and clear.

I'd like to take this opportunity to explain how the referendum vote would be administered. The legislation is based on our existing Election Act process. The referendum would be administered by Elections Ontario in a way that maintains the integrity of both the election and the referendum. We recognize the need to make sure that Ontarians have confidence in this election. This bill acknowledges the importance of safeguarding the integrity of both the referendum process and the election. If it were passed, this bill would build on our existing election process and allow a referendum to take place with all of the same safeguards and protections. For example, the powers of candidates and their scrutineers for the election would not change. Candidates and their scrutineers would continue to be able to challenge electors and scrutinize the voting and vote-counting process.

The referendum question would be on a separate, visually distinctive ballot, easily and identifiably differ-

ent from the election ballot. A candidate or a candidate's scrutineer would only be permitted to object to an election ballot and not a referendum ballot. From this, a referendum scrutineer would not be able to challenge an elector's right to vote—different from an election ballot—but they would only be able to scrutinize the referendum voting and vote-counting process.

This proposed legislation would also allow the government to make rules regarding the referendum campaign and referendum campaign finances. The regulations would impose requirements on people and entities who wish to campaign on the issue of the referendum. They could set spending and contribution limits, including advertising, reporting and record-keeping requirements, similar to those governing parties and candidates in the Election Finances Act.

This is all in an effort to ensure that, should a referendum be necessary, the campaign is carried out in a fair manner so that Ontarians will be equipped with the information they want and need so they can make choices for themselves in a referendum.

This bill supports our vision of an Ontario democracy as one where citizen participants build a better society, and that their government takes responsibility for strengthening the voice of the citizens we all serve. A healthy democracy encourages a multitude of voices, and these rules will enable a lively referendum debate and establish an inclusive process that is fair and transparent.

#### 1600

The introduction of this bill represents the latest step in Ontario's democratic renewal agenda. I'd like to take this opportunity today to highlight some of our other democratic renewal achievements. We have the most ambitious democratic renewal agenda in our province's history, and we've made significant progress in strengthening Ontario's democracy.

For example, we've extended the powers of the Auditor General to conduct value-for-money audits of institutions in the broader public sector. We believe the taxpayers' money should be spent wisely.

We've enacted a law banning partisan government advertising.

We've required that cabinet ministers attend question period at least two thirds of the time. We believe that all ministers should be in the Legislature, on the job, and accountable for their work.

We've required the Minister of Finance to release a pre-election report about Ontario's finances to the Auditor General for an independent review as part of our commitment to transparency and accountability.

As well, we've expanded the freedom-of-information and salary disclosure laws to cover Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation, to encourage responsible spending in the future.

Now we've introduced legislation that requires a referendum on electoral reform to be held if the citizens' assembly recommends change.

By passing this legislation, we will be telling Ontarians that their participation in this historic initiative will

have a meaningful impact on this government's decisions. As Minister Bountrogianni mentioned earlier, public consultations will be beginning next week, the first in my hometown of Brampton Centre. I'd like to urge Ontarians to find out where their citizen-led consultation is scheduled to appear in their community and to make their views known to the assembly-makers.

For the first time in our province's history, Ontarians are being asked to participate in a full, open debate on our electoral system. This won't happen again. It's an unprecedented opportunity for Ontarians to participate in strengthening Ontario's democracy. No government in this province has ever given citizens this kind of opportunity to shape how their government works. It's a healthy and an exciting process. It's democracy in action, a democracy that belongs to the citizens of Ontario, not just their elected officials.

With the establishment of the citizens' assembly and the introduction of this legislation, our government is making it clear that the shape of Ontario's democracy is a matter for Ontarians to decide. As I said, this is historic legislation. I urge the members of this House to support this bill.

**The Acting Speaker:** It's time for questions and comments.

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton):** The minister and the member are quite correct: This is a very historic piece of legislation. The last time that a referendum was held in this province was back in 1921—80 years—and we're having a new referendum proposed with this bill.

Over that period of time when they introduced this legislation, the minister and her parliamentary assistant could only fill about 20 or 21 minutes of their hour opening statement. On something that is this momentous, something that is this important to Ontarians, you'd think that the government of the day would find some way to speak for about an hour, which is their allotted time, in order to inform Ontarians what the purpose of this is, what the process of this is, how it's going to affect them. You'd think they would use the opening statement to at least set some kind of a ground rule as to how this piece of legislation is going to be enacted and what effect it's going to have on the people of Ontario, either pro or con.

It is an extremely important piece of legislation. It's going to change the way that we're governed. Although we've been governed, I think, overall extremely well in the province of Ontario, this government feels that there's some necessity to re-examine the way that governance takes place. I just find it absolutely astonishing that the minister of the day can't find enough to say about this bill to fill more than 10 or 11 minutes. I think that's a comment on the importance of this legislation and the importance this government places on this legislation. I don't think they're placing nearly enough importance on it. As I will say in a few minutes, there are a lot of questions around this piece of legislation that have not been answered and that are being left to a time down the road to be addressed, and that's too bad. There was a lot of groundwork that had to be done prior to this piece of

legislation being instituted. I'll be glad to elucidate on those comments later.

**Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York):** I listened to both of the debaters intently. I've only got two minutes, so I want to zero in on one of the comments made by the Minister of Democratic Renewal. She quoted Mr. John Ibbitson as if he was some kind of expert. Is this not the same John Ibbitson who has repeatedly said in his columns that we should not change our electoral process? Is this not the same John Ibbitson and the same Globe and Mail that have opined on the editorial pages that everything is hunky-dory the way we have it here in Ontario? Is this not the same John Ibbitson?

**Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni:** No, you're wrong.

**Mr. Prue:** I'm waiting to hear what you have to say about this, because in the editorial comments of that newspaper and in the writings of John Ibbitson that I remember, the same as the writings of many other columnists who follow the goings-on of this Legislature, the support for changing the electoral system is not high.

I have to question why you would quote such a person as being an authority. Certainly in my view he has no academic credentials to say what he's said and he has no rationale to say what he's said other than that he thinks this may be a monumental change. I would ask the minister to question and to think about the other referenda that have taken place in this country over a great many years, not one of which, until the BC example, required 60%. I intend to speak at some length about why the BC process failed and why this minister is seizing upon a failed process in order to ensure that this process in Ontario fails as well.

I feel very sadly for all of those 103 individuals who are spending the next 26 weeks trying to come up with a new system when, in the end, the system that you have before us today is designed so that whatever they recommend will never see the light of day.

**Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough):** I indeed listened very carefully to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and the member from Brampton Centre. I would like to remind my colleagues that the comment was made about the shortness of the address by the two members. But I've always remembered President Lincoln's Gettysburg address. It was very short, but it has historical proportions because it brought about the emancipation of African-Americans and the elimination of slavery. So we have to look at speeches in context. Lincoln's Gettysburg address was very short but high in content, as were the speeches today from the minister and my colleague the member from Brampton Centre.

I look forward to those 103 individuals who will be doing very important work over the next 26 weeks, who will be looking with great scrutiny at the first-past-the-post system that is currently used here in the province of Ontario, an opportunity to look at the parliamentary committee that my good friend the member from Beaches–East York was a member of and that spent some time touring the world, looking at systems in other countries, and an opportunity to look at what improvements poten-

tially could be made if we do retain the first-past-the-post system.

From time to time I hear from people, particularly from Trent University, who have taken some real interest in this as a study, suggesting that perhaps here in Ontario, with the three parties involved, on some pieces of legislation we perhaps need a conference system, an issue or a mechanism that is used by the American Congress, the House of Representatives and the Senate, where there are bills that the parties, the Republicans and the Democrats in that case, have a mutual interest to move forward. There are reforms we can make to the first-past-the-post system.

**1610**

**The Acting Speaker:** The Chair recognizes the senior member from Simcoe–Grey.

**Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey):** I seem to get more senior every Thursday afternoon when you're in the Chair, Mr. Speaker. I'm losing my hair.

I just want to comment briefly. I agree with some of the comments that have been made—and people should know this—that if there is a referendum, there is no guarantee that that referendum and the results of that referendum will ever come into law. There's no obligation on the government after the referendum to actually put it into law.

But I do want to say that it's kind of a horrible system you have set up here. I don't know who the citizen reps are in my riding. It's to address low voter turnout, but I can tell you that in the elections like the free trade election, where people have a real interest and a real stake, we saw tremendously high voter turnout in the late 1980s—1988 election. I find that people don't want to be forced to vote, but if they have a real issue they'll come forward.

I've held four town hall meetings in my riding in the last month, on angling and hunting, justice issues, agriculture issues and health care. You would expect, because the long gun registry is out there, that they packed the Creemore Legion, because people are very concerned about that issue. For agriculture, we got a good turnout. We didn't get such a good turnout on justice issues. We had a lot of lawyers show up and a lot of people just didn't have a lot of things to say to me about that. Of course, we got a good turnout for health care.

I think people turn out to vote when they feel there's a real issue. I don't see why low voter turnout is necessarily a bad thing. It's taken carte blanche by academics and professors and that, that somehow low voter turnout is a bad thing. I don't think it's a bad thing. In a free and democratic society, if people are mad at me and they want to get rid of me, they'll turn out. If they're mad at me, they'll write me letters and e-mails. But otherwise, most people want us to do our jobs, do a good job for them and to stay out of their lives and out of their faces until they need something changed or something done. As I said, at the end of the day, if you've got people locked in a room for 18 months, of course they're going to recommend change; that's human nature.

**The Acting Speaker:** It's time for a response. The Chair recognizes the minister.

**Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni:** I'd like to thank all my colleagues for their responses and also for their advice on this. I'd like to thank the member of the official opposition for reminding us how special this actually is as far as how often it has occurred in the last 100 years. This is basically the second time. It is very important, and I'm really proud that our government is doing it. I'm really happy to see there are people across the Legislature engaged in this issue.

Yesterday we had the students' assembly here. It made me happy and excited and a little bit sad at what happens to us as we grow older and how we grow jaded and cynical. They were wonderful, they were excited, they were looking forward to their weekend conference to learn about the electoral systems, to discuss what is best for Ontario—if what we have now is best. They asked me some very intelligent questions right there at the reception, which made me realize and believe and get reminded of how valuable our young people are and how, when you do have an open and clear mind, miracles can occur.

I told them I really depended on them, and our government depended on them and Ontario depends on them to give really good advice to the citizens' assembly. I could just tell by the questions they were asking me that they were going to take this very seriously, that the deliberations would be taken very seriously. One student asked me, "Well, what's wrong with what we have now?" That's a good question. I think the member from the official opposition asked me that question tonight. Another student said, "Why is the threshold the way it is?" I gave him my opinion on that, and he was listening carefully.

All in all, I think they're going to have wonderful debates—agreements, disagreements. But what I did see was amazing unity in the sense that they knew they were doing something important. These are kids who range from 14 to 18. I have two kids, a 15-year-old and an 18-year-old—and I know that many of us have raised kids—so I know what kids at that stage are capable of doing, and sometimes not doing. But I was really heartened to know that we had the *crème de la crème* in that room last night and they will be giving very good advice to the citizens' assembly. I'm very excited to be leading this for the government and very honoured that the Premier gave me this responsibility.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr. Chudleigh:** I'd like to ask for unanimous consent to stand down our lead speaker so he can speak at a later time.

**The Acting Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

**Mr. Chudleigh:** A few minutes ago I was talking about how important this is. The last referendum we had in this province was in 1921. That was on the issue of alcohol and the availability of alcohol and whether or not we should move to a system of prohibition. The people of

Ontario agreed that there should be a prohibition on alcohol and its distribution, and I've often wondered why. I've often wondered what the social situation was in that time. I can imagine that in 1921 in Ontario, there would have been a huge number of soldiers back in those days, about 10% of our country's population—I think a little more than that, maybe 15%. I think Canada had about six million people in the 1920s, and I think we had almost 100,000 soldiers—no; more than that. We had 250,000 soldiers in the Second World War, so whatever percentage that is. There was a huge percentage of them.

They came back, and of course they had looked into the abyss. They had been to hell and wandered around in it for two, three or four years of their lives. It was a terrible time and terrible type of warfare. No one could come back from that warfare without being negatively affected mentally, and most often physically as well.

I can imagine how some of these people may have turned to alcohol to dull their senses and to dull their memories of that terrible time that they had just come through. That would have caused tremendous social upheaval at the time, and also difficulty within that community of Canada in those days, where I think the church played a much larger role than it does today. Given those kinds of factors that Ontario was faced with, the government of the day decided that it needed a decision made, and one they weren't willing to make themselves. They wanted someone else to make this decision for them, so they came up with the idea of a referendum. This absolved the government of the day of the responsibility for it. It wasn't their fault that the country went dry or went wet in various counties across Ontario. The politicians of the day absolved themselves of that very difficult decision in a very difficult time.

I don't see those parallels here today. I don't see the parallels of the difficulty we have in governance today. I agree somewhat with the member for Simcoe-Grey, who talked about low voter turnout as something that wasn't necessarily bad. I would like to see a higher voter turnout, as I think we all would. But certainly, when the electorate are satisfied with the things that are going on and are not intimately involved on a day-to-day, week-to-week or even month-to-month basis with government, it's easy to imagine how in their busy lives they can let an election day slip away without actually casting their vote.

We came through a municipal election, and I think we saw a number of places in Ontario where there was a very high voter turnout based on very important races. People were concerned, they were upset or they were enthusiastic about the support of a mayor or a councillor, or they were upset with the performance of a mayor or a councillor—or a board of education—and they turned out in rather large numbers to correct the situation as they saw it, either to re-elect the person or to see that someone else was elected. Voter turnout I think is a reflection of the way in which governments have operated.

To suggest that voter turnout can be impacted by the way we conduct those elections, whether they be the so-

called first past the post or whether they be proportional representation—if you looked around the world to where proportional representation exists and where first past the post exists, I don't think the experience or history of those places that have one system or the other would indicate that there is a higher turnout, that there is greater voter interest or that there is a greater public interest in elections. I don't think you would see that in those statistics. I haven't seen those statistics specifically, but the readings that I've done on proportional representation don't seem to indicate that there is a huge difference in the voter turnout in those particular areas.

1620

One thing that concerns me greatly about proportional representation—and there are many different types of proportional representation. That's one of the things that is confusing: We don't really know what type of proportional representation we're debating here. That's going to be determined by a citizens' assembly of one person from each riding, with the exception of my riding. As it turns out, the part of my riding that I'm losing in redistribution is where the member on the citizens' assembly lives, and therefore in my new riding of Halton, they don't have a member on the committee. However, that's the way the members' committee was struck, and these members are going to decide whether or not we need this change, and if we do need this change or suggest this change, they're going to decide what type of proportional representation or what type of first-past-the-post election we're going to have. Again, I think that's abdicating the responsibilities of this House. However, the one thing that really concerns me is that in most cases of proportional representation, there would be people sitting in this Legislature who were not elected by a specific riding. That gives me a great deal of concern. For—137 years?

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Chudleigh:** It's 103 years? We've been here longer than that. From 1871—I think that was the first sitting of this Legislature—until today, every person who has sat in this House has been elected within a constituency, within a riding. I think that's very much a part of our democratic history. That's very much a part of how this country and this province have been governed. To move away from that principle, that everyone who sits in this House should be elected from a riding or from a constituency—I think that's a very, very important piece of democracy that we should never, never lose sight of.

The other thing that's concerning about proportional representation, and I see this in other countries that have this system—you see it in Italy, as one; you see it in Israel; you see it in New Zealand. Those governments seem to get a lot of press in this country. When they elect, very seldom do they have a clear majority; that very seldom happens. But after the election, it's up to the major party, usually the party that won the most seats, to put together what they call a coalition and to attract other parties to their cause so that they can have a 51% vote in

the House and therefore be able to maintain themselves. Of course, the largest party may have 40% of the vote; they may have 35%; they may have 45% of the vote. They're going to go to another party which they think they can work with in order to attract that other 6% or 7% or 15% that they need. Now, when you have those discussions with another party, obviously, if you're the smaller of the parties, you're going to say, "Well, yes, we might support you, but in order to garner our support, we would like you to do this."

Well, I can guarantee you that whatever "this" is going to be, "this" is going to cost the taxpayers of Ontario a lot of money. And if a party of an environmental nature were to become part of that affiliated government, they may ask for very, very strong environmental regulations in order to gain their support—not a bad thing in and of itself; however, it could be very, very expensive. And the party that has 40% in the House is going to buy that support with public money. It's easy to spend someone else's money, especially when it's government money. There seems to be a connotation about government money as being free and easy. I think we know all too well in this place, we certainly know in this party, that government money is not free and easy; government money is hard-earned taxpayers' money. There's no such thing as government money; it comes from taxpayers. And when it is spent frivolously or without due thought or due control, that's a bad thing for government. If you're putting together coalition governments, I can't help but think that there will be deals made, and those deals will be financed with taxpayers' money. That's another reason why I have some real concerns about proportional representation. I think it's going to be a very expensive form of government. It's going to cost more than the government that we have in place today.

Another point that I would like to suggest to the minister is that during a referendum we may very well have situations at the time of the election, and that would be on October 4, 2007—there may be events that lead up to that time that influence, for a short period of time, the mindset of a voter. They may have huge concerns about the current government. Maybe not, but for the sake of argument, they might have these huge concerns about the government. I think this would influence a voter to vote in favour of a referendum because they're unhappy with the current government. That's something that may influence the outcome of a referendum, influence the way Canadians or Ontarians may be governed over a long period of time, and I think that influence might be very short-lived. They might vote completely differently in three months or six months or even a couple of weeks down the road.

So I would like to suggest to the minister that no matter what happens with the referendum, there is a second referendum after some period of time, after some period of test time—it might be two elections, it might be one election or it might be a specific number of years, but after some period of time; certainly less than 10 years—I would like to see a second referendum put in place so

that people can make a judgment as to whether they did a good thing on October 4, 2007, or whether they did a bad thing and they'd want to correct it. The position of correcting—I'm not saying you might want to go back to the old system that we had, the first past the post; you might want to tweak or adjust the system to get rid of some of the concerns that have been raised by people or have become evident over that period of time. I think a sober second thought would be a very good thing to introduce into this referendum by having a second referendum.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Chudleigh:** No, I'm not suggesting that we have a Senate in Ontario. I think that one Senate in this country is probably too much—one too many, perhaps. But Ottawa is working on that. They're working on making that more democratic. They've moved a lot further in the last eight months than they had in the previous 80 years. We look forward to maybe having a Senate that would be representative of the people of Canada.

Another concern that I have, and I mentioned this briefly before, is that the rules around the referendum are yet to be written. The only thing that's in the act is that the Lieutenant Governor in Council will write the question. There is nothing in place to have that question debated or appealed. I'm not of the opinion that one man or one person or one group can write a question and think of all possible issues that might be affected by that question. I would like to see that some form of appeal or some form of debate around that question be put. That could also form part of the educational aspect that takes place around the question. Again, this is not in the rules, as to whether or not this question will be put and who is going to do the education of the public on the issue of the question. There will be some groups who will be for proportional representation and there will be some groups that are against it. Both of those groups, I would think, would have narrow arguments concerning the overall good or bad of the overall governance of that system. So having some form of publicly financed non-partisan education around that question I think would be a very, very valuable thing, to make sure that the conditions under which the question is asked and the influence that might be brought to bear on the question is fair and balanced, and there's some reference that people can go to to get the facts of the matter. If there isn't some system of laying out the facts in a fair and equitable way, it's like a vacuum of information, and all kinds of innuendo and other words that I can't use in this House flow in to fill that vacuum, so people aren't left with a clear and concise understanding of exactly what they're voting for.

1630

One of the other problems I have that I alluded to when I opened my remarks is that the citizens' assembly is very much replacing a bona fide, good, deep debate that should happen in this House. That's why we were elected. We were elected to govern Ontario, and this particular bill is talking about the very essence of

governing this province, and yet we're putting it off to another committee. Another committee might have a discussion on it and bring that discussion back to this House for further debate so that we knew all aspects from a broad committee, we knew all aspects of the questions, and we could sit and debate those aspects in this House. But as the government of the day did in 1921, because they had a problem they couldn't handle, we are doing much the same today with this bill. I think this bill is taking away some of the authority of this House, and that gives me very, very great concern. Members of this House have to be accountable to their constituents, and I don't think this bill helps me be responsible to my constituents.

There is one man in Georgetown, who is not in my new riding, who is making decisions for the constituents who live in my riding on this particular piece of legislation. He was not elected. I'm not sure how he was chosen, if he came out of the phone book or what he was doing. All the people who only have cellphones or have unlisted numbers weren't eligible. I don't know how they picked those people. But one name came out of the hat and he wasn't elected, and I have concerns. The very essence of our system is that you are elected by the people and you have to represent their wishes or you lose your privilege of being elected. This didn't happen in that case, and yet that person is going to make some very, very momentous decisions for the people of my riding, and that gives me very great concern that the business of this House is being put off to another committee.

Another concern is that I don't see a huge outcry from the people of Ontario that we have to change the system. I've been through three elections in this province and I've never once heard people demanding that we change the system in Ontario. There isn't a hue and cry out there to change the system in Ontario. There have been some debates about it, but it's very, very minimal as far as the issues that are brought to the attention of MPPs, certainly in my riding.

Those are just about my comments concerning this particular issue. I'm very concerned that the timelines on this bill are somewhat short when we are looking at a question that could change the way this province is governed for the next 100 years.

**The Acting Speaker:** It's time for questions and comments.

**Mr. Prue:** I listened intently again to the debate from the member from Halton, and he skirted around many times on the actual purport of this bill. He was talking about proportional representation. Of course, this bill cannot surmise that the citizens' assembly will choose proportional representation or, if they choose it, what type of proportional representation. But then he went on to talk about the old bugaboo about minority governments having to form coalitions. He said—and I listened to it—in every case it's going to cost the taxpayers more. I would suggest that he take a look at some of the coalition governments of Germany, where the Christian Democrats have forged alliances with the Free Demo-



crats, who are slightly to the right of them. In order to gain their support, they have to do things like tax cuts. You will see that what you are saying is not necessarily the corollary; it does not necessarily flow that way. It flows on who you are making the alignment with. So the bugaboo isn't there, and I don't even know that it should have been discussed in the first place or why I rose to the bait when you said that. But I cannot accept that it's true.

The second one: He did make reference to a second referendum to be held within 10 years. I would concur with that idea. It's not in the legislation, but it certainly was the 10th recommendation that was made by the select all-party committee, which recommended that within 10 years—between the third and fourth elections—there should be a very careful look at whether or not the system is working. Certainly, that was the experience in New Zealand after two elections. They had that within the body of their bill. Although it did not go back to the citizens to vote, there was a fulsome debate in Parliament as to whether or not the process had worked well. I think that should have been contained in this bill as well.

**Mrs. Jeffrey:** I'm glad to join this conversation, because I heard some things in the earlier speech that I wanted to correct and comment on. We watched very closely in British Columbia when they had a citizens' assembly. They had 160 British Columbians, and they were asked to think about what kind of democracy they wanted in their province. We're asking Ontarians to do the same thing. The question was not what they personally wanted but what they thought would be best for our province as a whole.

Our independent citizens' assembly is composed of 103 Ontarians and the chair, George Thomson, a very well respected individual. The members were chosen at random, not from the phone book but by Elections Ontario from the permanent register of electors.

I think citizens want to be involved in making important decisions. Too often they feel left out, on the sidelines while others debate the issues that affect their lives. Given an opportunity to make a contribution, they can make a very good decision and freely give of their time and their talents. Ordinary citizens can master complex decisions and materials. It's too easy to assume that only experts know enough to make decisions on specialized topics. In fact, regular citizens see the fundamental issues that are involved and can do the work necessary to make a really informed and reasoned decision.

I believe that the Premier's instincts were right about engaging Ontarians to talk about this very important subject. The decision that the citizens' assembly comes back with next spring will be one that we create a very clear question on, will be binding to our government. It is a very serious decision, and I think they should be engaged in this. I think it's a good decision to have made.

**Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock):** I'm pleased to rise and comment on my colleague from Halton's comments on Bill 155, the Electoral System

Referendum Act, 2006. Just for those at home, it provides that "If the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform recommends the adoption of an electoral system different from Ontario's current one, a referendum on the recommended electoral system shall be held in conjunction with the 2007 general election."

*Interjections.*

**Ms. Scott:** I know that it's a good and healthy debate—that's still occurring to my side here—in the Legislature. I appreciate the two individuals who have been chosen from my riding. One, Marie McLaren, is the senior representative—can I say that?—who is on the board and lives in the Buckhorn area close to the member from Peterborough, to our boundaries that meet there; and the young lady, Maria Reesor, who was here yesterday, whom I didn't have the opportunity to speak with yesterday. She's quite excited about being on the Students' Assembly on Electoral Reform. She attends Fenelon Falls high school, which is where I attended, and is very encouraged. I note that both of the selections from my riding are women. I'm sure that has nothing to do with that.

**1640**

Electoral system reform and the referendum act are interesting topics. Other countries have been mentioned: Have they been successful? Does it increase voter turnout? Does it get more women representatives? There are different forms of proportional representation that may be looked at. Is a first-past-the-post system the right way? As my colleague from Simcoe–Grey mentioned, is there something wrong with low voter turnout? You're right: If people are angry enough, they're going to come out and they're either going to vote against us or for us.

Those are some of the things that were brought up by my colleague from Halton and the comments we have on some amendments we'd like to see.

**Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** It's a pleasure to participate a little bit in the debate. I want to say that I appreciate the comments from the member from Halton. I don't think I agree with many of them, but I appreciate that he made the contribution he did.

I guess there are two points I want to make. I don't know what the citizens' assembly is going to come up with in terms of a system, but I do think that a change is required. I myself, on a personal level, am certainly not opposed to a system of proportional representation, recognizing that what is absolutely necessary is to ensure that the threshold is high enough so you don't have some of the instability you see in countries that use PR as a system. I feel that way because, after having been here some time—not as long as Mr. Phillips, who has been in the Legislature for some long time—through five elections and through three different governments, it's fair to say that in each of those governments, the number of seats that were assigned to the government did not reflect voter preference and did not reflect the percentage of the vote that that particular party got. They got those seats on the basis of having the highest number of votes in that riding, and it didn't matter if it was two or three or four. But that certainly doesn't reflect voter preference.

What I see happening in my riding is that more and more people are feeling like their vote doesn't count. If they think their vote doesn't count, they're not interested in participating in the political process any more. I remain very concerned about the low level of voter participation at the municipal, provincial and federal levels. I think that is a real difficulty our democracy is facing. We need to find a different way to engage people, and I think a system of PR would do that.

I also disagreed with him in terms of PR costing us more. But if I think back to some of the minority governments—I may make a mistake here and somebody's going to correct me—at the federal level, it seems to me that how we got the Canada pension plan in the first place and unemployment insurance—

**Mr. Prue:** And medicare.

**Ms. Martel:** —and also medicare was through minority governments. So I don't see that as a cost; I certainly see that as an incredible benefit to Canadians. The same, I think, could be said of some of the minority governments that we've seen here in Ontario.

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

**Mr. Chudleigh:** I appreciate the comments from the four members, who cover the province pretty well: Beaches–East York, Brampton, Haliburton and Nickel Belt. Now, if we had proportional representation here, we might have had four members speaking who didn't have a constituency, who weren't elected members of this House, who were appointed through the process. It could happen from the list of party names, and they wouldn't have covered the province.

The other concern I have is, there was mention of the 103-plus-one members of the citizens' assembly. If you're doing a poll in this province, if you want a really accurate poll, you'd better have about 450 respondents to your poll. If you want to get even more accurate than that, you can go up to 1,000 respondents, and then you're accurate to within plus or minus 3%, 19 times out of 20. But if you have a smaller poll than that, you might be accurate to within plus or minus 7% or 8%. I would expect that 103 would be in that 8% or 9% accuracy rate, and that would equate 19 out of 20 times. That's a 5% margin of error.

As a citizen of Ontario, you'll want to ask yourself, are you willing to risk the next 100 years of Ontario's governance on the chance that you're going to be accurate 19 out of 20 times? I don't want to and I don't think a lot of people in my riding want to. I think there are some very vocal people. We heard from the third party that they're very much in favour of this. Yes, it would benefit their party, and I can understand how they're in favour of it. But I don't think the majority of Ontarians would support this bill.

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

**Mr. Prue:** I have spent a great deal of time studying this as a student of political science my whole life. In university, we spent a great many hours debating this kind of system—

**Mr. Dave Levac (Brant):** So you're the expert.

**Mr. Prue:** I might be the expert—a great many hours debating how the system in Ontario and Canada could be reformed. So I've been looking forward to this date, probably my whole life, I would tell you, to see what is going to happen.

I want to start out, first of all, with the positives; I always try to state the positives. One of the positive things that has happened here is the whole system of asking ordinary citizens to come forward and look at the issue. This is not going to be looked at in the confines of this House, and whether it's good for the Conservative Party or the New Democrats or the Liberals. This is going to be looked at by ordinary citizens who are going to say what is best for the constituency of Ontario, what is best for me as a citizen. How can I elect better people to sit in the Legislature? How can my opinions be better enforced? How can they be better represented? So I welcome the fact, and I don't question the fact for a minute, that 103 people have been chosen at random to give their opinions and to make their opinions known.

There was a little bit of a glitch—I think it's minor, but I just want to state it for the record—inasmuch as the people were chosen from the permanent voters list. Sadly, what that's done is that in three years, we've had a lot of new people become citizens of the country who would not have been on the list before. We had a lot of people who were 15 or 16 or 17 years old during the last election who would now be added to the list but who are not on the permanent voters list. I know a system had to be developed, and I don't know how it could have been done any better, but sadly, those new Canadians and those young people who have recently turned of voting age have not been given a full opportunity to participate. Having said that, I don't know what else the government could have done, so I'm not going to say it was a mistake. I'm just going to say that there were certain people who perhaps did not get the same opportunity as those who have been around longer or who were older.

I do commend the government for choosing equal numbers of women and men. A system had to be designed which was different from British Columbia, because I understand the synergy and I understand trying to keep the volume of people in the assembly to 103. In British Columbia they chose one man and one woman from each riding, but they only have 55 ridings, and ours will be about the same size. I also need to say that British Columbia went out of its way to pick an aboriginal person. I have not checked the list to see whether or not we have one.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Prue:** The minister is indicating in the affirmative, so I'm very glad to see that the First Nations are represented on this issue, because if anyone has a stake in this, surely they do.

This citizens' assembly will be making a recommendation, and I do not want to presuppose it. There's lots of debate going around here, either in the formal part of the debate or in members coming up and talking to me who don't like proportional representation, or who don't

like STV, which is the system used in Malta and in Ireland. Well, I don't think that's up to us to be debating here today, and I'm going to stay away from that. Whatever these people choose, they have to think that it is better than the system we have here. If they don't think there is a better system, I'm sure they will say, "We have the best of all systems," and that will be the end of the matter, although I must state that I find that highly unlikely, because the people who have put their name forward and have volunteered have volunteered to change the system. One has to expect they are not going to be satisfied with the status quo, so I am expecting at least some modicum of change in the final analysis.

The issue is very complex, and I am not surprised it's going to take 26 weeks for people to study and to understand. If I were to ask the members of this Legislature to describe the D'Hondt system by which STV candidates are elected, I don't think I could find a single member other than myself—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Prue:** There's one indicating that he might know too. But this is a very complex system, and they're going to have to do some considerable study to understand it.

1650

The minister, to her credit, stated in scrums that she has never taken a political science course, but here she is spearheading this bill through. But I am glad that the 103 citizens are taking an in-depth, what can only be described as a second- or third-year political science course in excess—maybe two or three courses at once.

**Mr. Wilson:** Probably never been elected.

**Mr. Prue:** No, they've never been elected, but they're going to study—

**Mr. Wilson:** Don't know what they're talking about.

**Mr. Prue:** Okay. I think they may know what they're talking about by the time it's over, and I'm hoping they will, because I have great faith in the citizens of this province.

The sad reality, after having said all these glowing things, is that they are going to be doing work for 26 weeks; they're going to be making a recommendation which, sadly, may never see the light of day. It may never be passed, because there may not be a proportion of the citizens of this province who are willing to go along with it.

The minister has said 60% is fair, and she has quoted the eminent John Ibbitson as being the authority. I don't know where he gets to be the authority. I've never read any of his political science books. I've never seen that he attempted to describe the d'Hondt system, proportional representation, mixed-member proportional or anything else. All I know from his writings is that he does not believe that there should be any change. So of course he is in favour of an elevated level which will make the standard so high that it may be impossible for the citizens who actively and actually want change to ever see it happen. I feel sorry for those individuals, going through all this work for 26 weeks, if they are to present something that may not have a chance of actually passing.

This Legislature did something unusual, at least unusual for the time that I've been here, when it set up an all-party select committee to study this issue. This was a select committee not of the government but of the Legislature, and it was staffed with people who were to study this and come back with recommendations to the Legislature, come back with recommendations that the government might take hold of, and the recommendations were to be forwarded to the citizens in their assembly. The members of that committee were all people who I think had a fairly good and detailed knowledge, at least at the end, of what would constitute a valid referendum, what would constitute valid legislation, how the members of the citizens' assembly might come to their decisions, what kind of advice they might be given. And they studied jurisdictions in other places.

Those members—and I'm going to name them all, because two of them are now sitting in cabinet: the Chair, the member from Sarnia, Caroline Di Cocco, is now the Minister of Culture; the member from Don Valley West, Kathleen Wynne, is now the Minister of Education. We had other Liberal members on there; Mr. Arthurs, who is a PA to the finance minister. We had Mr. Richard Patten from Ottawa Centre, we had Monique Smith from Nipissing and Dr. Kuldip Kular from Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale. Mr. Speaker, sometimes it helps to sit in the chair; you can remember where everybody is from without looking it up. On the opposition side were Mr. Norm Miller from Parry Sound–Muskoka and Mr. Norm Sterling from Nepean–Carleton. And of course, I was on there from the New Democratic Party.

We were ably—ably—advised by Anne Stokes, who was the clerk, and by Larry Johnston, who was the research officer. I might say, and I'm going to say this publicly, that Mr. Johnston was one of the finest researchers with whom I have ever had the privilege of working. He was diligent. He understood the issue in a way that very few people could. He took the time to explain it to the members of the committee whenever there was difficulty understanding complex electoral systems, and in the end he produced a report, with a couple of minor variations, that the all-party select committee agreed to unanimously. I want to underline that: unanimously. This was eight members, plus the Chair, which is nine, who agreed to all provisions—save and except two on which the Conservatives did not agree—agreed to every single recommendation and provision unanimously.

**Mr. Shafiq Qadri (Etobicoke North):** Lanark–Carleton—Norm Sterling.

**Mr. Prue:** Thank you. Lanark–Carleton, not Nepean–Carleton. Thank you very much. I knew I'd goof up at least once.

Now, the purpose of this was to advise the Legislature with information and advice on potential changes to the electoral system. The minister, unfortunately, has chosen to disregard several of the key recommendations. We made 10. She chose to disregard several of them, and that's where I want to spend the bulk of my time. The

recommendations that were made clearly are not found within the four walls of this particular act.

The first one is subsection 3(1) of the act, which says, "The referendum question, in both English and French, shall be established by an order of the Lieutenant Governor in Council." This is contrary to what the all-party committee recommended. I hope the members of the Legislature understand how serious that first provision is. It ran contrary to what was said by the all-party committee in recommendation 6, which read, "Responsibility for the referendum question(s)—including the wording and number of questions to be asked, and the number of referendums to be held—rests ultimately with the Legislature, acting on the advice of the citizens' assembly, the select committee on electoral reform, and if required, Elections Ontario."

What this government has chosen to do is to take the question and the authority for making the question out of the hands of the Legislature, out of the hands of the citizens' committee, out of the hands of the neutral Elections Ontario, and make it a cabinet responsibility, make it the responsibility of one party and one very small group within that party. It is now a cabinet responsibility. This was not, and has never been, done in any other jurisdiction. This is an anomaly which I think many people in here should be genuinely shocked by when they look at it.

I went to see what they did in British Columbia, because the minister keeps saying that this is what they did in British Columbia. The responsibility for the referendum question in British Columbia was not decided by the Lieutenant Governor in Council of that province. The responsibility, and I'll read from the select committee report: "In British Columbia's referendum, the question (Should British Columbia change to the BC-SCV electoral system as recommended by the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform? Yes/No) appears to have been drafted by the assembly and accepted by the government. In the press release accompanying the announcement of the second referendum, scheduled for 2008, the BC government notes that 'A referendum question will be crafted by the government and will be debated and voted upon in the Legislature.'" That is September 2005.

While visiting the electoral commission office in Scotland, the committee learned about guidelines used by the office to advise the government on the objectivity and neutrality of the wording of referendum questions, and that was contained in Appendix D.

What has happened here is that this is being done by the Lieutenant Governor in Council—i.e., the cabinet—by regulation. There will be no debate in this House if this bill is passed. There will be no debate. Whatever the question that is put by the government at the time of the referendum, that will be the question. Will it be neutral? How do I know? Will it be fair or just? Will it purport to do one side versus the other? There will be no debate on this. It will be decided by the minister and her friends in cabinet. This is contrary to what they did in BC; it's

contrary to what they did in Scotland; it's contrary to what they did in New Zealand. In fact, I cannot find a single reference anywhere in the British Commonwealth for a government to take this action upon themselves and to leave the entire Legislature out of the process. It is a horrendous piece within this bill. I would hope the members opposite would look at this and convince the minister that this should be removed when and if this goes to committee.

The second issue: All of the lofty goals that were unanimous at the all-party committee have been ignored. Everything is now going to be done by regulation, by the government and by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. There will be no debate.

#### 1700

BC thought it extremely fair, honest and upright to refer the matter to the Legislature, and they have adopted it. It's clear, then, in Scotland that the clear guidelines formed parts of what the government did. Nothing in this bill gives me any cause to consider that anything will happen, except that the government will do what it wants to do without hearing from anybody at all or being part of any debate to defend what they are doing.

The third aspect, which flows right from this, is: "The wording of the referendum question shall be clear, concise and impartial," as set out in the legislation. This is subsection 3(2). But the question immediately flows: Clear, concise and impartial by whose standard? The only standard that will be used is the Lieutenant Governor in Council's. Mr. Speaker, not you, nor I nor anyone else in this Legislature who is not in the cabinet will have a word to say about the question, and whether it is clear, concise or impartial will be in their thinking, not in the thinking of the duly elected people of this province.

The fourth issue, and it is the one that is most troubling to me, is the referendum standard: 60%. This failed the people of BC; it failed them miserably. It failed them in a way that should have sent shock waves throughout this Legislature, but in fact has been endorsed by this minister for the arcane reason, or the only one I've heard so far, that John Ibbitson likes it, and that because the standard is so high, we're going to make sure that at least 60% of the people vote for this or it's not going to happen at all.

When this was first introduced in British Columbia, the editorial opinion and the opinion of those who were most concerned—Fair Voting BC, the people who had been pushing for democratic reform for a number of years, other groups—was that the system was designed to fail, and indeed it did. It is not surprising, when you set a standard which is alien to us, when you set a standard which is alien throughout most of the world where the majority does not rule, and you set a standard that is so high that it is virtually impossible to see change take place, I will guarantee you, that the change never takes place. It was the considered opinion in British Columbia from the editorial writers, from the columnists, from the people who were involved that in fact nothing would ever happen of the referendum in British Columbia.

There were people who were opposed to the referendum openly stating and laughing that they were going to win—not that they could garner 50% plus one of the vote, but they could garner 40% plus one of the vote and make sure it didn't happen. In the end, the losers won and the winners lost. That's what is being said up here: "The losers shall win and the winners shall lose," because if you can't get 60%, which is unheard of and almost impossible in most jurisdictions when you are seeking to make change, then change will not happen.

Page 55 of the committee's recommendations set out some of those arguments perhaps more succinctly than I am doing now. The first one is, "Many supporters of BC-STV argue that the referendum threshold of 60% was too high, and that a simple majority of 50% plus one vote should have been sufficient to make the referendum binding.

"It was also pointed out that the actual vote of 57.7% (with a simple majority in 77 of 79 ridings) was commonly presented as a failing vote, when, according to the actual wording of the legislation, it simply represented a result that is non-binding upon the government." This is the same wording we have here.

"Under the Act, for a result (either Yes or No) to be binding, it must have the support of 60% of the vote and a simple majority (voting the same way) in at least 48 ridings. Thus, while the result did not bind the government to implement BC-STV, neither did it bind the government not to implement BC-STV. In this regard, it has been argued that the result was advisory, and that the government could have chosen, if it wished, to implement BC-STV. In fact, not to implement BC-STV could be interpreted as taking the advice of the 42% who voted No rather than the advice of the 58% who voted Yes. This is something the government may wish to consider should the result of the 2008 referendum produce a similarly strong but non-binding result."

This is the information we got from Mr. Gibson: "The circumstance of having a result which is non-binding in either direction is a direct result of establishing a threshold of 60% for either option. There are two ways to avoid this. One is to clearly indicate that only one option will be binding if it reaches the threshold and to indicate which option that is. The other is to conduct a binding referendum on the basis of a 50%-plus-one-vote margin. In the latter instance, any vote clearly binds the government."

What the minister talks about as the BC tradition is an aberration in Canada. It was the first time an artificially high threshold was ever set. Prince Edward Island followed suit, and it didn't pass either, although it would not have passed in any event because it didn't get 50%. But it is an aberration of the way governments have been democratically conducting referenda in this country for a century. I ask the members to think about the really key referenda that have taken place in my lifetime and before my lifetime. Newfoundland joined Confederation with 51% of the vote. They didn't get 60%. Had Joey Smallwood asked for 60%, Newfoundland still wouldn't be

part of Canada. I see that the member from Thornhill, who never had an original thought in his life, is waving his arms around, as he might wish to do. But Newfoundland would not have joined Confederation had the threshold been 60%. Do you not think that joining Confederation is far more important than how the voting structure takes place? I certainly think so. That was deemed to be sufficient at 50% plus one.

Quebec's referendum: Every single Quebec referendum has 50% plus one. Now, there have been some clarifications that the question must be unambiguous. I would state that the last two times they held a referendum the question was ambiguous. I'm looking forward, if they ever hold one again, that it be a clear question. But I would state that the people of Quebec have an unfettered right to vote, and if the majority of them want to vote a certain way, then the government should act upon it.

Conscription in World War I and World War II was a referendum. The government never acted upon it, but it was 50% plus one. The alcohol, which has already been spoken about, in 1921 was a referendum which was 50% plus one. You don't think that drinking alcohol was important to many of the citizens of this country, then and now? But it was 50% plus one. Fluoride in the water of Toronto was 50% plus one. You don't think what we ingest and what we have our children ingest is as important as this? I would beg to differ, and it was 50% plus one. Right down to the Charlottetown accord it was 50% plus one, although it did require that a majority of the provinces representing a majority of the people had that authority, and it failed there. But it didn't fail on the 50% plus one; it failed because not enough provinces came forward to accept it. The majority of people voted for Charlottetown and, had they met the other threshold, it would have passed. It did not require 60% plus one either.

The former Conservative government refused to abide by referenda that were not initiated by them, so when the citizens of Toronto, or the megacity, voted about 80% not to have their city amalgamated, the government refused to do so because, they said, it was not a referendum to which they had agreed; it was not initiated by them and they were going to ignore it. But the Liberals have one-upped this in this very term of office. This government has refused to act on a referendum that they themselves sanctioned, that they themselves agreed they would be bound by, and that is the citizens of the city of Kawartha Lakes, which the now Minister of Citizenship and Immigration lovingly called the "city of Kawartha mistakes," because in fact it was.

#### 1710

The citizens there took the government at its word, got a ministerial defined question by the government in power at the time, which was the Conservatives, got the agreement of the now Premier that he and his party would be bound by the results of that referendum, went ahead, held the referendum, took 51% or 52% of the vote, only to be told the threshold wasn't high enough. I think that's where all of this is coming from: The

threshold is not high enough. We want to see a much higher threshold so that we can take action.

I would tell you that any member of this Legislature who gets elected with 50% plus one would say that he or she had a mandate. Many of us in this Legislature—many of us—do not have anywhere near that kind. If it's good enough to elect somebody at 30% or 35%, I fail to see how it's not good enough when 50% plus one of the citizens come forward, make a decision and that a government should be bound by it.

We have a situation here today that has set the situation and the standards so high, it may be virtually impossible for those good people, those 103 individuals who are working literally every weekend, either together or on their own, studying learned books on proportional representation and other things, to actually have what they're recommending happen at all. This is rendered by that third failure, which is identical to BC.

The third failure in BC was how the information was to be conveyed to the public. I read this. I read through section 19 of the regulations, how the information on what the citizens are going to do is going to be conveyed to the public. When we went to BC and asked them why it failed, it failed, they said, because it couldn't get 60%, which was artificially high. It failed because it could not be conveyed to the public what in fact the referendum was all about.

The British Columbia citizens' assembly delivered their report in December 2003. Immediately after that, the government, in its wisdom, set up an information office and gave them a paltry sum of \$710,000 with which to inform every single elector in British Columbia—\$710,000. With that \$710,000, they set up a website. We've heard that almost every day in here, setting up a website, as if it's actually going to accomplish something.

**Mr. Leal:** A busy week for websites.

**Mr. Prue:** You're right: a big week for websites. They set up a toll-free call system, and they had enough money that every single household—not every single elector but every single household would get one piece of literature to try to explain the arcane and very difficult proposition that the single transferable vote was best for them.

Now, the citizens' assembly in BC chose the single transferable vote. It is one of the most difficult systems on the face of this earth for any normal individual to understand. Even people who have lived in Ireland their whole life have difficulty understanding how this system works. It works because you get not one but five votes. They take off the top winner and then they recount the votes. They skim off the top numbers if you get too many votes and throw them in the garbage can and don't count them a second time. It is a strange and horrendous system, so I'm not surprised that the people in British Columbia were flummoxed by what they were voting for. In fact, most of them had no idea other than they knew that the system they had was broken and they were willing to try almost anything. But they got that

information in one single, solitary piece of mail delivered one per household throughout British Columbia.

The reality of the \$710,000 system that was set up by the government is that it too was doomed to fail. The RIO, the Referendum Information Office, got 500 e-mails—that's all—in the period between December 2003 and the time of the referendum. In a whole year they got 500 e-mails. That's about one a day asking, "Can you please elucidate? Can you please tell me?"

The second part was that they got only 4,200 calls toll-free in a whole year. I don't know how many people were on the phones waiting for the calls to ring, but I understand that most of them had cobwebs growing on the ends of their noses, because it simply was not enough money and simply was not done well enough so that ordinary people would want to come forward and try to find out that information.

The question of the budget is a very real one that needs to be examined. In British Columbia, that province spent \$5.5 million for the British Columbia citizens' assembly. I have no idea how much money has been put forward by this government or how much money is going to be spent before it's over. FairVote British Columbia suggested that we spend approximately \$1 per elector in order to inform them on how the system works. British Columbia chose to spend about 25 cents per elector. The results were catastrophic because nobody really understood, in the end, what was being voted for. The government there refused to do so.

There is no information contained within the body of this bill or with the minister's statements that any real important monies are going to be forthcoming in order to ensure that this works. There is nothing within the body of the bill that gives me any comfort as well about whether there are going to be yes and no sides, as they do in Quebec and as they have done elsewhere, yes and no sides struck to try to argue and to bring public debate out in terms of which side people may want to align themselves with.

There are monies available. There are strict criteria on how the monies are apportioned and how they're spent and that both sides are treated equally. There is nothing in here that I can find that says that is going to happen. I've looked at the regulations—I'm going to deal with those in a minute—but there is nothing there that gives me any cause that this government is going to commit the necessary monies. They are going to look at how the people collect the monies, but I would assume this is going to be done largely like an election campaign, that the yes side goes out and gets how much money they can collect and the no side goes out and gets how much money they can collect. But I want to tell you, this may not be a fair process. Unless the government is going to make sure that both sides have roughly equivalent amounts of money, then we're not going to have a fulsome debate where everything is aired so that the public can understand. There is nothing in here that shows that the yes and no sides are going to be recognized. There is a provision that they're going to

have to register with the electoral officer, but there's no real recognition of the yes and no sides, which would be required and was required in Quebec.

I want to turn my attention now towards the end, to the regulations. The regulations are found towards the end of the bill, section 19. Again, some of my comments are eerily going to be the same as they were earlier about the Lieutenant Governor in Council because, if you see here, the regulations are set up in such a way that there will be no debate in this House. Nobody from the opposition is going to have any say in how these regulations are implemented; they're done by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. They go across a whole broad swath. I guess we're going to be asked to assume and going to be asked to be told that everything in here is going to be fair.

Take a look at the regulations that are going to be decided by the minister herself or the minister in conjunction with her cabinet colleagues. She is going to be allowed to prohibit "any person or entity from organizing a campaign"—it goes on from there; I could read the whole thing—"to promote a particular result in the referendum or advertising for that purpose unless the person or entity is registered with the Chief Election Officer, subject to such exceptions as are specified in the regulations." So here we have a government that has not said—they're going through the process. They've made it artificially high, and then they're going to set regulations that are never going to be debated in this House; they're going to be debated by the cabinet. We're never going to see them; they're just going to be there. And it will forbid and prohibit any person or entity from organizing a campaign.

1720

The second one is, the Lieutenant Governor in Council is going to be "governing applications to the Chief Election Officer for registration, including specifying criteria to be met." I don't know what that means, but there it is.

The third one is "requiring the Chief Election Officer to make information relating to registered referendum campaign organizers available to the public." I don't have any difficulty with that, but I don't know how the cabinet is going to deal with that and I don't know what is going to be said.

The next one is potentially very controversial: "governing contributions to referendum campaign organizers, including,

"(i) prescribing what constitutes a contribution and, with respect to a contribution that is not in the form of money, prescribing how to determine its monetary value."

So this minister and this cabinet are going to set about doing something which we have always entrusted the Chief Election Officer to do. She's going to make the regulations that may make it virtually impossible for people who are either in favour or opposed to the recommendations of the citizens' committee to get off the drawing board. She's going to determine who's making the contribution and whether it's allowable. Does this

mean no contributions from developers? Does this mean no contributions from unions or rich people or poor people or people opposed or people in favour? It's up to the discretion of the minister, and it's never going to be debated in this House. Governing who may make contributions: Is that everybody? Is that certain people? I don't know.

"(iii) prescribing limits on contributions that may be made, accepted or solicited, or prescribing rules for calculating those limits." So there are going to be limits, I suppose. Limits are a good thing. We have them in election processes, but what are those limits? It's not specified here. It's up to the regulations made by one person, or one person in conjunction with her cabinet colleagues.

"(iv) requiring the return or other disposition of contributions that contravene the regulations." Well, I suppose, but we don't know what those regulations are to be contravened at this time.

"(e) governing loans and the provision of guarantees and collateral security to referendum campaign organizers." So if one side which is not particularly wealthy wants to take a loan out in order to start a campaign or to finance a campaign in the hope of collecting some monies to pay it off, this will govern the use of funds, the collateral security to referendum campaign organizers, which may, for some poorer people or people without good assets, make it very difficult.

"(f) governing the use of funds by referendum campaign organizers"—so she's actually going to tell them how the money is to be spent—"including prescribing spending limits;"

"(g) governing the return or other disposition of surplus funds..." I guess that has to be in there somewhere. If you collect too much money, you can't spend it all.

Skip down a couple:

"(k) governing advertising to promote a particular result in the referendum..." So she is going to make regulations which will govern the advertising; that is, saying how the advertising is going to take place. I'm a little reluctant to allow for this without some real specific legislation. I want to know that the minister cannot turn around and tell the yes side, "You can't put in this kind of stuff," or the no side, "You can't put this in either." I can understand that it has to meet a standard so that it's not inflammatory, it's not illegal—I can understand those things—but that's not what's here. It gives the minister and the cabinet full authority to govern "advertising to promote a particular result in the referendum, including,

"(i) prescribing information to be included..." You're going to say what can be put in and what can't.

"(ii) prescribing duties of broadcasters and publishers who broadcast or publish advertisements on behalf of others." You're going to tell the radio and television stations what they can play and what they can't.

"(iii) imposing a blackout period during which no advertising is permitted." If that's one day, like we have in an election, on the same day, I wouldn't have any objection, but that's not what's here.

Last but not least is “providing for any other matter that is necessary or desirable to protect the integrity of the referendum and referendum campaign.” Again, this is down to one person’s view. It will never be debated in this Legislature.

The all-party committee, as I said, came up with a consensus of what all parties thought would work, and I would just like to go through those, if I may, in terms of what was attempted and where the minister has not followed it, because I think this is very important and why the legislation has, to this point, been given a rougher ride than perhaps the minister had anticipated. She said she was taken aback a little by the vociferous response of some members in the opposition when we were opposed to what was contained. The reason some members are opposed to what is contained is because you have not followed what was considered absolutely fair by every single member from every single party in this Legislature. Most carefully, Madam Minister, I invite you to look at the recommendations.

“4. The referendum should be binding upon a vote of 50% plus one, and the support of 50% plus one in at least two thirds (i.e., 71) of the ridings, or any other formula that ensures the result has support from northern, rural, and urban areas of the province.”

The committee understood that you can’t have just 50% plus one and have all of the farming communities or all of the northern communities or all of the cities opposed while the majority of the rest—we understand that. We understand there’s a safeguard. That same safeguard was used in Charlottetown. That same safeguard has been used in other places to ensure that it is balanced and fair across the width and breadth of the province. But the importance here was the 50% plus one vote, and you have ignored that.

You have accepted the fifth recommendation, which was that “any referendum on electoral reform should be held in conjunction with a provincial general election.” I thank you for taking that one. It made sense. I think what BC is doing the second time around—holding it in conjunction with the municipal campaign—will ensure that the turnout is so much lower and that the results will be open to question again, because a majority of BC residents will not have voted if the last election is any sort of precursor of things to come.

The sixth recommendation was about the responsibility for the referendum question. I want to read this one again because this is huge:

“Responsibility for the referendum question(s)—including the wording and number of questions to be asked, and the number of referendums to be held—rest ultimately with the Legislature, acting on the advice of the citizens’ assembly, the select committee on electoral reform and, if required, Elections Ontario.”

You have ignored that. You have taken that responsibility totally upon yourself without any debate in the Legislature, without any legislation being put forward, and entirely by regulation, which is not subject to the scrutiny of any other person than yourself, and I cannot say how wrong I think that is.

“7. Elections Ontario (or another appropriate and neutral body) should be charged with the responsibility for ensuring that every voter receives adequate information about the arguments for and against each side of any question that is put to the people. Elections Ontario (or another appropriate and neutral body) should also be asked at the earliest opportunity to prepare a plan for an effective, participatory, proactive public education campaign, with an emphasis on enabling voters to participate in town hall meetings or other community forums.”

Madam Minister, and to the members opposite, you’re not doing that. It’s not contained within the bill. There is no provision other than that you are going to allow individuals, corporations or other entities to try to collect money and to make their own case. There is nothing in here saying that a neutral third party—as was attempted in BC, although failingly—would be involved and would properly educate the citizens on what is going to be a very complex issue.

“8. Members from either side of the House should not be constrained by their party leadership from taking part in any public debate and discussion of electoral reform, and be encouraged to play a role in fostering public dialogue in their own ridings.”

This did not happen in British Columbia. There’s nothing to date that says you’re either for or against this, so I’m only asking that you consider this most carefully.

**1730**

Number 9 was to involve the Association of Former Parliamentarians. I think I can leave that one out.

Last but not least, and it’s something which was brought up by the member from Halton and which is important, is that “Reform of the electoral system should contain provisions guaranteeing a review (if not also a referendum) on the suitability of the new system, to take place not before the third and not after the fourth election held under this system. One of the criteria for this review should be a measure of the acceptance of the new system by the public.”

There is nothing in this bill that qualifies for a review. In fact, at the end of the bill it’s very terse. It says that the bill ceases to be law almost immediately after the election. Wait until I find it here. “This act is repealed on the day the Legislature is dissolved for the first time after the 2007 general election.” So it’s not going to last very long.

One of the Conservative members—I believe it was Mr. Wilson—asked about how you’re going to bind a future government.

**Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni:** That’s the way it’s done.

**Mr. Prue:** That’s the way it’s done. Okay. But I just want to give the scenario. The citizens—

**Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni:** How else can we do it?

**Mr. Prue:** I’m going to tell you how I think you can do it.

**Mr. Wilson:** You could do it within your term of office.



**Mr. Prue:** Yes. The easiest way is to do it within your term of office.

Another way you can do it is to promise that, if elected, you will carry it out, but we've run into those circumstances before too.

Another one you can do is to put within the body of the legislation that the results are binding.

**Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni:** They are binding.

**Mr. Prue:** No, they are only binding if they are 60% plus one and accepted by the next Legislature. But they're not binding upon the next Legislature if they're not 60% plus one. They're not binding.

So let's take it—because most of the opposition I have ever heard comes both from your caucus and from the Conservatives, who are opposed to any form of proportional representation. Should one of you be elected, then I would assume that same opposition may still be there, so it would not bind, as in BC, if there's less than 60%, and if there's more and if it's the Conservatives, I don't know whether they would actually be bound. From my discussions here with Mr. Wilson, I don't think he would feel bound at all. Am I correct in that? I would assume so.

**Mr. Wilson:** It's not my idea. This is their party.

**Mr. Prue:** So there you have it. It would not be his idea and he wouldn't want to do it.

This is the kind of problem I have for all of those individuals, for all of those 103 people who are working their hearts out trying to change something and make it better. I feel for them, because I know it needs to be better. They need to know that it is possible that what they are saying is actually going to happen. I need to know that the regulations and the laws are going to be made by this Legislature and not by you alone. The people need to know that if they vote overwhelmingly in favour of a proposition, it is going to happen. We need to know that it is a fair system. We need to know that the question is not loaded. All of these things are left out of this bill.

I am asking, in the end—and I know the government has the legislative muscle and 70 people in this Legislature when they want to have it—to vote to pass this bill at second reading. I am asking that it go to committee, and it's going to have to go fast. I don't know whether this is your plan, because no one has yet said that this bill is going to go to committee. In order for it to succeed, this is going to have to be in operation pretty fast. The citizens' assembly is going to report in the spring and we are going to have to know whether or not this bill is the vehicle by which their recommendation is carried. I am asking—and perhaps you can respond or you want to use the two minutes which you are entitled to after I sit down to say—whether or not this bill is going to go to committee, whether we're going to hear from people, whether or not the government is willing to make those changes, whether the government is willing to refer what is necessary back to the Legislature and out of the hands of a single, sole individual. We need to know whether or not the government is going to listen to the assembly groups, those like Fair Vote Ontario and Fair Vote

Canada, which quite frankly are appalled at the 60%. They're very appalled.

**Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni:** I've met with them.

**Mr. Prue:** You've met with them, and do they like it?

**Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni:** But we talked about it.

**Mr. Prue:** They don't like it, no, but you've talked. Okay. I need to know that what they have to say, because they have been struggling with this proposition for years, is going to be listened to.

In the end, it all will come down to good faith. If the members of this Legislature from all sides can come to a conclusion like the select committee did and can come to an agreement on how it's going to work, and abide by it and support it, then it will be supported. If there are going to be internal arguments about the fairness of the number or whether or not all power rests with the minister or whether or not the Legislature or the citizens have been listened to, then I am afraid that the very noble exercise of those individuals and the very noble platform of the government in the last election around this issue are for naught.

I don't want to rag on—I think I've said everything that needs to be said—but I am asking the minister to reconsider those aspects of the bill which we find not to be acceptable. I am asking that there be public hearings. I am asking that it be done fairly rapidly so that if and when the citizens' committee deliberates and comes to a conclusion, they will know whether or not there is a reasonable and realistic chance of how it's going to play out, and that the government makes sure that there are sufficient monies within the next budget, which I guess will be coming out in April or May, specifically designed so that the system does not have the same problems that were encountered in British Columbia. Certainly in New Zealand they spent well in excess of a dollar per person over two referendums in order to get the information out and public acceptance. If that is the way, if it's going to go by way of referendum, we need to make sure that the money is there, and in the end we need to make sure that it does not fail because it is misunderstood, because there are not sufficient people who have had an opportunity to speak or there is not sufficient opportunity to learn about it through the media or through the medium of television. Hopefully, even TVOntario might have a great role to play in this as well.

Having said all of that, at this stage I cannot say that I support the bill because of what is in it. But should it go to committee and should some of these major changes take effect, I would be more than happy on third reading to laud the minister for making the necessary changes so that it can be accepted by all parties and by everyone in Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni:** I thank the honourable member from Beaches–East York for his debate, for his advice, for his criticism. Again we have different viewpoints, actually three or four different viewpoints within the Legislature. That's democracy and I respect that. You had on the one hand the member from Halton saying that we are the ones who should be making this

decision totally and we shouldn't leave it in the hands of an unelected group. Another honourable member says we have too much control and we don't give enough control perhaps to the citizens' assembly. I understand both viewpoints. I've listened to many, many viewpoints, including those two and many, many more, and I'm sure I'll listen to more in the months to come.

With respect to the legislation, it is binding. The next government, whether it's us or another party that forms the government, does have to introduce legislation for this to occur. Now, you're saying, "Well, legislation can die on the order paper." After a year's process, where citizens who represent their communities have gone through this process and given up so much of their personal time to do it, if any government has the gall to ignore that, if and when the referendum is binding, I think they will do so at their peril. This is the way this place works, through legislation, and there isn't enough time to do it in our own mandate. Having said that, it was the select committee's recommendation to have the referendum at the next election as well.

I do agree with the honourable member: British Columbia had its challenges in public education. I assure him we will have an excellent public education campaign. I also assure him that there will be committee hearings on the bill where his viewpoints and other viewpoints like Fair Vote and other stakeholders will be listened to.

Again I thank him for his debate, his advice, his criticism, and I look forward to hearing from others.

1740

**Mr. Wilson:** It's been interesting, but in the bill itself, the government says this is binding. Nothing could be further from the truth. It's not binding on anyone. The only thing that's required in the bill is that the government introduce legislation on or before—it says, "If the result of the referendum is binding, the government that is formed as a result of the 2007 general election shall, on or before December 31, 2008, introduce legislation to adopt the recommended electoral system." All that says is that you have to introduce a bill. Well, bills die on the order paper all the time. Governments prorogue, they come and go and they don't necessarily—often they'll introduce a bill just to fulfill, as in this case, a campaign promise and they probably have no intention of ever following through with it.

If you wanted to do it, you would have started this three years ago. You made the promise four years ago that you were going to do this thing. You would have done it when you first came to office. Citizens' assembly, student assembly, everything would be over with by now. And you would do it while you have a majority government if you really believed in this stuff. That's how you bind yourselves. There's nothing binding about this. If I hear that word one more time in here I think I'm going to throw something, like Ralph Klein, across the House, except I won't hit any pages. You've got to stick with the facts here, folks.

The minister quite correctly said, "How else would you do it?" You would do it during your majority term in

government. You've got four years. You're the ones who brought in the Americanization of our electoral system and now you want to cancel the first-past-the-post system so that perhaps, under proportional representation, a bunch of party hacks who aren't elected—I met with the Speaker of New Zealand. He loves the bloody system. The Labour Party will be there forever because they keep getting enough proportional representation of the vote so that a few of them get elected, but then everybody else, based on the proportion of the vote they got in that election, is picked off the party hack list. So you end up sitting beside someone who represents no one, has never been elected, has no accountability, doesn't have to go home at night and on weekends and face any constituents at all. They're simply not elected and not accountable.

**Ms. Martel:** I want to congratulate the member from Beaches–East York, my colleague, on his presentation on this bill this afternoon. I particularly appreciated the work he did to describe the work of the select committee and its recommendations and how the government, in its bill, has not achieved the unanimous recommendations that were made by the select committee.

I guess this is the concern that I want to raise here. We had an all-party committee, a select committee, that looked at this. I take the member at his word that everybody worked very hard on that committee, that they came to it without a biased view, came to it with a balanced view about potential changes and what could be done, and after much work by that committee, published a report that had very specific recommendations about how everybody felt one should proceed.

What bothers me the most about this bill is the government's rejection or dismissal out of hand of some of the really key recommendations that the committee agreed on. The idea of 60% in order for the referendum to be binding, after the committee had a much different recommendation and after the experience in British Columbia, which showed clearly how this wasn't going to work—the government is just setting this thing up to fail. Maybe it wants it to fail, I don't know, but it's very clear that 60% didn't work already somewhere in the country and that 60% is very arbitrary in terms of other very important votes that we have had in this country, indeed to put this country together, that have rested on 50% plus one. Why is the government moving to 60%? Why is the government dismissing or ignoring or not taking into account some of the other very important recommendations that the committee made, for example around who sets the question?

These are the concerns that I have. The government decided just to kind of pick and choose what they like, instead of going with recommendations that were clearly come to by a group of people who were very committed in doing the work that they did.

**The Acting Speaker:** The Chair recognizes the member from Mississauga West.

**Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West):** Gosh, I think I'm going to take the dare by my colleague from Simcoe–Grey. It is binding.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Delaney:** Nothing? Nothing. Okay.

In fact, although I may agree with the member from Simcoe–Grey on his feelings on proportional representation, because I don't like it either, that's not what this bill is about. This bill is not about the outcome; this bill is about the process. In fact, what this Electoral System Referendum Act, 2006, is about is the means by which Ontario will elect its representatives, the process by which we're going to arrive at that. Perhaps Ontarians—perhaps—will be presented with a clear alternative to our present system. That's what this bill is about, and, if so, we're going to vote yes or no.

Now, if the citizens' panel concludes that about 1,000 years of evolution of parliamentary democracy has procedures that make it a system worth keeping, then nothing further will be done. We stay with the present system. If that same citizens' panel concludes that we have a clear alternative, then it has to be chosen by a clear majority.

That brings us to a question that some speakers have raised regarding voter turnout. Is voter turnout good or bad? Will voter turnout affect it? Probably, and if we can use the Quebec referendums as any example, we're probably looking at a very high voter turnout. If there's one thing we do know about Ontario voters, it's that they are informed, they're engaged and they're aware. They may pretend that they are not interested, but that doesn't mean they're not aware.

So if we have a clear alternative to our present system—and that's what this bill is about. It's establishing: Will a citizens' panel come up with a clear alternative or not? If it doesn't, nothing further will be done. If it does, it goes to the citizens of Ontario to make what I am sure is going to be an informed judgment after a very lively and vigorous debate.

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

**Mr. Prue:** First of all, I would like to thank the minister for her comment that there will be a committee process in which ordinary citizens can come forward to comment on various aspects of the bill.

The member from Mississauga West and the member from Simcoe–Grey are both singing from the same song sheet, although they may sound one alto and one contralto, I think. But they're both opposed to any change to the current system, so of course they like 60% because it will virtually ensure that the current system with all of its warts and flaws will stay that way virtually forever.

I do, though, thank the member from Simcoe–Grey for his comments about binding a future government. This is a difficult proposition. It is difficult, and I'm not sure exactly how a future government can be bound any more than what is contained within this act. But certainly I think people need to rest assured that even should this survive the hurdle of the 60% and there be changes, there is no future government that need do anything, save and except put the legislation in and never call it for second reading. That's the reality of all of this. So it's true.

I thank the member from Nickel Belt for her comments. She's right: The committee did a huge amount of

work. My colleagues on that committee—Liberals, Conservatives, myself, the clerk, Anne Stokes, and the research officer, Larry Johnson—did a huge amount of work trying to determine a system that would be accepted by all sides. The disappointment, I guess, in my speech here today is that it is simply not there. Some of the key elements have been left out or changed, to the point that it is difficult to see how in its current form it can be accepted, and it needs to be accepted by everyone.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr. Delaney:** I guess I'm going to have the last word of the week on this bill.

I find myself agreeing with a comment made earlier by my colleague from Simcoe–Grey when he voiced the opinion that, in and of itself, the level of voter turnout isn't a problem, and that has some bearing on this because there's a certain threshold for this bill that's needed to succeed. Should a clear alternative be presented by the citizens' assembly, then it will go to a referendum. The referendum would be a separate ballot at the time of the next election. Voters would be given both an election ballot and a referendum ballot. They would have to mark each and put them in the ballot box at the same time. So at one point earlier in the debate, the member for Simcoe–Grey said that the level of voter turnout isn't a problem. In fact, he actually has a point. Is low voter turnout in and of itself a problem in our society?

There are two sides to that coin. One side says that people usually get the government that they deserve. So if you elect someone and then shortly after, people say, "How did this idiot get elected anyway?" then probably not enough people paid attention when they either did or didn't mark an X on their ballot.

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**Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre):** I wonder if anybody's asking that about me.

**Mr. Delaney:** Some members here wonder whether they're asking that of any of us. Perhaps they may.

Going back to voter turnouts, voter turnouts are an indication not necessarily of whether a voter is casting an informed ballot, but mostly of voter engagement of a thorough debate. The odds of a bad representative being elected in a high voter turnout are probably lower than with a low voter turnout, but it's not impossible. If you're going to elect a bad representative, the best way to do it is with a low voter turnout.

A low voter turnout can still elect a great representative. For example, if an electoral district has a great representative widely perceived as being effective, then a low voter turnout may basically mean that people are satisfied and there's no particular perception of a crisis. For example, in Mississauga people have felt that way for years even though voter turnout is very low. Our mayor is re-elected, she got 91% earlier this week, and the incumbents on city council were returned, again with very large pluralities.

**Mr. Prue:** How about Carolyn Parrish?

**Mr. Delaney:** My colleague from Beaches–East York asks about the former federal member for Mississauga—

Erindale. I might remind him that she got very nearly 50% of the vote—nearly 50% of the vote in a crowded field.

There's a saying in software development that encapsulates some of the conundrums that as members we may be grappling with on this particular legislation. One of them goes a bit like this: Decisions are made by people who show up. What that means in software development is that your project is going to go ahead come hell or high water, and the people who are there for the meetings, the people who are engaged at the time that you decide on the features, are the people who determine the end result. Decisions are made by people who show up. And that's what happens to us right now in our elections. Is first past the post a bad system? It may or may not be. Personally, I think it's a good system. Some members here don't agree with me. But the decisions that send people to this House are made by people who show up.

One of the things that one sees in this House, on both sides of the hall, is fine elected representatives with a strong vision of a great Ontario and the passion to bring it forward. They were all sent here by somewhere between 20,000 and 30,000 people, sometimes more, in their riding. You've got to respect the decision of the people in their riding. They were sent here by people who showed up.

The flip side of that coin goes a bit like this: Bad governments are elected by people who don't vote. That's an interesting concept. That basically says that in a low voter turnout, you're much more likely to have a result that you may not be happy with. Bad governments are elected by people who don't vote.

We can all come up with a number of examples of that. I remember in the town that I grew up in there was a mayor that we widely perceived as being incompetent and incapable. He was basically re-elected a few times because people couldn't be bothered getting out of their houses to vote. As it came to pass—I remember my father being involved in this—they used to have a lot of the citizens' assemblies and meet in our living room. I'd be upstairs doing my homework and I got to see firsthand how simple politics were. It was a bunch of people who got together in the living room and decided that something had to be done. They went out to do the things that they agreed they would do, they came back, they decided whether or not they'd done it and at the next election, we chucked him out and replaced him with a guy who was widely perceived as being capable, honest, forward-

looking and progressive. Three years later, at the time of the next election, people said, "Oh, he's done a great job. He'll get back in; don't worry," but he lost by five votes. I remember we went out walking the previous night and we were asking people, "Have you gone out to vote yet?"—"Oh, don't worry."

"Have you gone out to vote yet?"—"Well, you know, I've got stuff to do."

"Have you gone out to vote yet?"—"Jeez, I've got to take my daughter here. I've got to go there."

And they were the same people who came back and said, "Why didn't we know it was so important?"

This particular bill, the referendum legislation on electoral reform, could change the way in which we choose our elected representatives. It's going to be an important decision. But the point of this debate is, we're not here to pre-judge whether it will recommend this or whether it will recommend that. My colleague from Beaches–East York speaks eloquently and passionately and from a solid base of educating himself about a process called proportional representation. I've looked at the same data and come to an entirely different conclusion. And should the citizens' assembly recommend that or anything like it, then it would be time for the two of us to engage in debate and see, from the basis of knowledge that we have, whether we can persuade people in our ridings to either support it or oppose it.

But that's not where we are now. Where we are right now is to deal with a process that allows some people who don't sit here to study the different systems of government and to decide among themselves, "Should we recommend a change?" If they don't recommend a change, it's all over; if they do recommend a change, then it goes to a referendum. That referendum is going to be binding. It does require the government, following the election of 2007, to introduce legislation to enact the results of that referendum.

Most of the rest of this relates to the mechanisms by which it could work, and let me quote a few of them. The same rules would apply to declining a referendum ballot or receiving a new referendum ballot as we already have in an election. The counting of the referendum ballots would occur after the counting of the election ballots is completed. The referendum ballots—

**The Acting Speaker:** Regrettably, it's 6 p.m. of the clock. This House stands adjourned until Monday, November 20, 2006, at 1:30 p.m.

*The House adjourned at 1757.*

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO**  
**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

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Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers  
Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller  
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Beaches–East York / Beaches–York-Est	Prue, Michael (ND)	Hamilton Mountain	<b>Bountrogianni, Hon. / L'hon. Marie (L)</b> 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)
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Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kenora–Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	<b>Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L)</b> Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Millroy, John (L)
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Eglington–Lawrence	<b>Colle, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (L)</b> Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration	London–Fanshawe	Ramal, Khalil (L)
Elgin–Middlesex–London	<b>Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (L)</b> Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	<b>Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L)</b> Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship / ministre des Petites Entreprises et de l'Entrepreneuriat
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Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Mississauga West / Mississauga-Ouest	Delaney, Bob (L)
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Guelph–Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)	Niagara Falls	Craitor, Kim (L)
Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)
		Nipissing	Smith, Monique M. (L)
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Ottawa–Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Ottawa–Vanier	<b>Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (L)</b> 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	<b>Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L)</b> 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)
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Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge	Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Willowdale	Zimmer, David (L)
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Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Yakabuski, John (PC)	Windsor–St. Clair	<b>Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L)</b> Minister of Energy / ministre de l'Énergie
Sarnia–Lambton	<b>Di Cocco, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (L)</b> Minister of Culture / ministre de la Culture	York Centre / York-Centre	<b>Kwinter, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (L)</b> Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
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Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	Markham	Vacant
Scarborough–Agincourt	<b>Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L)</b> Minister of Government Services / ministre des Services gouvernementaux	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	Vacant
Scarborough–Rouge River	Balkissoon, Bas (L)		
Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)		
Simcoe–Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
St. Catharines	<b>Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L)</b> Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, government House leader / ministre du Tourisme, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées, leader parlementaire du gouvernement		
St. Paul's	<b>Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)</b> Attorney General / procureur général		
Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)		

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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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