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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 19 December 2006

Mardi 19 décembre 2006

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 19 December 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 19 décembre 2006

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

INTERNET SAFETY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): Today I tabled a resolution calling on the government to declare February 7, 2007, as Safer Internet Day in the province of Ontario. The resolution was inspired by the good work of the Kids' Internet Safety Association, KINSA, a group founded to bring together people with expertise in business, law enforcement, education and public policy to address this issue.

At a media conference this morning, Paul Gillespie, the vice-chair of KINSA and a former head of the Toronto Police Service's child exploitation unit, pointed out that there are approximately 560,000 different images of children being sexually abused to be found on the Internet. The anonymity of the Internet is used to lure kids to meet these pedophiles, and it gets even scarier: According to an Industry Canada survey, 50% of kids between nine and 16 have an e-mail account their parents don't know about and 33% of children in that same age group go into adult chat rooms.

I encourage parents and grandparents to go to www.kinsa.net to learn more about this serious and growing problem. I also encourage the government to quickly adopt this resolution to assist the important work of this outstanding organization, Kids' Internet Safety Association.

GURDIAL SINGH KANWAL

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale): It's an honour to rise today and tell this House about an amazing, dedicated individual in my riding of Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale.

I have had the honour of knowing Mr. Gurdial Singh Kanwal for a number of years and consider him a friend. He's a very determined and committed individual. Mr. Kanwal is passionate about his garden. He grows everything from onions to carrots. His love and care for his garden was recently acknowledged on a worldwide scale. On October 17, 2006, Mr. Gurdial Singh Kanwal, from my riding, made the Guinness world record for the longest zucchini, which measured 7 feet, 10.3 inches.

I personally would like to congratulate him on this amazing achievement. This is an example of dedication, perseverance and hard work paying off in the end, not only through public recognition, but also through personal fulfillment.

His cultivating skills are impressive, not only because of his green thumb, but because of the time, effort and care he puts into his work. This recent recognition is only one in a long list of many in which Bramptonians are excelling. Once again, I want to congratulate him and wish him and his family all the best.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): When Bill 130 comes into force, municipalities will have to deal with even more new expenses.

Municipalities cannot afford another Liberal down-load. The cost of delivering municipal services has increased dramatically over the last few years, and provincial transfers haven't kept pace. Municipal services are suffering, infrastructure is crumbling and high property taxes are pushing people out of their homes.

Municipalities were asking for help, and instead the McGuinty Liberals tried to bury the issue until after the election with an 18-month review. The Ontario Legislature passed a resolution asking the government to complete the review more expeditiously. Over 135 municipalities have passed resolutions saying the review is needlessly drawn out and calling on the government to speed up the review, with direction coming prior to the next provincial election.

The government finally drafted the terms of reference, and they say the report won't come for 18 months. The terms of reference, in effect, give the government a veto power. After the process is finished, the government has representatives who can just veto the report and do absolutely nothing. Maybe if it hadn't taken the Liberals four months to hold a meeting, more seniors would be able to afford to stay in their homes next year.

All these municipalities want for Christmas is for the government to stop dragging its feet and to take action on this review. Why will the McGuinty Liberals not admit they were wrong and tell the committee that they need to report back sooner?

HEPATITIS C

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Whatever happened to the leftover money in the Ontario hepatitis C assistance plan? This is a very good question, which victims of tainted blood deserve an answer to.

The Ontario hepatitis C assistance plan was set up under the former government to provide financial assistance to the hep C victims outside the 1986-90 window. Two hundred million dollars was set aside to compensate these individuals, and two separate payments totalling \$25,000 were made to those who qualified. Some \$88.5 million was spent to compensate 3,450 victims, leaving some \$112 million unspent, which is the situation to this day.

In April 2005, the Minister of Health announced a task force to look at the situation facing hepatitis C victims in Ontario. When it was finally appointed, in December 2005, the task force set up a smaller working group to look at recommendations for hep C victims to make further recommendations regarding how they might be helped.

It's my understanding that some long time ago, the financial assistance working group unanimously agreed that leftover money in the assistance plan should be used to provide more help to those who had already qualified for compensation. I trust this was the recommendation that the task force then made to the minister when the report was handed in. But since then, nothing has happened.

Ontario victims of tainted blood continue to wait and wonder what this government is doing with some \$112 million that was set aside, supposedly to help them. They shouldn't have to wait because they've waited too long already. Their health is not getting any better and the least we can do is give them the financial assistance to—

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

1340

KWANZA

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): This past Thursday, in my riding of Thornhill, the Glen Shields Public School hosted its fifth annual Kwanza celebration at the Dufferin Clark Community Centre. For your information, the first time we had the Kwanza celebration, there were only 25 people in attendance. Over the past five years, the annual Kwanza celebration has transcended its humble beginnings and has grown into a true community event with attendance by over 200 people.

The event contained several spectacular performances, including songs by the junior and intermediate choir, a traditional drum and dance ensemble, and a Kwanza candle-lighting ritual.

As you may know, Kwanza is a week-long pan-African holiday that occurs annually from December 26 to January 1. It is a time to come together as a community to renew friendship and family ties and to reflect and be thankful for our good fortune.

As we all know, Ontario is home to a multitude of diverse communities, each with a unique set of cultural traditions. In the spirit of the diversity that exists in our province, I encourage all members of this honourable House to participate in cultural events within their communities during this holiday season.

I would like to thank Neil Gunathunge, the principal of Glen Shields Public School, Oksana Majaski, community resource facilitator, and all the students and teachers at Glen Shields Public School for their hard work and extended effort in ensuring yet another successful celebration.

In the spirit of Kwanza, let the Karamu begin.

WATER LEVELS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Recently I was pleased to be invited to a luncheon hosted by the Midland Rotary Club. The guest speaker at the luncheon was Ms. Mary Muter, who is a cottager on Georgian Bay, a member of the Georgian Bay Association and a person who has devoted endless hours to the ecology and water levels on Georgian Bay and Lake Huron.

The Georgian Bay Association, through its foundation, at a cost of \$250,000, paid for the Baird water level report. The report concluded that erosion and the continual and ongoing dredging of the St. Clair River are causing water levels on Lake Huron and Georgian Bay to drop at a greater rate than ever before.

The Baird report convinced the International Joint Commission that the erosion of the St. Clair River is in fact a major cause of low water levels on Lake Huron and Georgian Bay. In Simcoe North, we have a lot at stake with water levels that continue to decline.

To begin with, the property values of shoreline properties are impacted because the high-water mark keeps moving further way from the property lines and buildings, making it at times almost impossible for dockage. Second, with thousands of boats on Georgian Bay, some marinas are finding it more difficult for larger boats to access their locations. Third, with the drop in water levels, our precious wetlands are also in jeopardy, as many have begun to actually dry up, putting a strain on our natural heritage system and wildlife.

It is now well documented that Georgian Bay and Lake Huron are approximately 40 centimetres lower than the levels recorded in 1918. Georgian Bay is part of the culture of our region. We need to address the concerns raised in the Baird report so that future generations can enjoy the natural beauty of beautiful Georgian Bay.

I know the federal government has committed to some mitigation funding; Ministers Ambrose and Clement made the announcement in September. It is imperative that the McGuinty Liberals show true leadership and become key players at the table so that a solution can be found to stop declining water levels in our Great Lakes.

DISASTER RELIEF

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): I rise today to applaud this government's announcement that the town of Fort Erie will be receiving up to \$1.8 million under the disaster relief assistance program.

On October 12 and 13 of this year, unprecedented amounts of lake-effect snow deluged that area, all across the southern tier of the Niagara Peninsula. Fort Erie received 30 centimetres of snow in one day, setting a single-day and monthly record for October. High winds uprooted trees and shattered branches, blocking many roadways, and major damage to the power grid caused a blackout that lasted for days in some areas.

The magnitude of the cleanup and emergency response led to significant costs for the municipality and tremendous hardship for the residents and businesses in the area.

The province will make an advance payment of over \$900,000 to assist the municipality with its costs after the severe snowstorm in October. The Ontario disaster relief assistance program is a provincial program that covers extraordinary, unmanageable public damages. In response to a request from the town, the province declared the town a disaster area under the program. This enables the government to provide financial assistance to the municipality.

I particularly want to commend my colleague the member for Niagara Falls, Kim Craitor, who I know advocated very strongly for the people of Fort Erie in the wake of this storm and kept their plight in the spotlight here at Queen's Park.

LONDON MARCONI CLUB

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): I rise in this House today to say thank you to the London Italian Marconi Club in my riding of London-Fanshawe, that was the host of a wonderful dinner on Sunday night for London's less fortunate.

The London Marconi Club is a wonderful organization that every year provides a special holiday feast for those who otherwise might not be able to enjoy such a meal. The annual dinner is sponsored by many different local companies in London, and I would like to take this time to thank all of them.

I am proud to say that I was joined by many of my colleagues this past Sunday: the Honourable Mr. Chris Bentley and Mr. Ernie Hardeman; and also Mayor Anne Marie DeCicco-Best and Councillor Roger Caranci.

Not only did the Marconi Club provide a superb meal of turkey, mashed potatoes and vegetables, but there were door prizes such as frozen turkeys for families to take home for a nice hot meal. We also had a very special guest of honour. Santa came to the dinner and gave out treats to all the boys and girls who came with their families.

I would like again to thank the local companies and also the Marconi Club for their generosity and for open-

ing the place every year to provide such an important meal for people who cannot afford to buy one.

I want to take this opportunity to wish everyone in this House a happy Christmas and, hopefully, a happy new year.

AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): I rise to inform the Legislature of more good news in the health care sector for the riding of Huron-Bruce and the province of Ontario.

Yesterday I had the chance to announce funding increases from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care for land ambulance services for both Huron and Bruce counties. This announcement was part of the McGuinty government's second-phase investment of \$50 million into the program for 2007. Overall, our government has planned to spend approximately \$300 million over three years in order to strengthen the 50-50 cost sharing program with municipalities. This cost sharing program will see our government share equally the cost of operating the land ambulance program with the municipalities by 2008 in order to further strengthen this service that helps so many lives in Ontario.

I'm very pleased to say that the riding of Huron-Bruce was the recipient of this funding. The financial commitment was \$956,566 for 2007, and this is after a similar announcement for last year as well. This represents an increase of \$648,769 for Huron county and \$307,797 for Bruce county.

This is part of the McGuinty government's commitment to upload the services of ambulances and make good on the commitment of 50-50 funding for ambulance—

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

VISITORS

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I beg the indulgence of the House to introduce and welcome my son, Christopher Cowperthwaite, to the Legislature. He has been out of the country for a year and we're glad to have him back.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I hope the whole House will join me in welcoming my niece, Ms. Lee Chrysler, to the House today. She is a third-year political science student at the University of Guelph.

APPOINTMENT OF
CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I beg to inform the House that I've laid upon the table an order in council appointing Dr. George Pasut as acting chief medical officer of health for a six-month term commencing on December 13, 2006, pursuant to an address of this assembly on December 12, 2006.

1350

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): I beg leave to present a report on agencies, boards and commissions, the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., from the standing committee on government agencies and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mrs. Munro: This report is the third in the series of three that we have done as a committee over the last few months. I'd like to thank all of those who participated. I also want to point out that this report contains two dissenting opinions.

At this time, I would move adjournment of the debate.

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

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE ET L'ASSURANCE CONTRE LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL

Ms. Mossop moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 177, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 177, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail.

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

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): This bill addresses two key issues brought to me by injured workers in Ontario. The first says that the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board will consider employment or business positions which are both suitable and available to the worker when determining the worker's post-injury earnings, and second, it will permit additional circumstances when the board may review a worker's loss-of-earnings benefit after the 72-month lock-in.

I would like to thank Rob Walters, Bill Wrye and Steve Peters for their help and support in crafting this bill.

TRUTH AND TRANSPARENCY IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR LA VÉRITÉ ET LA TRANSPARENCE AU SEIN DU SYSTÈME JURIDIQUE

Mr. Tory moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 178, An Act to amend the Courts of Justice Act with respect to truth and transparency in the justice system / Projet de loi 178, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les tribunaux judiciaires en ce qui a trait à la vérité et à la transparence au sein du système juridique.

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

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): In so many areas, we have learned that the first step in identifying a problem, getting a handle on the problem and then determining, as we're charged to do here, ways to fix that problem is to collect and make available to the public more information. In this case, this bill seeks to address something that I think is very worrisome, namely that our justice system is in trouble in terms of declining public confidence. This bill, the Truth and Transparency in the Justice System Act, will let the sun shine in and let more information be made available to the public through collection across the province by the government so that we can see, on things like plea bargains and sentencing deals, that justice is not only being done but we'll see how it's being done and we'll actually see it being done at the same time. I look forward to the debate on the bill.

ONTARIO CLIMATE CHANGE ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR LES CHANGEMENTS CLIMATIQUES EN ONTARIO

Mr. Tabuns moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 179, An Act to provide for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in Ontario / Projet de loi 179, Loi prévoyant la réduction des émissions de gaz à effet de serre en Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto-Danforth): Climate change is a profound challenge to the stability of our society. This bill provides a framework for action in Ontario, setting out targets and timelines that have to be achieved in order to actually have an impact on that challenge. I believe it's a realistic bill that should set the framework within which all other climate change legislation should be introduced in this House.

VISITORS

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: With your indulgence I'd like to introduce a grade school from the great riding of Davenport, called the Pauline Junior Public School, and their teacher, Megan Hickman. They came to watch how a bill becomes law. Thank you, and congratulations.

DEFERRED VOTES

MUNICIPAL STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2006LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
CONCERNANT LES MUNICIPALITÉS

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 130, An Act to amend various Acts in relation to municipalities / Projet de loi 130, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne les municipalités.

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

The division bells rang from 1356 to 1401.

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

Ayes

Balkissoon, Bas	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Patten, Richard
Bartolucci, Rick	Fonseca, Peter	Peters, Steve
Bentley, Christopher	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Bountrogianni, Marie	Jeffrey, Linda	Pupatello, Sandra
Bradley, James J.	Kular, Kuldeep	Racco, Mario G.
Broten, Laurel C.	Leal, Jeff	Ramal, Khalil
Bryant, Michael	Marsales, Judy	Ramsay, David
Caplan, David	Mauro, Bill	Rinaldi, Lou
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	McGuinty, Dalton	Ruprecht, Tony
Colle, Mike	McMeekin, Ted	Sergio, Mario
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Smith, Monique
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dhillon, Vic	Milloy, John	Van Bommel, Maria
Di Cocco, Caroline	Mitchell, Carol	Watson, Jim
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wilkinson, John
Duguid, Brad	Orazietti, David	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	Parsons, Ernie	Zimmer, David

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Munro, Julia
Barrett, Toby	Klees, Frank	O'Toole, John
Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
DiNovo, Cheri	MacLeod, Lisa	Runciman, Robert W.
Dunlop, Garfield	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
Elliott, Christine	Martel, Shelley	Tory, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wilson, Jim
Horwath, Andrea	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth

The Deputy Clerk (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 51; the nays are 24.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

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

VISITORS

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I wish to draw the attention of the members to the members' gallery where my family is visiting today. I have three of my nieces here: Elizabeth Green, Jennie Winchester and, particularly today, Corporal Christie Green, who has just returned safe and sound from Kandahar.

She was the development adviser to the Canadian military operation and the major general here for the last eight months. Thank you for being here. We're very gratified.

ORAL QUESTIONS

BAIL VIOLATIONS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. Premier, last month we heard about the case of a man in London who was charged with shooting four people in a downtown parking lot during the Thanksgiving weekend. He was granted bail on the condition that he reside with a relative in Toronto. The individual subsequently disappeared, and his whereabouts are at this point in time unknown.

Stories like this, we believe, seriously erode the confidence Ontarians have in their justice system, and they raise serious questions about whether or not that system is in fact working. Will the Premier advise the House as to how many cases of this kind take place in Ontario each year?

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

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): I know the leader of the official opposition knows the decision of a crown attorney has to be, and ought to be, a quasi-judicial one. It has to be an independent one. It ought not to be either popular or unpopular. We in this government support the independence of crown attorneys' discretion. Of course, the policy of crown attorneys when it comes to gun crime is to vigorously prosecute those charges and to oppose bail. That is the policy and that is the practice of the crown, to oppose bail in gun crime charges. That is the policy and the practice and that is the approach, one that we have made public for the first time by the publication of the crown policy manual and one we will continue to work on.

Mr. Tory: It may well be the policy, it may well be the practice, but that wasn't an answer to the question. The question has nothing to do with popularity and it has nothing to do with any kind of assault or infringement on anybody's independence.

The reason that the Attorney General can't answer the question is that he doesn't know the answer. It's odd, because the government of Ontario does assign people to keep track of every egg laid every year in Ontario—the number, in fact, was 228,889,000 in 2005—but they

can't tell us important information about bail and sentencing.

Jane Creba was killed last Boxing Day. Several of the suspects in that case were already out on bail on previous charges at the time of that incident. Media reports would suggest there are no consequences for people violating bail, because surety guarantees posted by others aren't collected on. Can the Premier tell this House, of all the bail violations that occur each year in Ontario, in how many of those cases are the guarantors actually expected to pay up on the sureties? In how many cases are they paying up? What percentage?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: The member mentioned that terrible tragedy that took place Boxing Day last year. He will know that before that happened, about a year ago, the Premier sat down with the OPP commissioner, with Toronto Police Chief Blair, with a chief prosecutor for the province and with his justice ministers to see if we're doing everything that we can be doing. Then what happened, in January, was the largest single expansion of our criminal justice enterprise in the history of this province. A provincial operations centre was established and will be operational very soon. We had a guns and gangs task force expanded exponentially with prosecutors working with police officers. And this week we learned of the new major crimes court that has been opened, the first of its kind in Ontario, very unique in this country. So that our policy of—

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

1410

Mr. Tory: Well, that was very interesting, but again, no answer to the question. The question is simply why we can't have, the public can't have, information related to plea bargains and sentencing deals, in aggregate, collected across the province so we know what's going on. The government of Ontario has people in place to track how many calls there are to the bear wise hotline that reach a live operator—10,536 between April and November 2005—but we can't tell people how many sureties are collected for bail violators or how many plea bargains are entered into across the province. This is why people are losing faith in our justice system. We want to open it up so that people can see what's happening, get the facts on the table across the province, and report them to the public. I introduced the Truth and Transparency in the Justice System Act today. Victims' groups support this, such as Victims of Violence, Sharon Rosenfeldt, co-chair, who says, "This bill ... would help measure whether victims of crime are truly having justice served."

My question to the Premier: Will you support this bill? Will you act to open the justice system up and let people see what's going on and be able to judge for themselves?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: I'm reminded of what our chief justice said, one of our greatest Attorneys General, Roy McMurtry, just a few years ago when a similar attempt was made by the Progressive Conservative Party to engage in an act of legal populism that would try and put pressure on either the quasi-judicial decision made by

crown attorneys or the judicial decision made by judges. What Roy McMurtry said was that the people of this province are best served by an independent and impartial judiciary that seeks to find a just result. We take that for granted, but from time to time it has to be restated. The chief justice was right when he said that then, he's right to say it now, and our government will continue to restate those important principles of independence that every single Ontarian has a right to and we will continue to defend.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Premier. There's nothing in that bill whatsoever that threatens anyone's independence at all.

To the Premier: The centrepiece of the Dalton McGuinty election campaign, and the re-election campaign that's sure to come—the promise to reduce wait times—lies in tatters. We have the wait time commercials that have been found by Advertising Standards Canada to be in violation of the Canadian code of advertising standards. The government of Ontario is a member of the advertising standards council. They obviously take the responsibilities that go with that organization and membership in it very seriously.

Will the Premier please tell us what the specific response of his government was when they were contacted by the advertising standards council to respond to the complaint that had been made? Did he say to them that the ad had been approved by the Auditor General and that that was good enough, or did he say that he was not going to abide by whatever ruling came from the advertising standards council? Or did he say that the membership of the government of Ontario in this body didn't matter and that, in fact, he was going to resign? What did he say when the advertising standards council called to say they had real troubles with these ads that they found inaccurate? What did he say?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): The leader of the official opposition knows that that ad was specifically approved by the Auditor General. He knows that wait times are coming down in the province of Ontario.

But there's still more good news today. The minister is announcing a new MRI in Guelph and a new MRI in Brantford. Each of those machines can perform over 4,000 scans annually. Since taking office, there have been 10 brand new additional MRI machines replacing another seven older models. We've increased the number of MRI scans in Ontario by 78%, and wait times in that area alone have gone down by 13%, or 16 days.

Mr. Tory: In light of his record, I don't know how the Premier can expect anyone to believe anything that he just said. He would say anything to try and win a vote.

The facts are incontrovertible. The government of Ontario launched a website that they said was "up to date" and "accurate." That website was found by the Auditor General to be misleading, that the numbers in it should be

taken with a grain of salt. They ran ads to extol the virtues of all of this which have been found by Advertising Standards Canada to make “inaccurate claims” and to “omit relevant information.” That’s the independent body that looks at ads from across the province. These are ads that said people could phone a number and get their wait time down, but when you phoned, nothing happened; they told you nothing that would help at all.

We believe that an acknowledgement and an apology are due to the people of Ontario whose money you spent—millions of dollars—putting ads on television that have been found by objective bodies to be misleading and inaccurate. Will you do the right thing and apologize and formally retract these bogus ads?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: You know, the leader of the official opposition likes to choose his independent experts. The Auditor General, again I say, approved this ad.

Other communities that have benefited from new MRI machines: Guelph, Brantford, Orillia, Niagara Falls, Windsor, Markham, Richmond Hill, two in Ottawa, and Owen Sound. This stands in stark contrast to the previous Conservative government record, which privatized MRI services and put in place for-profit clinics that offered fewer hours. We’re bringing online new MRIs, and we’re proud to be getting our wait times down.

Mr. Tory: In this case, your government is a member of the organization. When you say, “We choose our experts,” you chose to belong to the organization that found your ads to omit relevant information and to be inaccurate. You chose to belong to that organization, and you’re repudiating them now.

It’s not just us calling for an apology; here’s an editorial from the Kitchener-Waterloo Record, published today. It’s called, “Apology Needed over Wait Times.” I quote:

“This is serious criticism. It is the type of criticism that should have prompted an apology from Smitherman, the minister. No such apology appears to be coming....

“After the government’s policies on wait times have been condemned twice by reputable agencies, the residents of Ontario can’t be blamed if they conclude that the provincial government has deliberately attempted to confuse patients. The government has no one other than itself to blame for weakening its credibility.”

Premier, my question is this: You should have learned from your famous 2003 “I will not raise your taxes” ad. Will you stand in your place, in light of these objective findings about the ads and these numbers, and apologize to the people of Ontario, as the Kitchener-Waterloo Record suggests you should, and formally retract these ads?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The leader of the official opposition did not like our new law requiring that any of these ads be vetted by the Auditor General. He does not like the fact that this ad was specifically approved by the Auditor General. He is not prepared to accept the fact that in Ontario, wait times are coming down. Whether you look at median wait times, whether you look at average wait times or whether you look at 90th-percentile wait times, wait times are coming down. He does not appreciate the fact that we have enlisted some of the best

experts in the country with respect to the best way to present that information, which in the past had never been collected. We’re now collecting that information; we’re presenting it. The Auditor General says he takes issue with the way we present it. We’ve asked Senator Kirby to give us his best advice so we can reconcile the competing and conflicting opinions we’re getting from our medical experts and the Auditor General. We will do what we need to do to make sure that the people of Ontario continue to see that their wait times are in fact coming down.

MEMBERS’ COMPENSATION

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): My question is for the Premier. This morning, Dalton McGuinty defended his outrageous MPP pay hike by telling Ontario’s lowest-paid workers to “sit back and eat popcorn.” I wish Ontario’s lowest-paid workers enjoyed the luxury of sitting back and eating popcorn; they don’t. They’re on the job, working longer and harder than ever trying to make ends meet.

Premier, why do MPPs deserve 31% more but Ontario’s lowest-paid workers have to wait until February for 25 cents more? Why won’t you raise the minimum wage to a living wage—\$10 an hour?

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

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I’d like to say to the honourable member that what this bill is about is closing the gap between what hard-working members of provincial Parliament make and what our counterparts in Ottawa make. It’s a 40% gap. The value of the work we do here needs to be represented in the salary, and yet we still will have a 25% gap between what we make and what our federal counterparts make. We share the same constituents, we share the same ridings, and many would argue that our work is harder. We’re closer to our constituents. Ottawa funds health care and education; we implement it. This is about closing a gap. It’s something that has been needed for the last 15 years. For 10 of those 15 years, we’ve had cutbacks or freezing of our salaries. This is fair, it’s reasonable and we make no apologies for doing it.

Ms. DiNovo: If we want to talk about a gap, why don’t we talk about the gap between a 3% raise for the poorest among us and the 31% raise for those in the 5% top income bracket, who are MPPs in this room?

The Premier may think the issue of fair wages is one big joke. I can assure him, it’s no laughing matter for the 1.2 million Ontarians who earn less than \$10 an hour, most of them women, immigrants and single parents. Why is the Premier doing for himself what he refuses to do for others in a season that calls on generosity? Why don’t you raise the minimum wage to a living wage: \$10 an hour?

1420

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: It's this government that raised the minimum wage, which was frozen for 10 years.

Interjection: You voted against it.

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: And you voted against it.

We are voting for this bill and we are accepting the pay increase because we know the value of the work that we do here and we can explain that to our constituents. I'd like to know how the NDP is going to vote against this bill and still take the money. That represents something encompassed in a word that is unparliamentary and that I cannot use here, but no better word could ever be used today.

The hard work that we do here, contrary to what your colleague, your House leader, said today on one of the TV shows, that we take months of vacation every year—does he not realize that he mars your reputation as well as the reputation of all of us here? We're all hard-working. You're hard-working; the Tories are hard-working; the Liberals are hard-working. This bill begins to close a gap, and it's about time.

Ms. DiNovo: If this government doesn't give their money to the poorest among us, the New Democratic Party is certainly not going to leave more money in their hands so that they can give themselves more money and their own cronies a raise.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. I need to be able to hear the member for Parkdale–High Park place her question. We need to be quiet even when I sit down. Member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. DiNovo: Dalton McGuinty can ram through a 31% MPP pay hike in seven sessional days, but at the rate your government is going, minimum wage earners will wait seven long years before they earn \$10 an hour. That's a disgraceful double standard. In 1972, the minimum wage was \$2 an hour. Taking inflation into account, that's \$10 an hour today. That means the poor are poorer now than they were in 1972.

You're moving heaven and earth to give yourselves a raise. Why can't you find the time, energy and courage to raise the minimum wage to \$10 an hour, a living wage?

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: If the honourable member actually believed what she said, she would opt out of the pay raise instead of voting against it and taking it.

With respect to donations to charity, that's honourable; we all donate to charity. But we'll be looking forward to a year-by-year receipt made to the public until they retire or lose their seat, as far as where those monies are going.

Here's what Professor Wiseman at the University of Toronto says: "If we use public sector standards, MPPs are dramatically underpaid."

Marilyn Churley, former NDP member, who had to try federally: "I think there are reasonable grounds ... for a salary increase."

David Christopherson: "The constituency responsibility is as great, if not greater, in terms of just the raw numbers of casework that comes in."

It's a shame the front row—Mr. Hampton and the member for Nickel Belt—took a million-dollar buyout in 1995, and yet they can't turn around and value their own colleagues when it comes to pay and salary. That's a shame. I need to use a word that is unparliamentary, and we all know what that word is. If you don't want the increase, don't take it. It's in the bill. Don't be inconsistent.

DISABILITY BENEFITS

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to you, Mr. Premier, because the buck stops with you. For the last two years, I have been bringing one man's story to the floor of this Legislature. Brian Woods has struggled with advancing complications from diabetes, an illness that many hold at bay by a combination of diet and medicine. Brian fought for a special diet supplement. He went all the way to the Ombudsman. He won his case. You and your government then shattered his health and well-being by cutting his special diet supplement in half through your new regulations.

My question is a serious and simple one: How do you explain to Brian that you deserve a 31% pay hike while he and thousands of others are told to do without the food they need to lead healthy lives?

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

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I want to reiterate what I've said on what the member of the third party asks quite often with regard to the special diet allowance. As you know, we have asked for a review of the special diet allowance, because this allowance is to go to people who have a medical condition requiring a diet. If they are not satisfied with the decision of the Social Benefits Tribunal, they can appeal it to the tribunal, and there is a good process to do that. When the Social Benefits Tribunal turns down the decision of the ministry, the benefit is reinstated. That's what happened. That is the process—

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

Mr. Prue: In the case of Mr. Woods, the Social Benefits Tribunal said that the changes you made to the regulations, those cruel new rules that you imposed on disabled people, have, and I use their words, "created hardship" for Mr. Woods. In fact, they said that it was going to drive him into the hospital. That was an understatement. Brian is watching today from a hospital room in Lindsay, Ontario, while he awaits the amputation of his legs. That's what he's watching today, Madame Minister, as you speak. This is what he wants to see you answer. It got progressively worse as he waited for the

special foods he needed to assist in the healing process, the foods he was never able to afford or get.

I'm asking you because the Premier doesn't want to answer it. Will you give up even a part of your pay hike to ensure that Brian and others have the ability to feed themselves, this Christmas and into the new year, the food they need so as not to be in hospital?

Hon. Mrs. Meilleur: First of all, I'm not going to answer the second question, because when the decision is made here that we have an increase, I will take the increase. I will not do like them, hiding behind all sorts of excuses not to take the increase. At the end of the day, they will all take the increase. Trust me.

I want to just give some statistics to the member of the party opposite. In 1998-99, 4,353 people received a special diet allowance; in 2006-07, 91,000 people are receiving a special diet allowance. I'm telling you that every person who needs a special diet because of their medical condition is receiving the special diet.

Mr. Prue: What the minister doesn't state is that the amount they're getting is less than half of what they got a year before you changed the regulations. That's the problem with Mr. Woods and that's the problem with everyone else.

It's all well and good for everyone to stand up here and talk about how important it is that we get a pay raise for a better life, but you're forgetting people like Mr. Woods, who is waiting there in the hospital, waiting to have his leg amputated. You're forgetting them. We are fighting to make sure that sick and disabled people get the nutrition they need through the special diet supplement. I wish you would too.

My question to you is very simple. Don't have the Premier tell them they can eat popcorn, people like Brian Woods, who can't survive on popcorn. Will you apologize for the remark made by your Premier, and will you reinstate the special diet that he and others so desperately need so that they don't end up in hospital, so that they don't have their leg amputated? That's what we want to hear.

1430

Hon. Mrs. Meilleur: Again, I want to say to the member of the NDP that if a person needs a special diet and if it's supported by the medical community, they will get the special diet.

I guess I understand, from what the member is saying, that he is not going to take the increase in salary. He has not said it clearly, but it shows that he's not going to take it. It's unfortunate that this party chooses to parade the misery of their constituents here in the House.

If the tribunal has decided otherwise, this person will get this special diet allowance. I'm not at liberty to talk about cases here and I'm not going to talk about cases, but I can guarantee everyone here and all Ontarians that if they need a special diet, they will get it.

AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): My question is to the Premier. Premier, with the demise of the manufacturing sector in Ontario, with over a 10% contraction so far across the province and much more to come, we know our future depends on research and innovation.

Last week I asked you about the fate of the Turfgrass Institute in Guelph and your plans to close the station and sell the land upon which it sits. You sloughed off the question to not one but two different ministers, neither of whom was the Minister of Research and Innovation. And, by the way, neither of them answered my question.

Further details have emerged about the potential closing of two more research stations in Ontario: that located in Simcoe, in Norfolk county, and Vineland Research Station in the Niagara Peninsula.

Premier, will you commit today to leaving these valuable research institutions untouched until they change hands to the Agricultural Research Institute of Ontario on April 1 of next year, leaving their fate in the hands of researchers and not in the hands of land developers? Will you commit to do that today, please?

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

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): While the honourable member suggested I didn't answer it the last time, I would ask you to listen very carefully, because I intend to answer it again today.

First of all, with respect to our Premier's commitment to research and innovation, our Premier has listened to the agriculture stakeholders in the province of Ontario, and that is why he committed—and we are following through—to have the research stations right across the province transferred to the Agricultural Research Institute of Ontario. That's what the stakeholders said was needed. Unlike the previous government, which did not take this action, our Premier has made it happen.

What that means is that it is now the research institute that will direct how best the provincial resources will be deployed to ensure that our research initiatives are accomplished as we have said they should be and as we are investing in those initiatives. So it's the ARIO that will have the responsibility to ensure—

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

Mr. Chudleigh: The Premier's office and your office, I'm sure, are receiving copies of letters from ministry stakeholders and researchers alike imploring you not to sell off this land. The important research conducted on these research stations is tied directly to the land upon which they sit. Selling them would set research projects back years, if not decades, in Ontario.

If you're the champion of research and innovation, as your government claims to be, stand up for the researchers at these valuable research stations and ensure that they do not fall into the hands of developers before that transfer date of April 1. They're not going to be trans-

ferred until April 1. Will they be transferred on that date, intact, in the same location that they are located in today?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: First of all, I think it's important to caution the honourable member not to speculate on when the parties that are negotiating the transfer of these lands—on when that will be completed. I think it is really very surprising that a member from that party that slashed research dollars in the province of Ontario—you slashed them; you allowed these research facilities to crumble in their communities. You now stand up in your place, you've found religion, and you want to see some investment in research.

What I can say is that this government and this Premier have led investment in research. We have put \$3 million into a research chair at the University of Guelph. We have invested \$25 million for the research lab at the University of Guelph. We have invested \$2.5 million in the agri-food innovation awards that are going to be announced very soon. We also announced in the last budget—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question?

COAL-FIRED GENERATING STATIONS

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): My question is for the Premier. With Christmas less than a week away, experts warn that the ice at the North Pole could entirely disappear in summertime by 2040 as a result of climate change. In a campaign to save his homeland from climate change, Santa dropped by this place today and asked me to present you with a stocking with a large piece of coal in it to commemorate your broken promises to shut down coal plants in this province by 2007, then 2009. Premier, when will you stop breaking your promises on coal and move to a very aggressive energy efficiency and conservation program for Ontario's energy and climate protection needs?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): First of all, I thank the member for the question. I want to welcome Jack Gibbons today, who is a relentless advocate with the Ontario Clean Air Alliance.

We are moving as aggressively as we can and in a responsible fashion. We cannot compromise the reliability of our electricity system. The fact is, we have made some real progress. We're reducing emissions and making a difference. We've reduced our reliance on coal by 17%; mercury emissions by 33%; sulphur dioxide emissions by 28%; NO_x by 34%; carbon dioxide, which obviously contributes to climate change, by 15%.

We are the only government in North America that is shunning new coal-fired generation and that has made a specific commitment to phase out coal-fired generation. At a time when the rest of the world is going one way, we're going the other way. Ontarians can take pride in knowing that they are leaders in the fight for clean air.

Mr. Tabuns: I have to say, Mr. Premier, that Mr. Gibbons is here with some plainclothes elves, and I don't think they're particularly impressed by your response.

Earlier today, I introduced the Ontario Climate Change Act. It does two things. First, it mandates the creation of a climate change plan that meets Ontario's reductions under the Kyoto Protocol. As well, it requires further reductions beyond 2012, and it empowers the Environmental Commissioner to review the climate change plan for content and to ensure that reductions are achieved.

Premier, if you're serious about addressing climate change, will you give future generations of Ontario children an early Christmas present and commit to speedy passage of my Ontario Climate Change Act?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: What I can say is this: It's important that we have an intelligent debate about how quickly we can move with respect to phasing out coal-fired generation. But let's remember that at a time when most of North America and much of the world is expanding their reliance on coal, we are steadily reducing ours.

This summer I read a great book called *The Weather Makers*. It tells me that worldwide, there are going to be 249 more coal plants built by 2009. On top of that, there are going to be 483 more built by 2019. On top of that, there are going to be another 710 coal-fired plants built by 2070. We stand as a single, solitary beacon to the world. We are saying that we are not building more coal-fired generation in Ontario. More than that, we are phasing out coal-fired generation in Ontario. They are contemplating the construction of new coal-fired generation today in Alberta and BC. We are the only jurisdiction that's going the other way. Ontarians can take pride in the fact that we're phasing out coal-fired generation in Ontario.

REPETITIVE STRAIN INJURY

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): My question is for the Minister of Labour. I know that a top priority for the minister has been improving workplace health and safety in Ontario. For example, when this government took office in 2003, Ontario had the lowest ratio of health and safety inspectors in Canada. Since then, the McGuinty government has hired 200 new inspectors, nearly doubling their ranks; helped reduce lost-time injuries by more than 14,500 in only two years; extended Occupational Health and Safety Act coverage to farming operations; renewed and strengthened the WSIB; and the list goes on.

But today, I want to ask the minister about what he's doing to confront the increasing problem of repetitive strain injuries in the workplace. Some 42% of all lost-time injuries reported by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board are ergonomic-related, an unacceptable number, and I want to ask the minister what he's doing to deal with these specific workplace injuries.

1440

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): I want to thank the member for the question. "Ergonomic" is a challenging word to deliver. So is "musculoskeletal" disorders, and that's what ergonomic-related issues are.

I want to thank the member for raising it, because it is extremely important. Yes, our priorities are much different than what other governments had. We realize that we need to ensure that we have ergonomists on staff to provide specialized assistance to our inspectors.

In 2004, my predecessor introduced an ergonomic subcommittee to make recommendations as to how we move forward in dealing with ergonomic-related issues. As well, we moved forward within the Ministry of Labour on the related recommendations: raising awareness, enhancing training, better tracking of ergonomic-related inspections and increasing ergonomic expertise.

Last January, as well, we launched the pains and strains campaign to improve employer and worker awareness. But I think the most important initiative that we've moved forward with is hiring a new provincial ergonomist. This position was destroyed by the Conservatives.

Mr. Milloy: I am pleased that the government is working to reduce ergonomic injuries. Far too many Ontarians suffer disorders developed in their workplace. We all know someone who has suffered the cumulative effects of repetitive, stressful or awkward movements on bones, joints, ligaments and other soft tissues, and we all know the costs associated with these workplace injuries, including the unquantifiable costs in human suffering as well as the all-too-quantifiable costs associated with lost productivity.

While some businesses do recognize these costs and take measures to meet and exceed expectations when protecting their workers, sadly others do not. I want to ask the minister how having a new provincial ergonomist is going to better protect our workers from ergonomic-related injuries and other types of disorders.

Hon. Mr. Peters: The costs are too huge not to move forward with this position.

Some members may wonder about repetitive strain injury. Well, I watched many of you in this House signing your Christmas cards over and over again. That has the potential for repetitive strain injury, even for MPPs.

But the costs are huge: over 40,000 musculoskeletal injuries every year in this province; over \$1 billion a year in costs to the economy in this province.

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Peters: I hear the double-dippers on the other side chipping away at this issue, but the double-dippers have taken no interest in the initiatives that we have brought forward.

We recognize the importance of bringing back a position that was removed by the Conservatives, such as the provincial ergonomist. We're proud to have an individual like Anne Duffy coming forward as our new provincial ergonomist. Anne has 20 years' experience in this important issue. One billion dollars' annual cost—

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

HEALTH PREMIUMS

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): A question to the Premier: On May 18, 2004, you dropped a bomb on the

people of Ontario when you announced your so-called health tax, coming down hard on the backs of working families and seniors in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. Some have suggested this was the mother of all broken promises. Now, two and a half years later, we find out that taxpayers will be effectively paying your so-called health tax twice: first, your initial tax gouge, and now, secondly, because of decisions by arbitrators with respect to public sector employers covering the health tax for their employees. Premier, are you really intent on putting the health tax boots to working families and taxpayers not once but twice?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): The member will know that the Court of Appeal has decided that the courts will defer to the decisions of arbitrators on the interpretation of provisions in collective agreements relating to this particular issue.

As we have always said, the interpretation of the collective agreements is a matter for the arbitrators, and we will not comment on any matters that may be before any arbitrators.

Mr. Hudak: With all due respect, Premier, what a bunch of nonsense. To read your own words back to you, on October 27, 2004, you told the assembly, "If this situation persists, then we will take the necessary steps to introduce whatever clarity is required. Our intention remains the same today as it was from the outset: This is something that should be paid by taxpayers," meaning "not employers." That's what you said then. You say something entirely different today. In fact, you're intent on, again, pulling another McGuinty: saying one thing one time and saying the opposite when the going gets tough.

Premier, please tell me. The people at the Hamilton fire department are now paying \$300,000 more in taxes because of this decision. The LaPointe-Fisher Nursing Home in Guelph is going to face an administrative nightmare. Premier, please tell me you're not so obsessed with tax increases that you're going to put the boots to taxpayers two times for your infamous health tax gouge.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The member will also know, as I think the Minister of Finance related just yesterday or the day before, that 51 out of 60 decisions by arbitrators have ruled in favour of the employer, so that the individuals are required to pay. Our intention has always been crystal clear: that the Ontario health premium is a tax and not the OHIP premium that had previously been imposed under the Health Insurance Act. Again, this is a matter to be decided ultimately, though, by the arbitrators.

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, who always asks me to ask him questions. Minister, in last month's municipal elections, literally thousands upon thousands of mail-in ballots were rejected because of flaws in what your ministry has approved: the postal

ballot system. In Minden Hills, one very good example of the 849 rejected ballots, 256 were initially rejected because the obligatory signed declaration was improperly inserted inside the secrecy envelope. The large numbers of spoiled mail-in ballots seriously undermine voter trust in the democratic process at the local level.

Minister, I saw you musing in the paper today that you're going to study it. We don't need it to be studied; we need to know from you—the mail-in ballot system is clearly broken. We need you to say that, and we need you to say what you are going to do to fix it—not what you're going to do to study it; what you're going to do to fix it.

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the member for the question. It's always been the approach of this government and particularly this ministry that if certain issues are brought forward, yes, we do like to study the issues. We like to get a comprehensive view as to what's happening out there. We will be making recommendations to make changes to make sure that everyone's vote is counted.

We value the democratic process that we have in this province to the fullest. We are pleased that the municipal elections, of which there were literally hundreds across the province in over 450 municipalities, went off as well as they did. There were some isolated issues. We are going to look at them and we're going to make improvements to them.

Mr. Prue: The issues were not particularly isolated; they were mostly in rural Ontario. Last week, judges in Bracebridge and Lindsay both ordered that ballots declared spoiled because of problems with the signed declaration be counted. They saw clearly that your regulations did not work. The judges' ruling shows just how flawed the current mail-in ballot system truly is.

My question again: Other than study it some more, what are you going to do to ensure that the votes of Ontarians who believe they are voting correctly are going to be counted in local elections and not be rejected because of your regulations?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: The member will well remember the days when the only way one could vote was by actually going to the voting booth or voting by proxy. What governments have done over the last number of years is to make sure that as many people as possible are given the opportunity to vote, so the mail-in ballot has been one issue that has actually been added to the method of voting, I guess a number of years ago.

There were some issues this time around; there were some problems. We want to know what the problems are. Yes, we are going to study it, but we're going to do better than that. Once we've studied it, we're going to come up with some recommendations so that the kind of problems that arose during the last election will not occur the next time. It's absolutely important that every eligible voter in this province, whether voting provincially, federally or municipally, is given the opportunity to do so, and this government is determined to make that happen.

1450

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe): My question is for the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. As the population of Ontario grows, municipalities around the province need to build new infrastructure as well as upgrade existing infrastructure facilities. In the past, previous governments neglected infrastructure and municipalities. However, my constituents know that building infrastructure is a priority to ensure that Ontario can stay competitive economically and allow us to maintain our exceptional quality of life. Municipalities in Ontario now require new and innovative ways to fund capital projects.

Minister, are there any financing tools available to them so they can help build the infrastructure they need?

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): The member for London–Fanshawe is correct that infrastructure is a priority for this government and indeed for all Ontarians. We know that municipalities need many new ways to finance projects that are important, like clean water, waste management, roads and bridges or renewal of social housing.

That's why, in 2004, under the leadership of this finance minister, we created the Ontario Strategic Infrastructure Financing Authority, or OSIFA. OSIFA provides low-cost, affordable loans to municipalities to ensure that valuable infrastructure can be built by and for municipalities.

In 2005, the OSIFA mandate was broadened to include municipal culture, tourism and recreation infrastructure as well as Ontario's universities. In July of this year, OSIFA was merged with Infrastructure Ontario and continues to offer loans at affordable rates to help municipalities and the broader public sector deliver infrastructure projects. It is just one tool, innovative as it is, to deliver even more infrastructure. I look forward to the supplementary.

Mr. Ramal: I would like thank the minister for his response. My constituents appreciate that this government is listening to the municipalities and providing them with options for financing their infrastructure programs. As municipalities across the province expand and their populations grow, there are other areas that need addressing.

I know that local hydro providers need financing tools as this government expands power generation. I know that this government has made transit a priority, and as local transit authorities expand and provide expanded services to families, these operations need to finance new projects. As we make our streets safer and hire more police officers, municipalities will need to build new police stations.

Minister, will you listen to municipalities and make sure that we continue to expand the loan program and help municipalities make their investments to accommodate these priorities?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: We always listen to Ontarians, but I've got to tell you, the member for London–Fanshawe is one of the most passionate advocates of them all. So I am very happy to inform this House that we are indeed expanding Infrastructure Ontario's OSIFA loan program once again.

I know that a good number of communities in south-western Ontario that this member advocates for have already benefited from more than \$2.8 billion in low-cost, longer-term loans for over 1,200 infrastructure projects. We're expanding the program's scope and eligibility to include municipal corporations such as hydro utilities, transit corporations, universities, federated and affiliated colleges and not-for-profit long-term-care service providers.

The program will strengthen their capacity to finance and build new infrastructure projects and improve the delivery of these critical public services. Municipalities will now be able to borrow for investments in capital projects like municipal buildings, police and fire stations, emergency vehicles, snowplows. It goes a long way—

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

TOURISM

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): My question is for the Minister of Tourism. Ontario's tourism industry employs more than a quarter of a million people and is a \$20-billion industry, yet we are continuing to face extraordinary challenges. Same-day car trips to Canada from the United States are in steep decline, according to Statistics Canada—to a record low this fall.

Early in the new year, the US passport requirement will start to take effect, meaning that all US visitors will soon need to obtain a passport before they visit Ontario, so that they can get home again hassle-free.

Most tourism partners know that without an effective and targeted marketing plan, Ontario's tourism jobs will be lost next year. The government has promised to introduce a new marketing campaign for tourism to encourage Ontario residents to holiday at home, yet there are still no details about this new campaign on the ministry's website. Just before Halloween, the minister promised tourism stakeholders that he would release the details of the campaign in the coming weeks. It's now Christmas. When will the minister release the details?

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I can't find the answer in the book here, but I can speculate what it might be.

We are consulting at this time with the stakeholders to determine what would be best, but the member has identified, as we have, a significant concern out there. In my anecdotal explorations with the various stakeholders, they have said to me that one of the things that has been lacking is the kind of intensive advertising and marketing campaign within the province to encourage our own folks to explore all of the opportunities in areas such as yours.

You have some great assets in the Kitchener–Waterloo area. I've been there. There are really some nice places to explore everything in the province of Ontario, to identify what would be good in winter, summer, spring and fall, and to encourage our people to go from one end of the province to another, to look at another part of the province.

I think you will be very pleased with the advertising program that's going take place. I'm delighted that you have called for this kind of advertising, because we are going to deliver, I assure you.

Mr. Arnott: Back in June 2003, the member for St. Catharines, then in opposition, criticized the government for what he called “a virtual orgy of self-congratulatory, blatantly partisan advertising,” accusing the former government of “potentially cheating in an upcoming election.”

The McGuinty Liberal government has been condemned by Advertising Standards Canada for a health care advertising campaign that was inaccurate and omitted relevant information. The Auditor General has condemned the government for a year-end burn-off, where normal accountability and control provisions were reduced or eliminated.

Ontario Tourism needs a long-term commitment from this government for an effective and targeted marketing campaign that works, not a knee-jerk reaction at your end that is actually intended to boost the popularity of the Liberal government. What assurances will the minister provide the House that his marketing plan will be true, non-partisan, highlight the best of the whole province and actually give the tourism industry the boost it so urgently needs?

Hon. Mr. Bradley: First of all, I'm a bit confused by the member's thrust in this, because in the first case he says, “Would you please advertise to the people of Ontario and market to the people of Ontario to stay here?” And in the second, he gets into some other diversion issues.

I can tell you one thing: I've seen some ads on television already that are very intriguing. There's certainly enough there to interest the people of Ontario in staying in the province as much as possible to enjoy some of the attributes that we have. I can assure the member that when he sees the further marketing that goes on, he'll be delighted, because it will be portraying the various tourism assets that we have in a very positive fashion, so that he and I will be able to go to our neighbours and say, “Instead of perhaps looking at another jurisdiction to visit in this particular year, why don't you try the province of Ontario? Here are the various assets.” I think you'll be applauding those ads when you see them and saying, “That's just what Ontario needs.”

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, you'll know that in the Timmins Daily Press yet again

today, there's another story: In this case, the community of Smooth Rock Falls has been told by Tembec that they're not prepared to turn over the power dams to the community so that community can use the power dams as a way of being able to entice or attract a replacement employer for the craft mill, or for any other economic activity.

You will know that those dams were specifically built back at the turn of the century—the previous century—in order to provide electricity at cost to those particular operations so that they're able to attract the investments to communities like Smooth Rock Falls, but more importantly keep the investments there by providing cheap electrical power in order to allow those craft mills and paper mills to operate.

My question simply is this, Minister: Will you intervene on behalf of the residents and the laid-off workers of Smooth Rock Falls and tell Tembec that the hydro dams are for the benefit of the community and not for the corporation of Tembec, and that the community will have control of those dams in the very end?

1500

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): I thank the member for the question. This is another one of these hydro generation situations that have occurred with, in this case, the closing of the mill in Smooth Rock Falls. As the member knows, the company, Tembec in this case, owns the facility. They do have a water power lease agreement with the crown, and in the original lease agreements, it doesn't tie it to a pulp mill operation or to the community. It does talk about the purpose of generating power for the operation of machinery in a very general way. We are working with the company. The company being able to generate power here also in a way supports its other operations, and you have another big Tembec operation in Kapuskasing, in your riding. We want to make sure that that is sustainable, and obviously the revenue from this helps sustain that facility also.

Mr. Bisson: Minister, what's going to make Kapuskasing sustainable is having hydro rates that reflect the true cost of power, something that your government, quite frankly, in succession with the Ernie Eves government, has made worse.

The issue for Smooth Rock Falls, as it is for other communities, is very simple. They have (a) a power dam that has been built for the specific purpose of supplying energy to a corporation that would operate in their community; (b) they have woodchip directives when it comes to wood from other sawmills that should be tied to that community so that they can keep on operating, and a host of other tools that you have in your arsenal as the Minister of Natural Resources that you could use if you choose to support the community of Smooth Rock Falls, as well as many other communities.

So we're saying again, we want you to be our champion. We want you to be on our side. Are you prepared to stand up for the people of Smooth Rock Falls and say no to Tembec so that that power dam can stay with the

community, so it can attract a replacement employer or some other economic activity that will survive that community after Tembec is gone?

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: The McGuinty government is the champion for Smooth Rock Falls, and I must say, with my partner the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, we are working with the Smooth Rock Falls revitalization task force. We support that task force. I am looking for every opportunity I have in my ministry, and there are other under-utilized species. We've had RFPs out, and believe me, we are looking at those towns that are the hardest hit from the closures in the forestry industry for those new opportunities that are availing themselves in the northern forest. I would say that there should be some good news soon for Smooth Rock Falls. We're working closely with the community and we are dedicated to the survival of Smooth Rock Falls and northern Ontario.

HEALTHIER SCHOOLS STRATEGY

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): My question is to the Minister of Education. I was pleased to hear that you and the Minister of Health Promotion made a healthy schools announcement at Market Lane Junior and Senior Public School in Toronto. The McGuinty government is clearly working hard to make sure our students are becoming more aware of how to live healthy lifestyles.

We know that research indicates that a healthy school environment supports student success. There's never been a government that has invested so much in our students when it comes to healthy initiatives, from forming our healthy schools working table, to our swimming-to-survive program, to our community-use-of-schools program. We take health and active living in this province very seriously. Minister, how's the McGuinty government making progress to improve students' health?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): I want to thank the member for Peterborough for the question. Indeed, the connection between the health and well-being of our students and their academic achievement is very important to us, and we have already put a variety of initiatives in place. We have put in place nutrition standards for school boards for foods and beverages, we've put mandatory daily physical activity in place for our elementary students, we have protected students with anaphylaxis and we have a comprehensive strategy on bullying prevention.

The newest initiative, the healthy schools recognition program, does two things. It challenges all our elementary schools in the province to do one more thing to improve the health of their school. So they may plant a vegetable garden on school grounds, they may form an after-school running club. They may create a mural that outlines the anti-bullying strategy and confirms a bully-free zone. Those are all things that make the whole school a healthier, safer place. The final thing we're doing is allocating \$1,000 to the nearly 900 secondary

schools in the province to engage the students in activities that they think would make the most sense in terms of healthy schools at a secondary level.

Mr. Leal: Minister, it is clear that our government is on the side of Ontario students and teachers when it comes to developing healthy schools. The promotion of healthy living and active living is a best practice best started with our young people. Since we formed the government, we've taken remarkable steps to ensure that the tools and resources are available for teachers, parents and students to help our students enjoy the programs that lead to healthier and active lives. We've removed junk food from schools, instituted 20 minutes of daily physical activity and issued nutrition guidelines to all our boards. Minister, can you share with this House what further steps the McGuinty government is taking to promote health and well-being in our schools right across the province?

Hon. Ms. Wynne: To the Minister of Health Promotion.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): I want to thank my colleague the Minister of Education. We did announce the healthy school recognition program in Toronto. I had the opportunity in my riding in the city of Nepean to announce the program at Frank Ryan school. This is a great school. It's like many schools in our province where they're offering, in this case, daily physical education, plus they have spinning classes that I took part in. They're trying to create a culture of wellness in the school system. What this school is doing: The school principal, the school council chair and the student council president have all signed a pledge, and that's available to every school in the province of Ontario. Their plan is to add an anti-bullying activity in their school, in order to get the banner which will be hung in their gymnasium as an opportunity for the government of Ontario to say thank you for the recognition—

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

WILDLIFE PROTECTION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton): My question is for the Premier. Yesterday I wrote the Premier asking that he invoke subsection 44(2) of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act and return Bam Bam the deer to the Straby family in Greely.

What I'm asking, and over 10,000 residents in the city of Ottawa are requesting, is that you use the special powers provided under subsection 44(2) of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act to account for the special circumstances like the Strabys. Today the Straby family must drive 50 kilometres east of Ottawa to see this animal they have cared for, in a zoo that's not even open at this time of year, by paying an entrance fee at the gate. For their act of compassion, the Strabys may still be fined by MNR officials.

Will the minister or the Premier commit today to ensuring that the Strabys are not fined for their act of com-

passion? Further, will the Premier approve Mr. Straby's application, which he filed yesterday, to keep game wildlife in captivity for education, science and other purposes so that Bam Bam can go home?

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

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): I very much appreciate the member's co-operation on this issue and keeping me informed as this issue broke in September and in the following couple of weeks. That application that you've informed us of is before that, so we'll obviously give consideration to that application.

I would say to the member that wildlife, such as deer and other animals, belong to nature and they're not domesticated animals that we have domesticated historically that we keep as pets. We really have these laws in place to protect our natural heritage and our wildlife in Ontario. Right now, I just want to assure the member that Bam Bam is in a six-acre hardwood enclosure. Bam Bam has company of her own species now and is no longer alone. In January, we'll also have more deer, and they will start to have a life as a herd. Anyway, we'll just leave it at that. I appreciate the member's interest in this issue.

PETITIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I have a petition, names gathered by the Fairview Mennonite Home in Cambridge, to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas long-term-care funding levels are too low to enable long-term-care homes to provide the care and services our aging seniors and parents need, with the dignity and respect that they deserve; and

"Whereas, even with a dedicated staff who do more than their best, there is still not enough time available to provide the care residents need. For example, 10 minutes, and sometimes less, is simply not enough time to assist a resident to get up, dressed, to the bathroom and then to the dining room for breakfast; and

"Whereas the allowance for three meals is \$5.46 per day; and

"Whereas those unacceptable care and service levels are now at risk of declining, and there is a further concern with the residents' safety;

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

"We, the undersigned, petition the McGuinty government to increase operating funding to long-term-care homes by \$306.6 million, to allow the hiring of more staff to provide an additional 20 minutes of care per resident per day over the next two years (2006 and 2007)."

As I agree with the contents of the petition, I sign it also.

1510

RESPONSES TO PETITIONS

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): It's not a petition; it's a point of order. I tried to raise it before petitions started, but I do have a serious point of order.

On October 24 in this House, I presented a petition addressed to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the government concerning a public inquiry in the city of Vaughan. This is sessional day 29, five days beyond what the government has to answer this. They have not seen fit to answer it and I am requesting a response to that petition.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Minister, I want to remind you that you're required, under standing order 38(i), to file a response to the petition within 24 sitting days of its presentation. Your response is now overdue. I'd ask that you give the House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): It will be forthcoming shortly. But I should tell you that in the meantime, I've had a meeting with both the mayor and the member opposite about precisely that issue, and he's well aware—

The Speaker: Thank you. Petitions?

CHILD PROTECTION

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I have a petition on the granting of Ombudsman oversight of children's aid societies. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with the petition, affix my signature thereon and send it to the table by Sarah.

NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward–Hastings): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the national child benefit supplement was created to reduce the depth of poverty across Canada for low-income families earning less than \$35,000;

“Whereas the government of Ontario claws back the supplement from families receiving income from Ontario Works or the Ontario disability support plan; ...

“Whereas the government of Ontario has failed to end the clawback for those families on OW or ODSP;

“We, the undersigned from CFUW Ontario Council, petition the Legislative Assembly to end the clawback of the national child benefit supplement.”

CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the Lung Association's women and COPD national report card 2006 reveals that more than 425,000 Canadian women have been diagnosed with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and more than 4,300 will die of the disease this year; and

“Whereas the women and COPD national report indicates that since 2000, female mortality due to COPD has risen at double the rate of breast cancer;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support a call to action for early diagnosis and optimized management of COPD to reduce illness and suffering; and

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support the Ontario Lung Association's COPD advisory panel report to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care on the prevention and management of COPD in Ontario; and

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario endorse a comprehensive strategy to address COPD in this province.”

I'm pleased to sign this and Arianne will deliver it to the table.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that's been sent to me by members of SEIU. It reads 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 and affix my signature to this.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to present on behalf of my seatmate, the member for Niagara Falls, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the government of Ontario’s health insurance plan covers treatments for one form of macular degeneration (wet), and there are other forms of macular degeneration (dry) that are not covered,

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

“There are thousands of Ontarians who suffer from macular degeneration, resulting in loss of sight if treatment is not pursued. Treatment costs for this disease are astronomical for most people and add a financial burden to their lives. Their only alternative is loss of sight. We believe the government of Ontario should cover treatment for all forms of macular degeneration through the Ontario health insurance program.”

This is signed by more than 100 people. I thank the people from Niagara Falls on behalf of my seatmate and I will ask page Kelsea to carry it for me.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

I went to this school from kindergarten to grade 8 and my mother taught there for 33 years. It does need to be replaced.

REFUNDABLE CONTAINERS

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): This petition came in rather late, but I will read it into the record because I was requested to do so. It’s to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and the Minister of the Environment specifically.

“Whereas we find lots of pop cans and beer bottles in our parks plus children’s playgrounds;

“Whereas it is therefore unsafe for our children to play in these parks and playgrounds;

“Whereas many of these bottles and cans are broken and mangled, therefore causing harm and danger to our children;

“Whereas Ontarians are dumping about a billion aluminium cans worth \$27 million into landfill every year instead of recycling them;

“Whereas the undersigned want to see legislation passed to have deposits paid on cans and bottles, which would be returnable and therefore not found littering our parks and streets;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, strongly urge and demand that the Ontario government institute a collection program that will include all pop drinks, Tetra Pak juices and can containers to be refundable in order to reduce littering and protect our environment.”

Since I am in favour of this petition, I am delighted to sign it. Thank you very much.

1520

ORPHANED DEER

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton): I am pleased to support a petition that 9,500 residents of the city of Ottawa have given me.

“Whereas the Straby family of Greely, Ontario, showed enormous compassion by rescuing Bam Bam the deer from the side of a road when it was only a fawn; and

“Whereas the Straby family has cared for Bam Bam for more than two years by providing food, shelter and love; and

“Whereas representatives of the MNR confiscated Bam Bam and placed her in a distant zoo east of Ottawa; and

“Whereas section 44(2) of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act gives the Minister of Natural Resources authority to license the Straby family to care for Bam Bam; and

“We, the undersigned, call on the Parliament of Ontario to return Bam Bam the deer to the care of the Straby family of Greely, Ontario, no later than December 25, 2006.”

I affix my signature.

ADULT LITERACY

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): I have another petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas investing in adult literacy initiatives will give more Ontarians the opportunity to upgrade their skills and gain the training they need to reach their full potential; and

“Whereas through these funding initiatives, Ontarians will have greater accessibility to post-secondary education and valuable apprenticeship programs that will put them on the right track at gaining the jobs in their field of choice; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government is providing new support for adult literacy by expanding academic upgrading services to help workers build stronger literacy and numeracy skills so they are able to perform at a higher level, thereby enhancing our workforce and our economy; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government is investing \$6.2 billion more into post-secondary education and training by 2009-10;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the McGuinty government’s efforts in providing funding to adult literacy initiatives in order to both help Ontarians to meet their full potential as well as to strengthen Ontario’s economy.”

I do concur, and I will affix my signature to it.

PEDESTRIAN WALKWAY

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I’ve received more petitions from the people of the Port Sydney area regarding Mary Lake dam. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the dam at Mary Lake has historically provided a pedestrian walkway for use by the community and visitors since the dam’s construction; and

“Whereas the walkway provides a vital link and a tourist attraction for the community of Port Sydney; and

“Whereas restricting access to the walkway would result in pedestrian use of the roadway, where motor vehicle traffic poses a danger to pedestrians; and

“Whereas closure of the pedestrian walkway across the dam is inconsistent with other provincial government

programs, including Ontario’s action plan for healthy eating and active living and the Trails for Life program, both of which promote active lifestyles; and

“Whereas all ministries should strive to encourage and support healthy lifestyles;

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

“That the Ministry of Natural Resources continue to permit the use of the pedestrian walkway over Mary Lake dam indefinitely.”

I support this petition.

LAKEVIEW GENERATING STATION

Mr. Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas there should be no decisions on the future development of the Lakeview generating station grounds until a full, independent environmental assessment, including air, water, soil samples and a health study of long-term residents, is completed to determine the historical, current and accumulative impact of industrial pollutants on the existing environment of Lakeview, southeast Mississauga, and its citizens; and

“Government includes this assessment and gives its findings equal weight in all mandatory environmental reports regarding future development of the Lakeview generating grounds.”

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE L’ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 18, 2006, on the motion for second reading of Bill 173, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act, the MPPs Pension Act, 1996 and the Executive Council Act / Projet de loi 173, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l’Assemblée législative, la Loi de 1996 sur le régime de retraite des députés et la Loi sur le Conseil exécutif.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I am told that when the House last debated Bill 173, the member for Nickel Belt gave her presentation and concluded her time. We now go to questions and comments related to the speech given by the member for Nickel Belt.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I very much appreciated the contribution of the member for Nickel Belt to this debate. What’s remarkable is that this bill, co-sponsored by Dalton McGuinty and John Tory—oh, and

let's understand that John Tory is now Preston Manning in Stornoway.

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the member for Niagara Centre to please refer to other members of the House by the name of their riding or by their ministerial title.

Mr. Kormos: Of course, Speaker.

Dalton McGuinty, the leader of the Liberal Party and the Premier of Ontario, and John Tory, the leader of the Conservative Party and the member for Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey—for at least the next several months—understand that the deal that these two cooked up in the backroom was exposed by Ms. Martel, the member for Nickel Belt, in the course of her comments around Bill 173. It isn't just a paucity of debate, it's a desperate lack and failure to debate by the Conservatives and the Liberals that makes this second reading truly remarkable.

Oh, the courage they have out in front of the cameras, insisting that this is good policy. Good policy? Well, if it's good policy, stand up and explain to your constituents why you're supporting it. If it's good policy, then make sure that the bill undergoes scrutiny in public committee hearings, because I can tell you this: New Democrats will make sure that this bill is forced into committee. New Democrats can guarantee that to you. We are going to make sure that this bill is forced into committee. The question that then remains is, will this government use the brute force of its majority to as readily force it out?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge): I had the opportunity yesterday to hear a number of the speeches, including the member from Nickel Belt. As usual, she speaks with a great degree of passion and expertise in regards to those in our community who have needs and are vulnerable. I look forward to the balance of the debate on this particular bill.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I know that the member from Nickel Belt spoke the other day on this bill. In her address, she certainly raised the issue of ending the clawback of the national child benefit. I know she has raised that issue on numerous occasions in questions of the government, and she used her time on this debate to do so again. I know that's an issue about which she is very passionate.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): I want to commend my colleague the member from Nickel Belt for yet again raising issues that I think are really important to the people in our constituencies, specifically, the battle that has been ongoing now for I don't know how many years in regards to getting justice for kids with autism and their parents. The member from Nickel Belt has championed for two Parliaments now the need to get the province to provide autism services for kids past age six. I've seen, as all of us in this Legislature have seen, what it means to the parents, the siblings and the children themselves when it comes to not having IBI treatment for kids past age six. I think the member makes a good point. It would cost us not a heck of a lot to be able to assist those children and those families, to provide those

services necessary, as compared to what we will receive by way of an increase. I don't bemoan members working hard and all of those things, but the question is that we also have to assist other people in our society. She asks the question on IBI, which I think is a good one.

The second one is that of long-term care. As she has, and as with everybody else in this Legislature, I have had an opportunity to visit long-term-care facilities this fall, as they have invited us in to talk about some of the commitments the Liberals made in the last election and, since becoming the provincial government, have not maintained. They said specifically that they wanted to provide an extra \$6,000 per year of funding over when being elected to government. We're not anywhere near that amount of money. Long-term-care facilities are having to struggle to provide the kinds of services we need in dietary, housekeeping and personal care in our long-term-care facilities. I think of the Extendicare facilities in Kapuskasing and Timmins. I think of the Golden Manor, North Centennial Manor, Foyer des Pionniers and many others across this province that are struggling to provide the services necessary to keep seniors in the long-term-care facilities with a service level that they should expect. I think the member makes a good point when she says that if we're going to help ourselves, we should first help those people who need help as well.

1530

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time for questions and comments, there having been four. I'll return to the member for Nickel Belt who has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I want to thank the members who made a contribution. I want to say—I have already made it clear and I'm pleased to do so again today—that in the very fine tradition of Tommy Douglas and Stanley Knowles, I will be giving this pay raise to local organizations that primarily serve children and youth in our community.

I spoke with the executive director of the Social Planning Council of Sudbury this morning, Janet Gasparini, and I said I'd be seeking the advice of the council on how best to distribute funds in the community. She was very excited about my request and said that the council will be very pleased to help me with this project.

I've also advised the local media today that I would be happy to make available to the public all of my charitable tax receipts to show that the only people who benefited were the local charities and not myself. I fully intend to do that.

I find it incredible that any Liberal member would be so vehemently opposed to my making these contributions to local groups in my community that help children. I find it incredible that you are opposed to this. And it begs the question why you are so very opposed to my doing this to help the very organizations that you don't seem to want to help. So shame on you, all of you who have a problem with my using my pay raise in this way.

The other point I want to make is about this whole process. Before December 13, there was nothing on the

agenda about a pay raise. Two representatives from this government—the Minister of Finance and the government House leader—were very public in that regard. Then bang, last week, here comes a pay raise bill and a special motion for us to sit longer to get it through. There will be no public hearings. We are doing this “in the dark of night” before Christmas, so the public won’t have a chance to respond. That is a terrible way to do business.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I had thought the member for Ottawa–Carleton was going to be speaking, as she certainly got up out of her chair. So I apologize for waiting, thinking that that’s what was happening there.

Nonetheless, it’s my pleasure to put on the record a few comments about Bill 173. I have to say that I’ve received a number of e-mails, telephone calls and letters from people in my constituency and outside of my constituency, as I’m sure other members of the Legislature have. When I summarize what people are saying and what they are concerned about, the issues fall into two general areas: One is concern about the process and timing, if you want to call it that, and second, about the amount of the increase that is contained in Bill 173. I’m going to focus a little bit on those issues, but I also want to talk a little bit about some of the things that I think we could have been spending this extra time on when we’re here in the Legislature.

It’s interesting, because this is, I think, my third time getting to this point, where we’re about to leave for the holiday break and inevitably something or other comes up and we end up staying till the very last possible day, which, again, is not necessarily problematic. It’s certainly been an interesting experience in terms of watching the toing and froing that goes on amongst House leaders, particularly when talking about which bills are going to be coming forward and which ones are not. It’s quite an interesting process.

From my perspective, there are things that I think are more of a priority, and I’ll be reflecting on those a little bit later on, nearer to the end of my speech. Some of them are in fact government initiatives, some are private members’ initiatives and some are just issues that are out there festering in communities that need to be addressed.

I think it’s interesting to note that of the responses that have come across my desk in the last week, or less than a week, I guess, a number of people surprisingly are of the opinion that maybe there is justification for some kind of adjustment in the salary or the pay of MPPs. I was surprised to see that. A number of people who are writing to me, who are sending me e-mails and letters, are saying that. Maybe it’s not totally unjustifiable that there be some kind of increase. But then, of course, as you read into the letter, they begin to reflect on the reality that many of them are experiencing as either low-paid workers or as workers whose increases are more akin to inflation or more reflective of the general economy, whereas the one in Bill 173, as we all know, bears no resemblance at all to those kinds of measures.

Interestingly enough, the other thing that comes up often is that many people say in those letters that the idea of a huge adjustment in one fell swoop is another thing that is distasteful. So even if they buy the fact that there needs to be an adjustment, which some do—many don’t, but some do—the next thing they say is, “But it just is distasteful to people that that one fell swoop right before Christmas is the way that it was done.” Again, it goes back to people being concerned about the process by which this was brought forward so quickly, so unexpectedly, and the timing being right before the holiday season.

I think, really, had the government taken the time to think about how to make adjustments that they considered to be necessary in Bill 173, and perhaps phased in or in some other way addressed those increases in a way that people in communities, people in ridings across this province could support, we certainly wouldn’t be here. I’d actually be finishing off my Christmas shopping, which desperately needs to be done, as opposed to being here debating this. Although I have to say, I could certainly be here debating many, many other issues. Again, I’ll be raising some of those in a very short time.

I thought it was instructive, actually—and I’m going to take the opportunity to look at some of the issues that have been raised in my own newspaper. I have not only the e-mails and the letters and the volumes of things that have been sent to me, but I also have a number of clippings from the newspaper. I’m going to refrain, for the most part, from reading into the record any of the individual letters to the editor that have been published in the *Hamilton Spectator*. There have been many and they’re pretty consistent in terms of being upset with the government, not only for the amount of the raise but for the process and the way it was brought forward in such a quick and unexpected fashion at this point in time.

My initial reaction to this whole issue, coming from a council—and I know many members here are saying that their big issue is that, as MPPs, they are paid less than what many of their counterparts on municipal councils are. Today in the *Hamilton Spectator* there was an article that talked about that very issue. It outlines the amount of salary that Hamilton city councillors receive; in fact that’s the amount of salary I was receiving, adjusted down, because they get a cost-of-living increase every year. Their salary in 2000, the year of amalgamation, was set at \$50,000 and it compounds with a small inflation-based adjustment indexation every year. So at this point in time, the members of city council are at \$55,855 annually. Granted, about a third of that is a tax-free allowance, so I would suggest that they’re somewhere around \$75,000.

We all know that although we call it a pay of \$88,000, more or less, in this place, the vast majority of members are at around \$95,000; in fact, I think there are very few who are at less than \$95,000, maybe one or two out of all one hundred and—how many do we have here now? I guess maybe 100 because there are by-elections on the way. The point is that although I hear that argument, it’s

certainly not something that is reflective of my own experience.

Having said that, people will recall that I came to this place in a by-election, so I hadn't been jumping, as people tend to characterize it when a person moves from one level of government to the other. I saw an opportunity and was given the opportunity to represent my party in a by-election, and saw the quite likely possibility of bringing party status back to our caucus, which we all now know is historic and something that did occur.

1540

The perspective that I came from was more about achieving that goal than anything to do with salary, and as you can see from the information that I just provided around our city council, where I was coming from, and the salary that they receive, there was a significant increase between where I was then and where I am now. I was quoted in the *Hamilton Spectator* as saying something to the effect of, "I don't think I have anything to complain about."

I did have this conversation with the Integrity Commissioner when he was preparing his report—and I know that members opposite, the members of the McGuinty Liberal government, are heckling our members on this side about a number of issues, particularly when the Harris government, the previous Conservative government, decided to do away with the pension plan for members. One of the things I spoke to the Integrity Commissioner about at the time when he was talking about our annual filing statements and the possibility of making recommendations to the government about increases to salary, my biggest concern—and I raised it with him—was the issue of nixing or getting rid of our defined benefit pension plan here in the province of Ontario as MPPs. Again, I'm quoted in our newspaper as raising that issue, not particularly from the perspective of having a gold-plated pension plan.

Interestingly enough, notwithstanding the fact that there isn't a defined benefit plan at this point—and even this bill, Bill 173, was a huge missed opportunity, from my perspective—I would have been much happier had the McGuinty Liberal government actually dealt with the fact that the defined benefit pension plan was sent the way of the dodo bird. I would have preferred that we had dealt with the defined benefit pension plan here at the Legislature, because I believe it is the only way to make sure that people are able to retire with a modicum of dignity and quality of life. Otherwise, the amount of dollars that people have an opportunity to set aside oftentimes is left to the whim of the markets, and one or two errors in investment or significant activities in the marketplace that reduce your holdings can cause you significant pain when it comes to retirement.

I don't believe a gold-plated pension plan was necessary, but simply a defined benefit pension plan would have been appreciated. I have to say, if there's one thing in the city of Hamilton that I do miss and that I do feel I missed out on is that when I was a municipal councillor, I was a member of the OMERS pension plan, so I had an

opportunity to participate in a defined benefit pension plan as a municipal councillor. My municipal colleagues, the newly elected ones as well as the ones who have been there for quite some time, are currently members of the OMERS pension plan. So I really do wish that the government had taken seriously the idea of reinstating not a gold-plated but just a defined benefit pension plan overall for the members of the Legislature, because we do provide important services and we do work hard. I would say that every member of this Legislature works hard, but what we often do is interrupt our work life. We are working somewhere, we get into elected politics, and everything we have done in our life prior to getting into elected politics goes by the wayside. "Usually in the middle of your best earning years" is the way the Integrity Commissioner described it when he and I were having the conversation. Your best earning years are put into this place, where there's no guarantee that at the end of the day you'll end up with a pension of any kind.

Having said that, certainly there is no guarantee that any worker in the province of Ontario retires with a decent pension, and that's why I believe there needs to be significant review of the Ontario Pension Benefits Act. I've done some consultation on that issue myself around the province. Unfortunately, the Minister of Finance, who has finally decided, at the 11th hour of their mandate, to set up a task force to look at Ontario's pension system, has not bothered to include in the mandate of those very well respected and wise people on that task force the whole issue of coverage for pension plans generally. In fact, they're not even looking at the fact that the vast majority of workers in this province are not covered by pension plans and what that means as a public policy issue. I think it's shameful that a task force is in place to deal with some significant issues around pensions and not deal with the single most important one, which is that most Ontario workers don't get one, and that's problematic.

I wanted to quote from the *Spectator* editorial that came out after Bill 173 came forward. I want to read it out loud because I think in many ways it reflects some of the shock and disbelief initially, and it then goes on to say what the government might have wanted to consider if they were going to bring something like this forward and perhaps even bother to keep people onside. This is Howard Elliott, the editor of the *Spectator*. It says:

"McGuinty, and the provincial Conservatives who also support this idea," the idea of the raise, "aren't completely off base but their execution stinks.

"Yes, there is a legitimate problem with the lack of parity between MPPs and MPs, who earn a basic \$147,700 compared to MPPs' \$88,771. Even some municipal politicians earn more." Remember, this is the *Spectator*.

"Yes, there is something wrong when a backbench MP, such as McGuinty's brother, earns more than Ontario's Minister of Health.

"But does that legitimate problem justify a raise of this size, sprung on the Legislature and electorate in this way?

"Unequivocally, no.

“The government could have done this in a number of ways.

“When the Auditor General reported that MPPs need to earn more or be seen as a farm team for the feds”—I think he meant the Integrity Commissioner at that point, but anyway—“the Premier could have acknowledged the problem and struck an independent team to review and make recommendations within a month or so.

“Or the government could have introduced a bill that proposed a much more modest increase, say 8%, with another sizable portion phased in next year.

“Or it could have pledged to make this an election issue and run on the higher pay, with raises to be implemented after the next election late next year.

“Any of these, or a host of other options we can think of, would have made more sense and been more defensible than this option” that they chose to implement.

“The sad irony is that most reasonable people would agree that an elected representative should be compensated fairly and in keeping with a competitive market.

“Otherwise, qualified and gifted people will be discouraged from entering the public arena because the financial sacrifice is just too great.

“No one is asking politicians to take a vow of poverty, merely that they work and act in ways that assure taxpayers that we aren’t getting fleeced.

“This decision is so deeply flawed that even fair-minded people must be forgiven for overlooking reasonable substance and seeing only clumsy and badly executed style and strategy.”

Again, that’s from the editorial in the *Spectator*. Although I agree with some of what they say, there are other pieces that I don’t think are strong enough in terms of the way they look at the issue.

I wanted to put on the record a couple of things that I thought were more important for us to be dealing with at the 11th hour prior to the holidays. I’m looking on my desk for another opinion column that was in the *Hamilton Spectator*, and that was by Andrew Dreschel, who is a much-read opinion columnist in the *Hamilton Spectator*. His comments were a lot more pointed when it came to this particular move by the McGuinty Liberals, but nonetheless, he comes down on the side of saying that he doesn’t believe that the idea of increased pay really makes any difference, that, regardless of what the pay is, you get different-quality representatives, and that’s what the democratic process brings us to. I wish I could find it because his remarks were actually quite funny.

If we were here right before the Christmas holidays, the holiday break, and we were talking about increases that need to happen to the Ontario disability support plan, if we were talking about possible increases to the minimum wage so that the lowest-paid workers in our communities are able to have a decent standard of living, not this time of year but all year around, then I would feel a lot better about spending this week debating bills. If we were talking about the government finally making good on its promise to stop the clawback of the national child benefit, I’d be happy to talk about that in this time frame,

or if we were talking about changing the special diet forms so that people like myself and my colleague the member for Beaches–East York don’t have to bring really sad and incredibly disgusting stories of hardship that people are going through because they can’t get their special diet.

1550

Members may recall that I brought forward the issue of Mr. Goodwin, a person living in my riding who was unable to purchase his Ensure, which is a diet supplement. As a result of an illness he has called ALS or Lou Gehrig’s disease, he needs to have four cans of Ensure a day. Why? Because he can’t chew and swallow food because the muscles in his neck and his esophagus don’t allow—it’s a degenerative disease whereby you begin to lose control of your muscles, particularly your involuntary system, so what happens is, eventually you can no longer eat. Mr. Goodwin used to have four cans of Ensure paid for through his special diet allowance. The government brings in the new form, and lo and behold, there’s nothing on there to indicate how many cans of Ensure are allowed for special diet. Hence, he gets cut off to almost nil for special diet. Luckily, when I brought this issue forward—Mr. Goodwin made an issue out of it locally in our local media—the government relented and made some changes so that ALS sufferers are able to obtain the required amount of nutritional supplement for their particular illness.

Likewise, my friend from Beaches–East York brought up the situation of Brian Woods. His issue has been brought here for months and months and months. He has not had the same luck that Mr. Goodwin had because the government is still ignoring his pleas. Meanwhile, the diabetes, at the time it was first brought here, was only—“only,” I say, and that’s pretty scary—creating sores and eventually holes in his feet. Now, this very day, he watches the legislative channel from his hospital bed awaiting a double amputation of his legs because he’s not obtaining nutritional food appropriate to a person with diabetes. That is something that I would rather be talking about here in this Legislature today.

Talking about all the job losses in the manufacturing sector in Ontario, some 140,000 jobs—I’d like to be talking about a jobs commissioner, somebody who can help us with those job losses. I’d like to be talking about a government bill on the independence of the child advocate. That’s something that I think would be worth our while. Indexing WSIB: That would be something that would be worth our while.

Unfortunately, the time has run out. I thank you for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I’ll just ask a quick question of the member. I wonder if she’s going to opt out and not take any of the money at all or if she’s going to take the charity portion and then get the tax receipt.

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound): In the short time I have—I watched the House yesterday; I

couldn't come. I just want to thank Norm Sterling for putting our view forward so eloquently, as Norm does. I certainly appreciate that.

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): I want to speak to the comments of my colleague, who I think has addressed well the issues that are before us. What are the priorities of this government and what, in fact, should be the priorities in terms of dealing with compensation for MPPs? There's no question that there are many, many pressing issues that face us in this province: the question of the special diet for people on social assistance; the question of rates for those on WSIB; the question of legislation that has come before this House around minimum wage, around the Bob Shaw law to protect firefighters who, through no fault of their own, because they are fulfilling their duties, are struck down early in life with cancer. Those pieces of legislation, those issues, should be the high-priority issues that this House is seized with. Instead, right now we are seized with this issue.

The member is quite correct when she says that addressing the issue of pensions is an entirely reasonable one, not just for members of the this House, of course, but for people throughout this society for whom the question of income in their old age is an extraordinarily profound and central issue that I come across regularly when I talk to the seniors in seniors' housing in my riding. I think all people deserve a decent pension. I think the government would have been in very good shape if it had come forward with a bill that had incorporated pension reform for MPPs and a small amount of catch-up increase, but instead the government went, I think, completely wild in bringing forward this bill at a time when in fact a great part of the population is tuned out from these issues. A great part of the population is caught up with other things of far greater moment to them right now.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): I find, as Lewis Carroll said in Alice "Through the Looking-Glass," this debate is getting "curiouser and curiouser."

If I remember correctly, the member for Nickel Belt's current position is that I am supposed to vote for this bill so that she has the luxury of voting against the bill, so that she can then turn around, vote against the bill but take the money to give to charity. So I think her position is that I'm supposed to vote for the bill so she can give money to charity in her riding. Is that correct?

The Acting Speaker: There have been four questions and comments. That concludes the time for questions and comments.

I return to the member from Hamilton East, who has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Horwath: I want to thank the members who have made a few remarks on my speech, and even those who didn't make a remark on my speech but made other remarks. I think it's appropriate that people take the time to get on the record on the issue.

It's interesting, because one of the issues that was raised by my friend from Toronto–Danforth was the issue

of Bill 111, which is the one that basically allows for presumptive legislation to be put in place in Ontario so that firefighters and their grieving families don't have to fight the WSIB. And I say "grieving," because many times these men and women have long past gone through the stage of actually being diagnosed with cancer. In fact, they have deteriorated through a horrible bout with cancer and have passed away, and sometimes have been dead and buried for 10 years before the WSIB finally approves their claims. Jeez, if we were waiting that long for a pay increase, we'd be in real trouble around here.

Mr. Kormos: And we're not. That's the whole point.

Ms. Horwath: And we certainly are not.

I'm glad he raised that, because that's one of the issues that I think can be resolved fairly quickly. In fact, had that bill been brought forward in this kind of process, to get through by the end of the year, we would have made many a firefighter and firefighter's family happy. The fire chiefs of Ontario and volunteer and professional firefighters support this bill. Many municipalities support Bill 111. So that's another one that I think we would have been able to spend time on. It would have been quite appropriate.

Instead, we're here talking about a bill that, frankly, has caused no end of angst in the population of Ontario. People are not happy with the way the government has brought this forward, and really it's sad, because there were probably many other options before the government that would not have caused such a melee of concern in our communities.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. I recognize the member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Last Saturday, my daughter Marnie, who is married to Ben Lines, had a lovely eight-pound, one-ounce baby boy in Sevenoaks, England. The baby's name is Peter John Lines.

Interjection.

Mr. O'Toole: No, I just wanted to be able to send them a copy of Hansard when I visit them in January.

But secondarily, my son Erin and his wife Rebecca had a little baby as well on July 28, 2006, and her name is Mollie Barbara Ann O'Toole. She was seven pounds, 15 ounces.

It's so important at this time of year to share that with members of the House—a lighter matter on an important topic day like Bill 173. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1600

The Acting Speaker: I don't believe that's a point of order, technically speaking, but we are delighted to hear the news and wish to offer our congratulations to your family.

Further debate? I recognize the member for Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Tabuns: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to address this issue today.

There's a lot of concern in the wider community about this bill. I hear about it in cabs, I hear about it in e-mails, I talk to people on the street about it. I want to talk to you

about the way this bill has been handled, about its substance and where it fits into the priorities of this government, because frankly, timing and time are key elements in understanding what governments do, what's important to them and how they treat the public.

I first want to speak to this whole question of timing. My colleague from Hamilton mentioned this as well, but I want to go back to it. If you issue a press release late in the afternoon of a long weekend in midsummer, you have done your best to ensure that that press release does not reach the eyes of readers. You have effectively shunted it aside. It's an indication either of very low importance or of a desire to ensure that as few people as possible hear about that.

Frankly, to bring this bill forward in the week before Christmas, when people are focused on other things, when there are a variety of religious holidays—Hanukkah—when there are a variety of social commitments and demands on people so that politics is way down on their list of concerns and interests, speaks about this government's respect, or lack of it, for the public—introducing a bill that is of great moment to many. In the timing of the bill, on its own, this government is showing a lack of respect for legislators and for the people of Ontario. I think that's a significant problem in and of itself.

I want to talk about time, time being in some ways coin of the realm in legislation. Prior to being in this Legislature, I had an opportunity for a number of years to be a city councillor with the city of Toronto, which is where I found the value of time in legislation: that the ability to set agendas, to put things at a particular point in time, has huge bearing on outcome and spoke profoundly to the priorities, or lack of priorities, of the Legislature, of the people engaged in the process. So I know that legislative time is extraordinarily precious and limited. If you look back over Hansard, we'll have debates twice a day for a few hours on, say, two different bills. Most commonly, that's most of what happens. We're not talking three or four bills a day, five or six bills a day. It is a very slow process, and so the hours devoted to legislation in a Legislature are extraordinarily narrow and limited, and their use speaks to what's important to the legislative agenda of the government.

I have seen, in my time, initiatives taken and sent into orbit, referred back to a committee that meets very rarely, tabled, received and in many other ways simply put out, way out there, so they never come back to land. I have seen items held back on an agenda so that they don't ever quite make it to discussion, they don't make it to a vote. So that setting of the agenda, that setting of the time is as powerful as having a majority in any Legislature. Your ability to determine whether something will come to a vote, where it sits on an agenda, whether in fact it ever will be debated: Those are profound powers, and their use speaks to what's important to a government.

I would say that my colleague from Hamilton has spoken well about this and spoken about what the priorities are of this government. In fact, bringing this bill forward, the one that's on the floor right now, was a very

bold move on the part of the government. It showed a desire to get something through, to get it through quickly. As I said just a few minutes ago, I think it showed a lack of respect, but it was a bold move to substantially change things, and it showed that the time for this initiative was of value to the government. It was willing to spend time. It was willing to spend a day, two days, three days, a week; maybe more. So I would say that this bill ranks very high in the government's roster of priorities. What I have to ask, though, what I have to observe, is that there are other priorities that one would think would be at least as high. My colleague from Parkdale-High Park, Cheri DiNovo, earlier this year introduced a member's bill to increase the minimum wage to \$10 per hour.

Let's look at the difference in treatment between those two initiatives. Ms. DiNovo, as a member of the third party, brought something forward as a private member's bill. It had an opportunity for debate one Thursday morning. That is a bill that is not now scheduled to go to committee. That is a bill to which the government has not made a commitment of support. Its chances of getting to third reading rest on the ability of those who need that pay increase to apply pressure to the government. That was not the case with regard to this bill. So one has to say, what was the importance of the \$10 minimum wage bill as opposed to the bill before us?

Ms. DiNovo, when she spoke in the House about the \$10 minimum wage, quoted Dr. Charles Hastings, who was the city of Toronto's first medical officer of health. He said, back in the beginning of the 20th century, that "every nation that endorses a wage that does not afford sufficient revenue for the home, a revenue that will make possible development of a sound mind and body, is trampling on a primary principle of democracy."

UNESCO, the United Nations committee on social, economic and cultural rights, condemned our minimum wage in Ontario as "insufficient to enable workers and their families to enjoy a decent standard of living."

I'd say that that would identify this as an area that should be a priority for government, an area where government should act to ensure that those who flip burgers and who stock shelves at Wal-Mart have enough money at the end of the day to clothe themselves, to clothe their children, to put food in the cupboard and on the table. But that bill is not a priority. It did not get bold action on the part of the government. It may or may not touch down, again depending on the pressure that's applied.

In my riding, poverty and the related issues of crime, drug addiction, and both mental and physical illness are substantial issues. In the north part of my riding last summer, two people were shot within two weeks at one intersection. Two people were shot in a club on the Danforth subsequent to that. In the south end of my riding, we have ongoing problems with drug addiction, with crack houses. I know, because I meet with community groups and I meet with my constituents, I meet with people in the neighbourhood, that we can try and address these problems in a variety of ways. We can

bring in medical programs; we can try and provide counselling to people who have addictions; we can press our local police forces to try and be more vigilant to apply more officers to immediate situations. But I also know, in the end, that without addressing the fundamental problems around poverty, deprivation, child abuse, these other problems will not be resolved. And I have to say, my constituents see them as pressing problems. In fact, I would say that anyone in this House who deals with those problems in their ridings would see them as pressing problems.

So I ask again, what is it about taking action to start to deal with poverty, to start this whole process of bringing in a minimum wage? Why is it ranked so much lower in the priority list of this government? Why does it not get the bold action that it requires?

I had an opportunity, a few weeks ago at the end of November, to introduce the Community Right to Know Act, which is modelled on legislation that's in place in California, to give people warning if they are to buy a product or a service that will expose them to carcinogens. Frankly, it's a useful act. It's not a great, world-changing act, but part of a larger puzzle that can reduce the incidence of cancer, reduce the incidence of heavy metal poisoning, contribute to the power that people need to protect their own health, and contribute to the society as a whole to protect the health of all its members.

1610

It was interesting to me to go through the debate afterwards. I didn't have enough time to actually address all of the questions or comments that were raised by those in the House, but I could summarize the comments of government members who said things along the lines of, "Doing an approach like that in Ontario is too narrow. We need a pan-Canadian approach. Environment Canada and Health Canada are taking action. This bill is too limited. We need to go beyond it. It will set up a patchwork of standards." And so in the end, although the bill passed second reading—there were no votes in opposition—it did not rate the same priority as this bill before us to increase the pay of members here in this Legislature.

It was interesting. When I heard all those comments, it took me back to the 1990s, when we were engaged in the fight around second-hand smoke. I heard all of these arguments from those on Toronto city council who were opposed to taking action. But if we hadn't in Toronto, in East York, in North York and in other municipalities across Ontario taken action, we would not be where we are today, with far more robust strategies to take on second-hand smoke and protect the population. Those sorts of things take prioritization; they need the commitment of government; they need allocation of time. And allocation of time on the exposure-to-chemicals issue, we're not getting. We are seeing what the priority of the government is. The priority of the government is to get through this bill.

The government could have negotiated with all parties in the chamber. They could have come up with a package

that I think would have been acceptable to all. But it was not their nature; it was not their predisposition. And so they decided they were willing to spend a lot of time on this rather than spending time on issues that I think are far more pressing to the majority of people who live in this society.

Bill 111, the Bob Shaw act that my colleague Andrea Horwath from Hamilton put forward: I had an opportunity this fall to speak with firefighters here in Toronto and to hear that, in fact, the use of breathing apparatus was not enough to protect people from exposure to toxic chemicals, that when firefighters go into fires, many of the toxic chemicals that they are exposed to can be absorbed through the skin. They don't need to be—I guess the word might be "negligent." They don't need to be negligent and forget to have their breathing apparatus on to be exposed to toxic chemicals. They are exposed because of the ability of those chemicals to get through their skin. So one would say that it's pretty clear we have people who risk their lives, who are out there dealing with an environment in which construction materials contain toxic elements. They deal with fires in waste dumps. They deal with fires in recycling facilities where toxic materials are present. They, unfortunately, contract cancer at very high rates. Why is there difficulty in getting through the private member's bill, Bill 111, the Bob Shaw act? Why is that not a priority? Why is time not allocated? Why is that act not before us today as one that could be brought through, addressed—and justly addressed—and one that I would say the majority of people in this society, in this community and in this province would support?

Bill 30, an act to reduce needle-stick injuries: The member for Nickel Belt has brought forward an act to protect front-line health care workers. We know there are a lot of nasty diseases out there that people have to deal with: hepatitis, AIDS. A needle stick can have profound consequences for a person's life. It makes sense, given everything that we would say around this chamber about the value of the lives of front-line health care workers, that the bill put forward by the member would be debated, put through committee, adopted and put in place to protect people's health. That's a high priority and would be seen by people in this society as a high priority. The bill before us is not seen as a priority, and that's part of the reason it's being brought through at this time when so many people in this province are distracted.

There are other issues that cry out for bold and quick action: the whole question of support for autistic children and their families. I have constituents in my riding trying to deal with this problem. They want care for their child so that the child has a good chance of growing up and being a functional person, being able to live a full life. They know that to do that they have to get treatment early on and treatment has to be consistent. Why is that not a priority for this government? Why is it not high on its list of actions that have to be taken? Why is it set aside? Remember, the allocation of time says to everyone what's important to a government and what is not

important to a government, and it's very clear that this question, the question of dealing with autism, is not an important issue for this government.

The whole question of dealing with firefighters and their contraction of cancer: not a concern; protection of the public through community right to know: low priority; \$10 minimum wage: not a priority. One has to ask where this government is going when it sets aside a lot of the big questions of the day and focuses instead on this bill. I think if you look back over the last three years, if you look back at the promises that were made in the last provincial election, this is about a government that is at its core a government that likes to market, likes to put forward image, has difficulty biting through on substance and, when it comes to the issues that are so key, so important to society, is always willing to step back.

I want to speak, just before my time ends, to the whole question of fair access to regulated professions and the fact that we had a commission, an inquiry and a study done by Judge Thomson, who was commissioned to look at the whole question of setting up independent appeal tribunals for internationally trained professionals. Judge Thomson did that report, a very clear, coherent report with very readable, understandable recommendations. He said it was vital, if you wanted to ensure that people's credentials were recognized, that there be an independent tribunal to hear appeals. And yet when the act comes forward: no independent tribunal. However, buried in the act is a reference to giving the fairness commissioner set up by the act the instruction that they "may" look at the whole question of independent tribunals.

We continue to deal with a government that is focused on marketing, focused on appearance, but not focused on the priorities that are staring this government, this community, this province in the face. I think that to the extent that lack of commitment to priority, that lack of understanding of what needs to be done in this province, continues, this government will discredit itself and to some extent will discredit all politicians. I call on everyone in this House to vote against this bill.

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The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Arthurs: I have just a very brief comment. The House schedule would normally call for sitting to end roughly in the last part of December and resume about mid-March. During the last couple of years, the House has chosen to sit from about mid-February until early March for three weeks or a month. Thus government and the House have set a priority on dealing with legislation, have actually added to the legislative agenda and the legislative schedule, in effect, to debate and see legislation approved.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): When you listen to the laundry list that the NDP thinks is important for this province, it's easy to see how they doubled the provincial debt in their four-and-a-half-year tenure.

Mr. Bisson: I guess those last comments—he never noticed the recession that was going on in Ontario. But that's another debate.

Anyway, I just want to commend my colleague the member for—

Ms. Horwath: Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Bisson: Toronto–Danforth. I was going to say Trinity–Spadina.

I think an important point that all of us are trying to make in this debate is that—for me personally, it's not the issue that I don't think MPPs work hard or are deserving of some increase. My God, I even heard Peter Kormos, the member from Niagara, on television today saying that a modest increase would be needed. But the issue is—for me specifically and I think for a lot of us—that there are a lot of people in our society who are hurting, and they look to provincial, federal and municipal governments to be there for them.

I look specifically at what's happening in my constituency. We've had the Tembec closure in Timmins and Smooth Rock Falls and Opatatika; we've had layoffs across the riding in the forestry sector, as we've had across northeastern and northwestern Ontario. I look at those workers and I say to myself that it would be very difficult for me to stand in this place and say that I'm going to vote in favour on the basis of them spending Christmas not having a salary come in the door.

I want to say for the record that I am one of the people who are going to accept the increase, and I want to say upfront why. I believe in trade union principles. If you negotiate an agreement—and the majority rules—everybody benefits from whatever the majority has ruled. As far as what happens in the end, in regard to whether I should or should not give it to charity, I think that's an individual decision of members. Everybody is in a different situation. Some people, because of circumstance, can or can't do those things. I, like others, am going to give some of that money to charity, but I'm going to say upfront that I'm not going to give it all. There are things in my own family situation that I have to take care of, and I have no difficulty with that. But I think it's important, in the end, to say to the constituents in my riding and others across this province that, when given the opportunity to say yea or nay, I'm going to vote nay in order to say to those workers who were laid off and others in our society who are looking to government for help, "We want government to listen to you as well."

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): We'll look forward to seeing if the member for Toronto–Danforth takes advantage of the opting-out clause, and if, indeed, there's a question of charitable giving, we look forward to seeing public disclosure of income tax statements to verify what they're doing.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time available for questions and comments. I return to the member for Toronto–Danforth for his two-minute reply.

Mr. Tabuns: I appreciate the fact that the members for Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge, Halton, Timmins–James Bay and Peterborough all took advantage of the opportunity to speak to the matter before us.

The question of pay and compensation for MPPs and legislators is always a difficult question. There's no

getting around it. But I have to say, talking to people in coffee shops or in cabs, there is a feeling that the approach that this government has taken has been one that does not show the people of this province the respect they deserve. I think that those on the Liberal benches who agree with us should vote no. They are just as free to vote no as they would be in any other circumstance. If they don't agree with us, then that's their business. But if they want to go on at length, I say come along, vote no, and we'll go from there. Sit down with all three parties in the House and see if there's an agreement that all three can come to that's reasonable and something that could be justifiable to the people of this province. I would say elements of that have to be a reform of the pension plan and a much smaller increase than is presented. If that isn't the case, then I expect we will continue in this chamber. It's interesting to me, as Mr. Kormos had said earlier, that there's very little in the way of a defence on the part of members of the government. The odd sentence, but in terms of a reasoned analysis of questions before us and a defence of the government's bold move, I'm not hearing it, I'm not seeing it. I think they've just decided to keep their heads down and ride it out.

The Acting Speaker: I wish to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 37, the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Natural Resources concerning the funding of fish and wildlife programs in Ontario. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I stand here somewhat surprised. I had not really known that I was going to be speaking today, but I was prepared to speak and I am prepared to speak.

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: Well, I am prepared to speak on this bill because it is a bill that is getting much publicity. It is a bill that my constituents are talking about. It is a bill that we have received e-mails, some letters, some phone calls about, and it is a bill I think that we all need to be on the record to say where we stand.

This is a very difficult bill. I'm going to tell you from the outset—I may not sound like all of the other New Democrats or even like the Liberals or Conservatives—this is a very difficult bill for politicians. Politicians are very good at beating themselves up. We are very good at taking shots at each other and we are very good at taking shots at ourselves. We are very good, over the long term, at saying that we are not deserving. We are very good at saying that politicians are overpaid.

Even within the life of this Parliament, one of the first actions of the new McGuinty government was to deny all of us a raise in our first year. If you remember that—

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: I remember that, and being kind of angry, but the decision was made in caucus and we weren't going to speak out against it.

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: Does the member want to hear what I have to say or not?

Mr. Wilkinson: Oh, I'm listening.

Mr. Prue: Thank you. This is what happened even within this Parliament. Politicians were very mindful of the fact of a public backlash, very mindful of the fact of where we were going as a new Legislature, and were kind of reluctant to deal with this.

You can imagine my shock. You could have knocked me down—and probably you did—on that day last week when I walked into the House and one of the staff members from the NDP said, “Congratulations, you're getting a huge raise today; congratulations, your pension is going up; and congratulations, the severance package is going to be enormous.” I couldn't believe that that was in fact what was true.

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: Excuse me? If you want to speak, then at least—

The Acting Speaker: Member, take your seat. I would ask the member for Perth–Middlesex to refrain from heckling the member for Beaches–East York. He's obviously finding it quite annoying. I'll return to the member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Prue: I don't mind a good heckle, but I would like to at least hear it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Bisson: Or get it on the record.

Mr. Prue: Or put it on the record. I mean, if it's funny, we all need to hear it.

But you can imagine that when I found out that the NDP was not consulted and that, although the Conservatives were called in, although Mr. Tory was given an update and although the Conservatives had an opportunity to caucus among their members, we of course did not have that opportunity. So I have been weighing very much the arguments that have been made by the government since that time. I've tried to fathom in my own mind whether or not this is justifiable. Some of the arguments are exceedingly strong. I must admit some of them are strong and some of them are undoubtedly true.

The first statement that has been made is that, as politicians, we have a very stressful job. I don't have to tell all of you who are here today or all of you who are members of the Legislature how stressful this job can be: getting here early in the morning, going to scrums, going to caucus meetings, making speeches, answering questions, going to committee meetings in the afternoon, going out to community events at night, working on the weekends. I don't have to tell you that this is an extremely stressful job, and of course it is.

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Some of you have said we need to have pay raises that make us possibly equivalent to, in some measure, our federal or municipal politicians. Undoubtedly there is a corollary between the federal and the municipal governments. When you look at how much they're getting paid and how much we should get paid, I'm sure there is a logical argument that can be made there.

There is, of course, the whole argument that we have not kept up with inflation for most of the last 10 years, which is absolutely true. As I said at the beginning, we tend to beat each other and ourselves up. We have not kept up with inflation for the last 10 years.

There was an argument that we need to attract good candidates. I found this one a little bizarre, but that argument has been made, that we need to attract really good candidates.

The last argument I heard is that we need to stop the exodus of people who are leaving this place to go either to the federal government or, in some cases and recently, to municipal governments to seek election in those venues.

I weighed all of this very heavily and I started to think in terms of whether these arguments held water.

The first one I will acknowledge: This is a very stressful job. I'm not sure it's the most stressful job I've ever had, but I think it probably is. It is more stressful than being a councillor in the megacity of Toronto. And I will tell you that it's more stressful than being the mayor of the former borough of East York, because there I had a very large staff and there I was not called upon to be the critic of seven portfolios, to sit in the Speaker's chair, to go to committees and do all the other things that we are required to do in this small but very mighty little party. But I also think about other stressful positions: nurses, health care workers, teachers. They have stressful jobs too.

I looked at the other levels of government, and there is an institute, the Mad River Institute located out of Creemore, that looked at the wage—

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: Creemore, that little town. It's in your riding, is it not?

Mr. Wilkinson: Not mine.

Mr. Prue: Okay, but it's a lovely little town; I spent a few days there this summer. There is an institute there called the Mad River Institute that does analysis of wages of public officials. They determined that we, in fact, were underpaid. When they looked at the federal and municipal counterparts, though, they determined that they were overpaid and that we should not be basing our salary on theirs—that we, in fact, did deserve a modest increase, but that the increase should not be based on what they thought were overpaid people in the federal government and in some of the municipalities.

I looked at the answer that we've not kept up with inflation, and that is absolutely true, but that is true of almost literally every other workforce in this province. It is certainly true of those who are the most desperate and destitute in this province: those who earn minimum wage at \$7.75 an hour, those who are on ODSP or general welfare or Ontario Works. It is very true of our aboriginal communities and other people who live, in some cases, in very destitute poverty.

I looked at the argument about good candidates, and I started to think, well, what kind of candidates would we possibly get in this House that would be better than who

we are? I looked around, and we have lawyers, teachers, civil servants, people who were politicians in another life, electricians, ministers, social workers and social activists. That's just in this nine-member caucus. Then over there we have PhDs, we have lawyers, we have doctors, we have accountants, we have people who do marvellous things with money. We have people who do all kinds of things. I don't know how we could get better candidates, quite frankly, than what we have in this House. If that is the argument, that we need better candidates, I don't know who those better candidates are, unless you want to hire people who make hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars a year as corporate executives. Those are the only people who would be left that you could recruit and for whom money would be—

Mr. Bisson: Parkinson made \$1.6 million.

Mr. Prue: I'm not getting into Parkinson. I'm trying to be calm and rational here.

The whole thing comes down to, I don't buy the arguments. But in the end, I know what's going to happen here today. I'm not naive. I know that the government is going to use the might of its 70 members, plus the might of the 24 members of the Conservative caucus, and this bill is going to be passed.

So for the last number of days I have been looking at the fallout from that. I have listened to the statements that are being made back and forth in this House, which trouble me a great deal because, as I started out to say, politicians tend to beat each other up and we beat ourselves and others up. I have heard catcalls back and forth about millionaires. I don't know where that comes from and, quite honestly, if that refers to the payout that happened under the Harris government, all MPPs in this House who were here at this time were paid out. Every single member was paid out; all 150—because it was a much larger House—were paid out. So I don't know what that argument is, and I know it's being said. If there is a bogus argument that's being made or thrown across the floor, that is it.

Then I heard other arguments being made: "What are you going to do with the money?" I don't know how anyone can ask any of us what we're doing with the money. I do not question for a minute what any member of this House does with his or her paycheque. That is entirely up to you. I tell you, I do resent when people ask what I am going to do with my money. I'm going to be very blunt and tell you that if this raise goes through—and I expect it will—my wife and I have discussed this and we intend to give the bulk to charity. That is my choice. That is our choice. That is the choice that the two of us have made, because we consider this to be a windfall. To us, it is a windfall. I do not deny that my colleagues—I heard what Mr. Bisson had to say. He needs the money and he will spend it; he has a family. I don't begrudge him for a minute, nor do I begrudge what any person here wants to do with their money.

I'm only asking the members opposite to stop this catcall about what people do with their money. If I want to give my money to charity, I'm going to give it to

charity. If he wants to keep it, if you want to keep it, if you want to buy a house or a new car, if you want to go on vacation or if you want to do anything with it at all, that is entirely what you should do.

Interjections.

Mr. Prue: No, you don't need to vote for the bill, nor should you.

I'm telling you now, in final, why I am not voting for the bill. I was a municipal politician in my first year in the former borough of East York; I was a rookie councillor. A proposal was put forward in front of our council to raise the wages of the council in its first year of a new term. I remember the debate, I remember the tens and hundreds of people coming in from East York—because we had a very lively little democracy before it was done away with—who came, meeting after meeting, to argue that we should not be getting a salary increase.

What they said was very logical to me, and it holds true even today. We ran for political office knowing what the wages were going to be, and if we wanted to raise those wages—we were entitled to do so—we ought to do it for the next term of office, and the people who were running in the next term of office, which indeed could be us as well, could run on the basis of knowing what the wage was going to be and could either accept it or not accept it. That was a very logical statement to me. I believe that they were absolutely right. In the end, my colleagues on the council, on a vote of seven to two, voted to accept the salary.

I did not feel comfortable then and I do not feel comfortable now taking that salary immediately. I did not run on the basis of the money then. I took that money that year and I offered it, through the East York Foundation, to fund East York baseball. Those kids on the baseball team got the increase.

It wasn't \$22,000; it was a relatively modest amount of around \$600. But I took that money that year and for a number of subsequent years—the \$600, which I did not believe was justified during that term of office—and gave it so that kids could play baseball. That was my choice. Nobody said, "Hurray for you, Michael Prue." Nobody said, "You're a crazy man." Nobody ran up and down the streets saying that I did the wrong thing. It was not in my campaign literature; it is just what I felt comfortable doing. I did not feel that we should be taking money in the mid-term of our office, save and except that which was equivalent to inflation, which I would have accepted, but this was over and above that, and I did not feel comfortable.

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To this day, I believe that I made the right decision. To this day, I feel very comfortable with refusing what I considered to be the excess for that term of office and giving it to kids' baseball. I feel the same way today. I feel very comfortable in the period leading up to the next election in taking that money and giving it to charities that are deserving and needful of that money.

Come the next election, if the salary is \$110,000 per year, or whatever is set at that time and I run for office, if

I do so, then I will run for that salary. What I feel very uncomfortable about and what is very unfortunate about this government's bill is that you make it impossible for someone like me to say that I should not take this salary during this term of office. The bill says, not during this term of office, but for ever and always. You have to think about that. That means that if I were lucky enough to be elected three or four times subsequent, I could never again have another raise. That is a poison pill that no politician could accept, that no politician should accept. No politician in his or her right mind would ever do that. And then you have the temerity, the unmitigated gall, to yell across here, "Don't take it forever."

I don't know what the future is going to hold. I don't know what inflation rates are going to be like. I don't know what legislators are going to be paid. But I am bound and determined that all legislators should be paid the same. Every single one of them should be paid the same. What those legislators in turn do with their money is up to each and every one of them as individuals.

I heard people saying today, "Show us your income tax." I will gladly show you my income tax form on the same day that the Premier of the province of Ontario shows me his. I will gladly do it on the same day the member from Perth–Middlesex reveals his. I will gladly do it when the member for Willowdale reveals his and where he spends his money and where he makes his contributions. I will gladly do that when all of these people who shout these things across do it too.

This is not what is happening here. This is a bill which is very difficult. This is a bill that has a poison pill at the bottom, saying, "You either take it now or you give it up for all time." I am not willing to do that.

Interjections.

Mr. Prue: No. And neither are any of you. So to all the "Ahs," not a single one of you would do it either. I would do it if it was in the short term, if you listen to what I say. But of course, none of you ever do listen.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: The member is right. Many of the members of the House are not listening to his presentation, and I would appreciate if they would so that I can hear him as well.

I return to the member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Prue: Mr. Speaker, it's very clear that they're not wanting to listen.

The point is that if this were in the short term, for the balance of this Legislature, I would not have a problem with this. But that is not what this bill says. So I am going to take the money, as I have told the press and as I'm telling you, and I am going to do what I did as a mayor and what I did as a councillor: I am going to give that portion which I do not believe is justified to worthy causes. I think that's all I can do—

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): How long?

Mr. Prue: —and I will do that for the balance of the term of this council. In the next election, I will do exactly what I need to do at that point. This has a long and

honourable tradition. This is a tradition that has been reported. I even have—

Interjections.

Mr. Prue: Mr. Speaker, can I continue speaking, or do I have to—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: I would ask members of the House to come to order, for the member for Willowdale, the member for Perth–Middlesex and all the other members who are heckling to stop it. If necessary, I will take decisive action to allow the member for Beaches–East York to conclude his presentation.

I'll return to the member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Prue: This is precisely what was done in the federal government and in the federal House for many years. It's precisely what many members of Parliament did as far back as 1975, and it's entirely what I intend to do as well.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know how much more I can add because I don't know how much longer they will remain quiet. But having said what I needed to say, I thank everyone for the limited attention that was given.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Arthurs: I appreciate the comments from the member from Beaches–East York. I've known him for a great number of years and I always respect his point of view.

Having said that quickly, I have been in these processes before, as he has been, municipally. This is a process we're undertaking with some nine months left in this mandate. It's not as though we're at the beginning of the mandate. In fact, it has been three years since any significant consideration was given. It's an appropriate time in which to put it in place so people know, going to the polls, exactly what the status is, not what the status might be.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton): I just wanted to say that we were talking a little bit about the calendar this week. I'm actually pleased to be sitting today so that I was able to raise a very important issue in my constituency, which is to save Bam Bam the deer and bring him back to the Greely farm that he was brought up on. So this has given me and my constituents a unique opportunity to raise some issues that are very important to our community.

Mr. Bisson: I appreciate the comments made by the member for Beaches–East York. I think he was trying to be genuine and honest, as I think all members try to be in this place, when it comes to what his approach is and what his rationale is for this particular vote.

He raises a point that's important, and I think it's one that we need to say. There's never a good time, as some people have said around here about how members treat each other when it comes to increases or whatever we might do to benefits or wages. Basically all of us—I see people pointing fingers; I wish you wouldn't point at your colleague across the way, because I think he's an honourable guy—at times have engaged in a little bit of bashing when it comes to these things. And I understand

why, because sometimes there are some reasons, and you have to accept it. There are some people here who genuinely feel that the increase is excessive, and they are doing it on the basis of their conviction. For members in this House to say somehow or other that's disingenuous, I think is not respectful of what a person's position might be. I also accept in this debate that there are people who feel it is something that's perfectly acceptable, and I personally don't appreciate people trying to drag personalities into this.

The other thing I say is that I respect the member, because he raises a point that I think is—something that he reminded me about, back when this issue came up about three years ago. If you remember, the government of the day under Ernie Eves had introduced legislation to in effect do what we're doing today. The idea with that legislation was that we'd get the increase after the next election. We know that didn't work either. So the point he tried to make was that until the next Parliament, he feels that for himself, for his own reasons, he is going to give the lion's share of it, or all of it—I'm not too sure where he falls on that—to charity. Others will give it all; myself, I'll only give some. But we need to respect that members will do what they will do. I don't have the right to take a look at how an individual member spends his or her money, and I think we should be able to respect that.

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): Regardless of what you may think about the opinion or the beliefs of the member for Beaches–East York, you have to respect the fact that he is an intelligent, impassioned, articulate, good debater. Frankly, I think this man deserves a raise.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Prue: I'd like to thank the members from Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge, Nepean–Carleton, Timmins–James Bay, and especially my friend from Mississauga West. As a matter of fact, I may even lift that portion of Hansard and put it on my re-election brochure.

In any event, what I was trying to say and what I firmly and honestly believe is that we have, as legislators, an obligation to reflect very strongly on what our communities want, what our communities expect, and, within ourselves, what we think is personally right and correct. In my own view, I believe that wages, save and except those that come through inflation and inflationary measures in small amounts, should be increased only at the time of taking office, that the Parliament should be setting the amount for the next government, and those who are elected should obtain and get that amount of money. That's what I feel comfortable with; that's what I would vote for. And if that's what this bill was, I would vote and I would agree with the member from Mississauga West, not only about myself but about the 103 other individuals here in this Legislature—or the 103 who will be here in this Legislature, because I don't know how many are coming back or who's not running again.

Interjection: It's 107.

Mr. Prue: It will be 107.

But I do personally feel difficulty in taking money mid-term. That is why I cannot take the money. That's why in the mid-term, I will be giving my money or the bulk of the money to charity. I feel comfortable with that. It's what I did as a municipal councillor; it's what I will do now. I cannot refuse, because if I am lucky enough to be back here, then I expect to be paid the same as everyone else. I cannot take the option that is contained within the bill, and you need to understand that. Nor should anyone be expected to do it, which is why, in fact, no one is doing it.

So that's my position. I thank all of those who had an opportunity to comment.

1650

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. I find it regrettable that I have but 20 minutes to speak to this proposition, this government's Bill 173.

The bill and the debate are not about the MPPs here at Queen's Park. This debate is about Christopher Hagan from Orangeville. He writes to me, "The rate of increase they are attempting to allot" with Bill 173 "more than doubles my annual income of just over \$11,520; this is a combination of assistance from Ontario disability support program, ODSP, and WSIB. My illnesses and debilitating pains are not something I have chosen." That's what this debate is about. It is about Mr. Hagan, who as a WSIB and ODSP recipient has an annual income of \$11,520 and continues to cope, to attempt to live with ongoing, debilitating pain.

This debate isn't about MPPs. It's about Henry Perry, and my colleague the Minister of Tourism will know what he speaks of when he writes, "I will not be getting any raise this Christmas as I'm one of the 500-plus Dana employees" who lost their jobs and who are unlikely to ever get them back.

We've had occasion to consider before in this chamber—I know we have, because I remember participating in the discussions. I remember trying to paint the picture of a person like Henry Perry, who can be a life-long industrial worker, working hard, working skilled, working dangerous, earning a middle-class income, paying middle-class taxes, consuming goods like middle-class consumers do—persons who after a year or perhaps less of UIC, or EI, as they call it now, when their jobs are taken from them, like the jobs of those workers at Dana, can end up on welfare. That's when families disintegrate and that's when lives start to unravel.

The debate's not about us. It is about Christopher Hagan and it's about Henry Perry.

The debate's not about us. It's about Terry Stokoe from Hamilton: "Unfortunately my, and thousands of other, indexed pension pay raises are linked to the consumer price index which translates to a 2.5% pay raise for 2007."

It's about Sara Ramsey and people like her. "Thousands of Ontarians are losing their jobs," she writes, "and the poor in Canada are getting poorer. Those of us who

toil for minimum wage (or less) don't have the luxury of taking a holiday because we've mouths to feed and bills to pay. To be honest, I have never made even \$22,000 a year."

These aren't fictional characters; these are real Ontarians. These are good people, hard-working people, people who are committed to their families, people who are committed to this province and to this country, people who are committed to their kids and their grandkids. "To be honest, I have never even made \$22,000 a year," Sara Ramsey writes.

Peter doesn't enclose his last name, but he has his e-mail address at rogers.com. "It is also worth noting that the Liberal government gives themselves a 25% pay increase yet feels that a 2% increase in ODSP payments which amounts to only \$20 a month will be sufficient after 12 years of inflation with no increase during this time."

This debate's about the woman I told you about the other day, the worker in a small franchise supermarket where I stopped in, walking from Queen's Park to my apartment at 6:30 p.m. And as she's bagging the loaf of bread and other assorted groceries, she looks at me and says, "Can you stop him?" I didn't know what she meant, and I said, "Pardon?" Here is this woman, 60, 65 years old, a cashier. She's on her feet all day. You can do that when you're 20 and 25; it gets a little harder when you're 60 and 65, especially if you're a woman who's had a few kids and the veins in the leg start breaking down. That's what happens.

I said, "Pardon?" She said, "Can you stop the pay increase?" I said, "Ma'am, I don't think so. There's only nine of us, but we're doing our best." She said, "Because, you see, I'm not working by choice; I'm working to pay for groceries. I'm making \$7.75 an hour." That's the minimum wage in Ontario right now. And she said, "And the employer doesn't even provide ballpoint pens; the staff have to bring their own ballpoint pens." That's who this debate is about. My goodness, a 25% salary increase come Christmastime for MPPs; 25 cents for minimum wage workers, and they've got to wait until February 2007.

The Premier says it's never a good time. Dalton McGuinty, the Premier of Ontario, says, "It's never a good time to raise MPPs' salaries, so what the heck, let's just do it." And during question period, whether it's my colleague from Hamilton East or from Trinity-Spadina or from Timmins-James Bay or from Nickel Belt or from Kenora-Rainy River or Toronto-Danforth or Parkdale-High Park or Beaches-East York, when my colleagues question the government about their failure to raise the minimum wage to \$10 now, the response is, "Well, it's not a good time, so we won't."

When New Democrats question the government, "Why aren't people receiving disability pensions participating in some catch-up to make up for all the lost years?" the Premier says, "Now is not the right time," so the government won't. And when New Democrats stand up and ask why social assistance recipients, inevitably

kids, children, little children—they haven't had catch-up either, not even close to restoring the 21%-plus that was cut from their benefits 10 years ago now. When New Democrats say, "Why aren't those people getting some catch-up in their benefits?" the Premier of Ontario, Mr. McGuinty, says, "It's not a good time," so the government doesn't.

But the Premier says it's never a good time to raise MPPs' salaries, and he does. I ask you, is that fair? Is that fair? Like you, I've had a whole lot of people talk to me over the course of the last week and a half about this very issue, down where I come from in Niagara region, here in Toronto and a few other parts of the province as well.

1700

You know, Ontarians are prepared to be very fair with their politicians, whether they're municipal politicians, provincial politicians or federal politicians. Ontarians have made it clear to me, and I'm sure they have made it clear to you, that they are prepared to be very fair about salaries for their politicians. Why aren't you prepared to be fair to them about minimum wage, disability benefits and social assistance?

Why aren't you prepared to be fair to the poorest moms in this province, struggling in a way that most people in this chamber have never seen, never mind imagined, to raise kids? Why can't you be fair to them? Keep your promise to end, end, end the child benefit clawback. It's federal money that's designed to assist the poorest moms and their kids here in Ontario to literally put food on the table. We're talking about hungry Canadians. Oh, not the poor in spirit; kids literally suffering from inadequate nutritional intake. You see, that same mom is prepared to be fair to you when it comes to your salaries, her city council's salaries or her federal member's salary. She is. I've talked to her over and over again. She asked for you to be fair to her and her kids when it comes to you keeping your promise to end the clawback of child benefits.

The government, the Premier, would have been delighted if New Democrats had joined Messrs. McGuinty and Tory in that backroom and cut the deal they wanted, which was to ram this bill through in the dark of the night, second and third readings, one fell swoop, with no exposure to the public. What were you thinking? New Democrats weren't going to have any part of that, and you know it. You ought to have known it. If you didn't know it, how dare you suggest that you should be paid more than you are now?

I have no shame, and I have nothing but pride in my colleagues—New Democrats here at Queen's Park—and in our leader for having exposed this dirty deal and having ensured that at the very least the public knows what you're doing to them. Because if you had had your druthers, this would have been wrapped up, tied up with a bow and passed willy-nilly, boom, boom, on an evening sitting, in the absence of the press gallery, in the course of but five minutes. Make no mistake about it.

This was such a clandestine operation that even members of cabinet weren't made aware that this was in

the works, never mind backbenchers. We know that because we read their comments in the press. I read the comments of the member for Niagara Falls, Kim Craitor. On Monday, December 11, the member for Niagara Falls told the Niagara Falls Review that "he didn't support" increasing MPPs' pay. "'I knew what the salary was when I ran. I consider myself extremely well paid,' he said. 'I enjoy what I do and I think I'm very fortunate.'" That particular government backbencher obviously had no idea whatsoever that this pot was being stirred, that this little concoction was being cooked up.

His regional counterpart, long-time—in fact a veteran, a senior member of this chamber, a person for whom I have the highest regard and respect, the Minister of Tourism—didn't know either. Also on Monday, St. Catharines MPP Jim Bradley, who is also government House leader, told the Review, "'I don't anticipate you'll see any significant action on this at all' and that a large pay increase for MPPs 'is not going to happen.'"

Sault Ste. Marie member David Oraziotti, when he was called by the Sault Star at his constituency office in Sault Ste. Marie with news of the pay raise legislation, to the reporter from the Sault Star: "'What? Where did you hear that?' Oraziotti said, when asked to comment on the raise." And "Oraziotti said he isn't personally concerned about his rate of pay."

The Premier tells us that MPPs have to be paid more; they have to be paid a salary closer to the federal salary so that quality people can be attracted. Then what the heck are you? The Premier says, "If we don't increase MPPs' salaries, we won't attract quality people." Well, there you are, my friends. If the Premier is trying to tell Ontarians that you've got to pay politicians \$144,000 and change a year—federal MP salaries—to get quality people, just take a look at some of the clunkers sitting in the federal Parliament. Do you want me to start naming names, Mr. Zimmer? Because I can start naming names. Man, oh man. What false, distorted logic and what a silly effort to try to peddle a sad deal.

So I say to colleagues here—and I say to the leader of the Conservative Party, you who came to Queen's Park as a breath of fresh air, as somebody who was going to do things very differently: You've lost your virginity; you are now Preston Manning in Stornoway. You've illustrated that the Tories are just like the Liberals. You've made it clear, leader of the Conservative Party, interestingly named Mr. Tory, that when it comes to self-interest, when it comes to self-serving, when it comes to backroom dealing, why, the Conservatives under their new leader can match anything that they were under previous leaders.

Which of you are going to put in your householder—oh, you won't publish one before Christmas, I trust. I suggest that you'll probably publish one in February, maybe the beginning of March, to get it in under this budget. Which one of you, in your householder, Liberal and Conservative colleagues, is going to put on the front page that "Your member, blank, MPP for riding blank, takes pleasure at having narrowed the gap," Mr. Bradley,

“between provincial MPPs’ pay and federal MPs’ pay”? Which one of you in the next provincial election campaign, when you inevitably publish the newspaper ad listing your achievements, is going to say, “I went to the wall for MPPs at Queen’s Park, but I told people at minimum wage to go pound salt; I told people receiving disability pensions to forget it”? Which of the Liberal or Conservative members here are going to brag about having enriched themselves with salary, with pension, with severance pay à la Tom Parkinson? It seems the only thing you’ve learned from the Parkinson scandal over at Hydro One is how to do it. Which one of you is going to tell moms on social assistance who haven’t had their 21.9% restored that you choose yourself over them? Which one of you?

1710

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I’d just like to add a comment to the comments of the member from Niagara Centre, who is probably the best thespian that we have within the Legislature and has a tremendous sense of hyperbole. You’ll notice that not once did he make any reference to the recommendations by an independent officer of this Legislature called the Integrity Commissioner. Not once did he make any reference to that, or to the discussion or review, or criticize that. He completely ignored that, which was the basis on which much of what is happening now was presented.

Mr. O’Toole: As has been said, the member from Niagara Centre is always entertaining and committed and passionate on Bill 173, as all members are.

But I want to digress for a moment, as I missed mentioning the grandparents, Barb and Ralph Grant of Nova Scotia, in my remarks before. They’re also grandparents of Mollie Barbara Ann Grant, born July 28. Of course, the parents are Rebecca and Erin O’Toole, Erin being my son and Rebecca being their daughter.

Also, secondly, John and Leslie Lines of Kent, England, are grandparents of Peter John Lines, born just last week on December 15, 2006. The parents there are Marnie and Ben Lines of Sevenoaks, England, our daughter and our son-in-law. Peggy and I are both grateful for their health and for delivering two of our grandchildren—now four grandchildren.

How does it relate to Bill 173? It’s all about having quality people in the world. I believe that I’ve been fortunate to be the grandparent of two lovely grandchildren who are quality people.

Ms. Martel: In response to the comments made by my colleague from Niagara Centre, let me make a few comments. I said to the local media that the argument that we need to raise pay to attract quality candidates was an absolutely bogus argument, and it surely is. I’ve run in five elections now and I can tell you that every political party has been represented in terms of mainstream political parties. In many cases, more than the mainstream has been represented. There have been contested nominations in the other parties. I think that those people who ran for the Liberals in particular would feel somewhat

slighted and somewhat insulted on hearing that the government said we had to raise pay more in order to attract quality people. They must ask themselves, “Who are we and what are we?”

I didn’t understand how the Liberal backbenchers in particular weren’t really astonished by the kind of back-of-the-hand they got last week when the minister said, “Here we are, the farm team. We need to raise pay so we can attract quality candidates.” What does that say about everybody here? What does that say about all of our colleagues? That none of us are quality candidates? That none of us bring to this job skills and expertise and work that is important to the rest of Ontarians? What does that say about everybody who is here now working on behalf of the people of Ontario? That we’re the farm team? That we’re not qualified and capable? That was surely the inference. That was surely the reference. That was surely the conclusion that one had to draw from the comments that were made by the minister last week.

We should be here dealing with the priorities of average Ontarians, keeping the government to account with respect to the promise it made to end the clawback when it hasn’t. We should be here raising ODSP rates, because the fact of the matter is, with the increase in inflation, they are worse off now than they were under the Conservatives. We should be here ensuring that people who are working at a minimum wage full time are receiving a living wage. These are clearly not the priorities for this government.

Mr. Berardinetti: I just want to ask a couple of questions of the member for Niagara Centre. The city of Toronto recently increased their salary quite a lot. I just wanted his views on that and what he thinks about that; and secondly, what he thinks of the Integrity Commissioner’s report and if he has any comments on that. I’d really like to hear what he thinks of the Integrity Commissioner’s comments.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time available for questions and comments. I return to the member for Niagara Centre for his two-minute response.

Mr. Kormos: I appreciate the member for Scarborough Southwest putting questions to me. I say to you, member from Scarborough Southwest, when are you going to show the same passion for minimum wage earners that you show for yourself today? When are you going to show the same passion for people being crippled by poverty on disability pensions? When are you going to show the same passion for them that you show for yourself today? I say to the member for Scarborough Southwest, Mr. Berardinetti, when are you going to stand up and speak for moms with kids who are having their federal child benefit clawed back by your government? When are you going to do that? I say to the member for Scarborough Southwest, when are you going to have the courage to tell your Premier to put the poorest people, the most vulnerable people, the weakest people, first? I say to the member for Scarborough Southwest, when are you going to get up on your feet in this Legislature and give your government notice that you’re not going to tolerate

this government's inaction when it comes to the 110,000 or 120,000 industrial jobs lost here in the province of Ontario, driving families into unprecedented poverty? I say to the member for Scarborough Southwest—and please feel free to include my comments in your next householder—when are you going to have the guts and the gumption to think for yourself, rather than simply reading the crib notes that are passed out to feckless government backbenchers? When are you going to do more than simply be a little spin machine for a desperate government?

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs. Bountrogianni has moved second reading of Bill 173, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act, the MPPs Pension Act, 1996 and the Executive Council Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

I wish to inform the House that I have received a deferral notice from the chief whip of the New Democratic Party: “Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I hereby request

that the division on the second reading of Bill 173 be deferred until deferred votes during routine proceedings on Wednesday, December 20, 2006.”

Orders of the day.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Before we can deal with that motion, I wish to inform the House that when a motion to adjourn the House carries before the usual 6 p.m. adjournment hour, a scheduled adjournment debate late show is automatically carried over to the next sessional day on which such debates are held, which is in this case Thursday. Therefore, the late show originally scheduled for today is carried over to Thursday.

Mr. Bradley has moved the adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

As such, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1719.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. James K. Bartleman
Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. Brown
Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers
Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma–Manitoulin	Brown, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (L) Speaker / Président	Guelph–Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)
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Bramalea–Gore–Malton– Springdale	Kular, Kuldip (L)	Hamilton East / Hamilton–Est	Horwath, Andrea (ND)
Brampton Centre / Brampton–Centre	Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Hon. / L'hon. Marie (L) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique
Brampton West–Mississauga / Brampton–Ouest–Mississauga	Dhillon, Vic (L)	Hamilton West / Hamilton–Ouest	Marsales, Judy (L)
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Hastings–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
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Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kenora–Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
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Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener–Centre	Milloy, John (L)
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Elgin–Middlesex–London	Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (L) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail	London West / London–Ouest	Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (L) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
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	Crozier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga–Centre	Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L) Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship / ministre des Petites Entreprises et de l'Entrepreneuriat
	Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (L) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	Mississauga East / Mississauga–Est	Fonseca, Peter (L)
	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Mississauga South / Mississauga–Sud	Peterson, Tim (L)
	Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (L) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement	Mississauga West / Mississauga–Ouest	Delaney, Bob (L)
	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Nepean–Carleton	MacLeod, Lisa (PC)
		Niagara Centre / Niagara–Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)

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Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Nipissing	Smith, Monique M. (L)	Thornhill	Racco, Mario G. (L)
Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Mauro, Bill (L)
Oak Ridges	Klees, Frank (PC)	Thunder Bay–Superior	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	North / Thunder Bay–Superior- Nord	
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	Ramsay, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
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Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L) Minister of Health Promotion / ministre de la Promotion de la santé	Toronto–Danforth	Tabuns, Peter (ND)
Ottawa–Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)	Trinity–Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Ottawa–Vanier	Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	Vaughan–King–Aurora	Sorbara, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (L) Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre des Finances, président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Waterloo–Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Peterborough	Leal, Jeff (L)	Windsor–St. Clair	Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L) Minister of Energy / ministre de l'Énergie
Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge	Arthurs, Wayne (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	Kwinter, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (L) Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Prince Edward–Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	York North / York-Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Yakabuski, John (PC)	York West / York-Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
Sarnia–Lambton	Di Cocco, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (L) Minister of Culture / ministre de la Culture	Burlington	Vacant
Sault Ste. Marie	Oraziotti, David (L)	Markham	Vacant
Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Duguid, Brad (L)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	Vacant
Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est	Chambers, Hon. / L'hon. Mary Anne V. (L) Minister of Children and Youth Services / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse		
Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)		
Scarborough–Agincourt	Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L) Minister of Government Services / ministre des Services gouvernementaux		
Scarborough–Rouge River	Balkissoon, Bas (L)		
Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)		
Simcoe–Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
St. Catharines	Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L) Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, government House leader / ministre du Tourisme, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées, leader parlementaire du gouvernement		
St. Paul's	Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L) Attorney General / procureur général		
Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)		

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

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

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