



No. 148B

N° 148B

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly
of Ontario
Second Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario
Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 28 March 2007

Mercredi 28 mars 2007

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 28 March 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 28 mars 2007

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROVINCIAL ADVOCATE FOR
CHILDREN AND YOUTH ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR L'INTERVENANT
PROVINCIAL EN FAVEUR DES ENFANTS
ET DES JEUNES

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 20, 2007, on the motion for second reading of Bill 165, An Act to establish and provide for the office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth / Projet de loi 165, Loi visant à créer la charge d'intervenant provincial en faveur des enfants et des jeunes et à y pourvoir.

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Be prepared. Today, we have the 219th Boy Scout troop from Toronto. This is the 100th anniversary of the founding of scouting by Lord Baden-Powell. So welcome to troop 219.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Welcome. The Chair would like to know sometime, and perhaps you could find out: Do they still call it Boy Scouts?

Interjections: Scouts.

The Deputy Speaker: We'll find that out sometime. Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Not only is this troop 219, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. They are based at All Saints Church. Although they can't of course participate in the debate, and I don't want to cause them any grief, the general scouting movement is broad-based and has both women and men in it, which is why we call it the scouting movement. I got a nod in the affirmative. Nobody, of course, broke any rules.

Look, it's interesting: Here's a group of bright young people, obviously committed members of an outstanding movement—I should tell you that I was a Boy Scout. Before that, I was a Wolf Cub.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): Dave Levac was a Queen's Scout.

Mr. Kormos: Dave Levac was a Boy Scout.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): A Queen's Scout.

Mr. Kormos: Would all the members who were Boy Scouts just raise their hands—all the members who were

in the scouting movement? There you go. And I don't want that to discourage anyone.

Interjection: It's too late.

Mr. Kormos: Undoubtedly, there are women here who were involved in Girl Guides and Brownies, which was the counterpart. It's an exciting movement, and all of us in our given communities are proud to be very supportive. I know that down where I come from in Niagara, young women and men in the scouting movement are front and centre, not only as members of their troop but in community activities, working with seniors and working with other young people at community events.

We are indeed debating second reading—not inappropriately, in view of the audience we have present in the gallery—of the creation of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth.

First, let me make it very clear that New Democrats are supportive of the proposition that this role is one of an officer of the assembly. That is critical. I am pleased to be able to tell you, Speaker, that over the course of several years now—is it you, Mr. Colle, or is it me who is causing them to leave?—we have developed, amongst all caucuses here at Queen's Park, an effective process when it comes to making decisions about people who are to be appointed officers of the assembly. There has been a process that has developed and has become the norm, the pattern whereby there is selection by consensus—in this instance, with all three parties. It's a process that has worked well. We are in the course of exercising it in terms of the selection, for instance, of the Integrity Commissioner. New Democrats look forward to being able to participate in that process in terms of the selection of a Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth.

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It remains, however, that the scope of his or her duties is very bare-bones in terms of the statute as it exists and then to be expanded based on regulation. In any event, it remains that the advocate may receive complaints, act on complaints, but may not act for young people in court, for instance, and has the requirement to give some specific advocacy to children in the wardship, custody or care of family and children services, as well as young people—children—who are in the custody or under the care of the correctional system, the ministry of correctional services. That's kids in custody—secure or unsecured custody.

One can't speak about the need for advocacy without speaking to the need for the sort of things that the advocate will undoubtedly be burdened with in short

order: children's mental health services and the shortage of resources in that area across the province. But I tell you that in Niagara there is a critical and dangerous shortage. The Niagara Centre for Youth Care, which is the single institution—and my colleague from St. Catharines, Mr. Bradley, knows full well what I speak of—handles a huge caseload with an incredible backlog and is constantly struggling to provide what I'll call those mere core services, never mind embarking on any special projects that situations, be they persistent or unique, would call upon them to do.

I suppose while we're discussing this bill, Bill 165, in the context and in the shadow of last week's budget, one has to note and bemoan the fact that there was sparse mention given to kids and kids' needs, especially mental health needs, in the last budget.

This isn't a partisan issue. Down where I come from, Niagara region, we've got people from all three political parties representing constituents. Tim Hudak represents the riding of Erie—Lincoln, and of course he is here tonight as well. When Mr. Hudak speaks to this bill—if his caucus gives him the opportunity—he may well join me in assuring you that there's a crisis in Niagara—a crisis, we tell you—around funding for children's mental health services.

The cost of not providing those services is tremendous. Kids who fall between the cracks, kids whose families do their best, families working hard, if they are working—you see, you have to look at all social factors that add to the turmoil and the strife that generate the crises. You can't talk about mental health without talking about joblessness and the pressure that puts on workers and their families and their community and the children of those families.

You can't talk about mental health without talking about the critical need for adequate funding for special needs in our educational system. We had folks here yesterday from OSSTF, didn't we? Dan Peat came up from Niagara region, along with teachers from Port Colborne and Niagara Falls. One of the things that was at the top of their list—let's be very clear, this isn't going to put anything in OSSTF's pocket. But they talk about the critical need in terms of special-needs kids—right, Mr. Hudak? You were there—the waiting list for assessments and the fact that if a family has, catch this, \$24,000, they can jump the line, because that's what it costs for a private assessment.

So you can't talk about kids, advocacy for kids, you can't talk about the mental health and well-being of children, without talking about the crisis in our educational system when it comes to addressing the needs of special-needs kids. Because it starts with the very basic, very fundamental assessment. Assessments aren't getting done. When assessments aren't getting done, programs aren't being designed, staff aren't being allocated. And then you've got the whole problem that when there are assessments, they don't have the money to implement the programs. They don't have the staff to designate them, to

attach them to a youngster, a young person, a child with these special needs.

Something as simple as this Boy Scout troop that was here—because you know that across this province, traditional public facilities, schools amongst them, are increasingly pressured, pressed, to charge user fees for groups like the Boy Scouts, or Scouting in general—I should be very clear about that; members of the Scouting movement—or Air Cadets or Navy Cadets or Army cadets. Any of those organizations are being increasingly hard pressed, notwithstanding some modest relief that was given them, because of the increased need for schools to charge for their services because those boards aren't being adequately financed. So you tell me: What good does it do kids when programs like Scouting or Air Cadets or Sea Cadets or Army Cadets don't have homes to operate out of and can't operate because without those homes, they can't function? Tell me what that means for kids.

Tell me what it means for hard-cash-strapped municipalities like the places I come from, places like Port Colborne and Wainfleet and Welland and Thorold and Pelham and St. Catharines. Tell me what it means when those municipalities have to cut back on recreational programs. Tell me what it means when user fees in hockey rinks and arenas have to rise.

I was over at the Welland Minor Hockey House on Sunday because it was Lena Stuart's 85th birthday. As I told Lena and the huge crowd that was gathered there, Lena Stuart—she was a Villella originally. Everybody knows the family. She was the baby of the family, the youngest child, the daughter. And all her siblings—Fee is gone now; all the Villellas are gone. She now lives in the old Villella homestead on Patsy Avenue down in the south end, in Crowland. She lives in the old homestead with her son, Gordie Stuart. Gordie is extremely active in minor hockey.

So we were at the Welland Minor Hockey House for Lena Stuart's 85th birthday. You talk about kids—Lena was the sort of person whose door was always open. She would adopt stray kids; she would adopt her children's friends and buddies and so on. While I was at the Welland Minor Hockey House—it's over at the end of Fourth Street, behind the arena, right along the old canal bank. I had to reflect on the fact that—and, look, I don't know about where you are, sir, but hockey where I come from is an incredibly popular sport with kids, and with adults, too, with old-timers. But with the young kids it's an incredibly popular sport. You understand how increasingly families can't afford to equip their kids for hockey, because it's not inexpensive to outfit your kid with the skates and the various paddings and gear and so on to be able to play hockey safely. So let's not for a minute suggest that there isn't a relationship, that the welfare or the well-being of children isn't related to the ability of municipalities—places like Port Colborne, Welland, Thorold, Pelham, Wainfleet, St. Catharines and, heck, Niagara Falls too—to fund recreational programs, especially now that when you do have a two-parent

family, almost inevitably both parents are working. You found that out in the last election.

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Undoubtedly, almost everybody here other than Mr. Patten is going to be out knocking on doors. And he may be campaigning for a candidate of his choice up in his riding too.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): Not Dalton.

Mr. Kormos: Mr. Hudak mentions—and I think you're right.

Mr. Hudak: I think so. There's a tension there. He's two seats away from the door.

Mr. Kormos: Of course—Mr. Patten is.

Maybe we're a day late and a dollar short, because the opposition is doing its best to open up a vacancy in the provincial cabinet. Mr. Patten maybe shouldn't have been in such a hurry to announce that he isn't running again, because we're doing our best to create a vacancy. Who knows? It could be the member for London–Fanshawe, Mr. Ramal.

Mr. Hudak: Yes, he's a good guy. It's him or Jeffrey. Linda Jeffrey has a good shot too.

Mr. Kormos: Mr. Hudak says Ms. Jeffrey.

Mr. Hudak: I would put her in, sure—a talented individual.

Mr. Kormos: Well, there you go.

There's no shortage of candidates, and we're doing our best. I tell you, folks, we're doing our best to create an opening in cabinet for you. A little bit of help wouldn't hurt. Come on, you've got nothing to lose and everything to win.

The time is so short. I want to talk about an issue that's very important to New Democrats, and that is, now that we're here talking about the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth—and New Democrats tell you we support the proposition—I have no doubt that our critic has indicated already that the bill should go to committee. Let's get that done and proceed promptly. But this government's failure, this government's refusal, this government's complete inability to understand how incredibly important it is to have the Ombudsman charged with oversight of family and children services is a disservice to every kid in this province. Haven't the events of the last week told us how critically effective the Ombudsman can be? Haven't the reports submitted already, in this instance by Mr. Marin, shown us how important it is for agencies like the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. or like the Family Responsibility Office—huh, Mr. Hudak?—or like the Municipal Property Assessment Corp.? How many more reports do we need to understand how important it is that government agencies or quasi-government agencies like those are the subject of oversight by the Ombudsman and his office?

Mr. Hudak: Criminal compensation.

Mr. Kormos: The Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, Mr. Hudak recalls, as do I.

Why, for the life of me, does this government refuse to permit the Ombudsman to have the same oversight of family and children services after the tragedies that

we've witnessed and the inability of family and children services as a private agency to effectively be accountable? I, for one, believe—and I don't speak for my caucus—that the time has come for family and children services, as a corporation, as an entity, to end. It's unconscionable that in 2007 this Victorian sense of benevolence on the part of a private agency that is contracted by the government to address the welfare of kids—it's bizarre in this day and age that children's aid should be allowed to exist as a private corporation. I say it's time to abolish children's aid, to bring that work into the scope of an appropriate ministry so that there's accountability, so that the work is done by skilled public sector workers and so there is transparency, so that when there's a problem with family and children's services, you or you or any of us—Ms. Savoline—can stand up in his or her place and address the minister about a problem with family and children's services.

The minister now has to say, "Look, it's beyond my capacity. It's family and children's services. They have their own board, they've got their own legislation. I'm not responsible." And of course this government denies the Ombudsman the capacity to perform oversight of family and children's services. So on one hand, we have the creation of the office of the child advocate, which New Democrats say, yes, we support, especially as an officer of this assembly. But any enthusiasm about that is dampened by this government's absolute stubbornness and refusal to let children be protected by the office of the Ombudsman when it comes to kids in the custody of family and children's services. If you care about kids, you care about all of them. It means you care about the kids in the custody of FACS too. That means you can make sure they have access to an Ombudsman.

My time is up, I regret. Thank you kindly, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): It's always a pleasure to follow my never-short-of-loquacious colleague from Niagara Centre, who on this day, when the spirit of goodwill prevails in the Legislature, supports the bill that's before the Legislature. I know there are a few things he'd like to do differently, but let's focus on the bill; let's focus on the thing we're actually debating. That thing is that today the government is pleased to be moving forward on the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth Act that would, if passed, make the province's child and youth advocate an independent officer of the Legislature. So this legislation, if passed, will better protect the interests of children and youth by ensuring that no government, current or future—not our government, not any Parliament that should follow us—would be able to suppress the voice of the advocate. That advocate is going to speak for children and youth, the people who most times are unable to bring complaints forward on their own behalf.

We in this place all believe that one measure of the greatness of a society, one measure of how progressive a society is, isn't how it treats its wealthy or powerful or well-connected; it's how it treats its young and its old, its

sick and its vulnerable, but especially its youth. That's why all of us here—and I'm sure both opposition parties will stand up and speak for this—believe that our government has a responsibility to listen to everyone it serves, and that “everyone” includes children and youth.

The legislation, if passed, would ensure that children and youth would be heard not only by this government and this Parliament and these people who sit here, but by all of our colleagues who follow us in the next election and the ones following that.

Mr. Hudak: I always enjoy the comments of my colleague and neighbour, Mr. Kormos, the member for Niagara Centre. He makes some important and weighty remarks for us to consider as we debate Bill 165 this evening. I'll have a chance to speak in more detail shortly on behalf of the constituents of Erie–Lincoln.

Mr. Kormos raises a very interesting point, however, and I look forward to government members' response; that is, that this bill really fell short of giving the child advocate the authority that exists and has been wielded very effectively by the current Ombudsman. At the same time, this bill, if I understand Mr. Kormos's comments, restricts the Ombudsman—or does not permit the Ombudsman, in their way of putting it—to investigate children's aid societies. He certainly raised some issues recently, and very effectively, with respect to the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., now known as OLG. He raised some issues very effectively with the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board and with MPAC—effectively as well as dramatically—that compelled the government to make substantial changes in all of those circumstances.

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Imagine if the Ombudsman were able to take that investigative authority and that level of momentum into the children's aid societies that were recently exposed by the Auditor General to have some serious issues. The degree to which those issues are widespread or limited to a few bad apples is indeterminate at this time. I don't know if the government has adequately responded; to the Auditor General's report, I would say not. And no doubt Mr. Marin, the Ombudsman, would have a lot to say, if given the opportunity to investigate them from tip to toe, something that I do note the child advocate proposed in Bill 165 fails to do.

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the chance to speak and comment on the speech of the member for Niagara Centre. It's very refreshing when you hear the member support a bill. Normally when we listen to him he's always opposing all the bills we propose. It seems like this time he believes strongly that we should support the bill and go forward to create an advocate group to support the youth and the people who have no support in our community.

So many kids suffer from mental illness and many different problems, kids and youth who have no family or anyone to support them. It's very important to create an advocacy group for those people to be protected. As you know, we hear a lot of stories, left and right, every day

across the province of Ontario about so many different kinds of abuse. If we create a task force, I think it will be very important to protect those vulnerable people among us.

The member for Niagara Centre was talking about why we have to create that and why it's not supposed to be linked to different agencies. It's very important to create an independent party that is outside the government and that doesn't belong to any party or government, to continue the job they start and to follow up in the future. It would be a non-partisan group. They would have one task, one direction: to look after the kids, to look after the youth, because that's very important.

We've talked many different times about the importance of our youth and our children. All of us believe that they are the future of Ontario. If we don't create some kind of mechanism, a task force to protect them, we cannot protect our future. That's why I'm standing up and supporting Bill 165.

It was refreshing to hear both members from Niagara region speak in support. Hopefully, when the vote comes, they'll vote and support the bill.

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): I want to comment on the speech given to us by the member for Welland.

Mr. Hudak: Niagara Centre.

Mrs. Munro: Niagara Centre, sorry.

I think the important point we need to understand in his comments is the issue around the role of advocacy as opposed to having the opportunity to have investigative powers. I think all of us are very sensitive to the fact that over a number of years, there seems to be a gap, if you like, in the service, in the ability of someone to speak out on issues that are more than systemic, issues that are individual and require some kind of investigative support. So while the notion of advocacy is an extremely important one, and throughout this piece of legislation there's certainly reinforcement of the notion of giving voice to vulnerable youth, at the same time, there's a huge gap in terms of the ability to have investigative powers and a huge gap in terms of the ability to sort out some of the continual problems that seem to crop up between children, their families and the CAS around the province. I think this legislation has to be viewed from the perspective of its shortcomings as well as its strengths.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Niagara Centre, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Kormos: Let's be very, very clear. Section 13 of the bill, the functions and powers of the advocate:

“(a) provide advocacy to children and youth who are ... receiving ... services under the Child and Family Services Act;

“(b) provide advocacy to young persons who are being dealt with under the Ministry of Correctional Services Act ...

“(d) provide any other advocacy that is permitted under the regulations....”

There you are. The jurisdiction of the advocate is pretty narrow. One would like to see a children's advo-

cate that was adequately funded so it could be a broad-based advocate for children in every context: kids in schools, kids in communities, kids in health care. The government was very careful to restrict this advocate's power.

Imagine the workload that an advocate who had the capacity to advocate for children with respect to the issue of mental health services would have on their hands, and the great things they could do. But of course that's not what's being contemplated.

So while we support the proposition, be very careful about being too proud of what is but a modest achievement here. And the failure—this bill isn't the one that says the Ombudsman can't oversee family and children's services, but the bill points out the government's failure in that regard: the specific exclusion of the Ombudsman from any oversight of family and children's services, notwithstanding that the hardest-working child advocate in the world is going to continue to put kids at risk—kids who could get hurt badly, kids who are going to continue to die—because we don't have an office that can investigate systemic issues and failures within family and children's services. That's wrong.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Hudak: Thank you. I'm just making sure we have the 20 minutes' time to address Bill 165. I hope I didn't pop up too soon. Okay, I'll proceed with some comments on Bill 165.

Of course, I enjoyed the comments of Mr. Kormos, my colleague and neighbour physically both here in the Legislature and in Niagara, who represents the Welland, Pelham, Thorold area and sits immediately, and suitably, to my left.

I want to start my comments on Bill 165, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth Act—I'll be more proper here: Bill 165, An Act to establish and provide for the office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, standing in the name of the Honourable Ms. Chambers, Minister of Children and Youth Services—by commending our very hard-working and outstanding critic on children and youth services, Lisa MacLeod, the member for Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. MacLeod has been one outstanding addition to our Progressive Conservative caucus and here in the Ontario Legislative Assembly; somebody who has been a real firebrand, who has held the minister and the government to account on issues affecting Ottawa and eastern Ontario, and been a real champion for children and youth since winning her by-election not too long ago. Ms. MacLeod entered the Legislative Assembly—I'm trying to think what the exact date was.

Mrs. Munro: March.

Mr. Hudak: March 2006—and has been so effective that it's hard to actually remember who the previous member for Nepean–Carleton was.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): We traded up.

Mr. Hudak: My colleague Mr. Arnott from Wellington says we traded up. With all due respect to Mr. Baird, whom we miss dearly at the same time—

Mrs. Munro: You're sitting in his seat.

Mr. Hudak: I am sitting in Mr. Baird's seat here.

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Mr. Levac: Tell me how it feels.

Mr. Hudak: My colleague asks what it feels like to sit in Mr. Baird's seat. It has given me—I've been grandfathered in terms of heckling in the Legislature. As you may know, Mr. Tory wants to see a greater respect for decorum and the rules in the Ontario Legislature, and one of the benefits of Mr. Baird's seat is that I have an exemption to that, which allows me to heckle.

Mr. Levac: Because of the seat.

Mr. Hudak: Because of the seat, I've been grandfathered here in the Legislature to go beyond those rules.

Mr. Bradley, the Minister of Tourism and the member for St. Catharines, often has about 200 copies of an article about Mr. Tory wanting to see more decorum in the Legislature that he'll send to us across the floor if he feels that we've broken Mr. Tory's pledge—

Mrs. Munro: As a reminder.

Mr. Hudak: As a reminder, as my colleague from York North says. I always return them to Mr. Bradley, indicating that I have the John Baird exemption from sitting in this corner seat.

I want to get back to Ms. MacLeod, who has very ably replaced Mr. Baird as the provincial member for Nepean–Carleton—Mr. Baird, of course, the member for Ottawa West–Nepean federally, if I remember the federal riding boundaries correctly. Ms. MacLeod has been an outstanding addition to the team and a real champion for children and youth in the Legislature and for eastern Ontario. In fact, there are some issues I'll probably get to later in my remarks where she combines both. I remember her first question in the Ontario Legislature, where she was going like gangbusters from her seat just behind Mr. Arnott. I think it caught the government a little bit off guard that a new member would come in with such fire in the belly.

Mr. Kormos: She was full of vim and vinegar.

Mr. Hudak: Vim and vinegar, to say the least; two parts of each at least.

Ms. MacLeod had some very important insights into this legislation that I'll get to in a moment. I was just reading through her remarks upon second reading of the bill.

I think it's important at the beginning to indicate that it was actually a Progressive Conservative government, under then Premier Bill Davis, which in 1973 or thereabouts introduced Ontario's first child advocate as part of his government at the time. Interestingly, earlier on you'll recall that we were debating the Endangered Species Act, and Mr. Miller, our critic, the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, mentioned that it was actually the Davis government that had brought forward the first Endangered Species Act around the same time; I think it

was some time in the early 1970s. Of course, Bill Davis was elected as Premier in 1971.

So we have two pieces of legislation brought in by the Davis government that are now being impacted by new bills of the current government. Mr. Miller raised his concerns. I think we're very supportive of the principle, obviously, of protecting endangered species in the province of Ontario. Mr. Miller had some very important suggestions on how to improve that bill to ensure that it is successful. Similarly, Ms. MacLeod, as our critic, has brought forward a number of important suggestions with respect to the child advocate that I know my colleagues will be sharing their views upon as well.

So it was in 1973, if I recall, and now, 30-plus years later, we see legislation to redefine the role of the child advocate, to take the role outside of the ministry of the day, which is currently the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, and give it more independence as what's defined as an officer of the Legislature, just like the Auditor General, who I mentioned earlier on, is an officer of the Legislature and similarly the Ombudsman. I guess the Information and Privacy Commissioner would be an officer of the Legislature and the Integrity Commissioner would also be considered as such—very prominent individuals who play very important roles in how this place conducts itself. Typically, as well, those individuals are picked by all-party consent. There's usually a committee of party representatives from each of our official parties in the Legislature to find individuals for those jobs, because they play an important role and you put a lot of trust in those individuals, given their status.

This legislation, if I recall, suggests a five-year term, renewable for an additional five-year term, which means, when you're considering at least five years and potentially 10, that that first choice for child advocate, if this bill does pass, will be a crucial decision for the Ontario Legislature, through its representatives, to make.

The point I want to make, though, in a more specific sense, is that I'm not quite clear what direction the McGuinty government plans to go with the child advocate. If the intent of the government, through Minister Chambers, is to create a powerful new individual, an officer of the Legislature the likes of the Ombudsman or the Auditor General, then you'd think like powers would be afforded to that individual—investigative powers, for example. Or, if you're just creating an advocate, then just go ahead and say so, rather than trying to dress up a child advocate in the clothes of an Ombudsman or an Auditor General.

Let me go back a little bit and talk about some of the history before this bill came to the Legislature. I think you'll remember that in the previous Progressive Conservative government, there was a point of debate about the independence of the child advocate under the community and social services ministry, I believe it was at the time. The Ontario Liberal Party was then in opposition, and Mr. McGuinty, then Leader of the Opposition, had said that he would create an independent office for the child advocate that would report to the Legislature, as

opposed to the government or through the ministry of the day, then community and social services, now children and youth services. It was one of the very many campaign promises made by the Dalton McGuinty party in opposition in the run-up to the 2003 election. I think we've tabulated—was it 240 campaign promises? Something like that. This was one of them. There seemed to be some expectation from people interested in this field that that would be forthwith upon assuming government.

You will recall, however, that despite that campaign promise in the fall 2003, once Dalton McGuinty had become Premier of the province of Ontario, instead of bringing forward a bill like Bill 165, the government decided to commission consultants from outside of government—mind you, there's a bit of irony in this—not only not proceeding in the time frame expected by stakeholders for keeping the child advocate promise but simultaneously breaking another promise not to use outside consultants unless absolutely necessary. I don't think there was a case made that Whitehead Research Consultants Ltd. of London, Ontario, were the only individuals or group that could do this type of research and make recommendations to the province of Ontario. Nonetheless, in delaying one promise, Dalton McGuinty was breaking another by hiring these consultants, who began the work in April 2004.

In the fall of 2003, the consultants were hired. They began their review in April 2004. In August 2004, the final report of the consultants was tabled with the Minister of Children and Youth Services, who was Dr. Bountrogianni at the time, from Hamilton Mountain, if I remember the riding correctly. We are already—as my colleague for Nepean—Carleton, Ms. MacLeod, points out—almost a year behind schedule of what a reasonable expectation would have been for this bill to be before the Legislative Assembly.

Then in March 2005—so again, this was tabled in August 2004. I know August is often a slower-moving month. It's a time when people in Ontario, whether they're in politics or the civil service etc. take some time to be with family, or take time away from work at the very least, so it's understandable that the minister wouldn't necessarily act on that final report in August 2004. But, sadly, it took until March 2005 before any announcement was made about what to do with that final report.

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Effectively, the consultants were hired outside of government, so at additional expense to government. They did their work. They tabled their report in August 2004, but it wasn't until March 2005—I've been doing some quick math in my head—some seven months later, before there was really the first word from the minister, at the time Dr. Bountrogianni, on how she planned to proceed on the final report of the consultants. I would probably suggest, if I recall correctly—I know my colleague Ms. MacLeod would know far more than I would—that there was some outcry, some protest, at least some upset, by those engaged in this process earlier on, or those who were strong advocates for legislation to proceed, that we

were now in March 2005 and still nothing had been put before the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario.

In March 2005, the then minister, Minister Bountrogianni, announced that legislation to establish Ontario's new office of the child and youth advocate was imminent. The word was "imminent," meaning probably "in the very near future," "immediately," "soon," "promptly."

Mr. Arnott: Next week.

Mr. Hudak: Next week would be reasonable, my colleague from Wellington says. We are in March. The House was in session, I believe, in March 2005—not August—when Minister Bountrogianni announced the legislation was imminent. A news release issued on March 8, 2005, stated—I'm quoting from the press release of the time. Is that the ides of March, by the way?

Mrs. Munro: The 13th.

Mr. Hudak: I just thought there'd be another irony.

March 8, 2005: "The McGuinty government will introduce legislation this spring that, if passed, would better protect the interests of vulnerable children and youth by establishing an independent child advocate in Ontario, Children and Youth Services Minister Marie Bountrogianni announced today."

My colleague Mr. Arnott from Wellington would guess that would be in about a week, probably sometime in mid-March, maybe around the ides of March. But, you know, not to hold the assembly in too much suspense, the entire month of March passed, April passed, followed—in all likelihood, if I recall, after April—by May, June and then, as these things can be predictable, the spring sitting of the Ontario Legislative Assembly passes by and no bill enters the assembly to create the office of the child advocate as promised by Dalton McGuinty, signalling yet another one of his promises relegated to the dustbin of history. So no bill came in the spring.

I know that advocates and colleagues here in the assembly were extremely concerned that despite the fact of an imminent piece of legislation, nothing had arrived at the table and been distributed to members of the assembly: more outcry. A new minister was in position, and she came under significant pressure to move on the legislation. Finally, on November 30, 2006, some 20 months after legislation was "imminent," Bill 165 was introduced to the assembly by the new minister, Minister Chambers. So not exactly keeping promises with great alacrity, and I think there is some debate whether this actually fits with what was promised back in 2003, so many years ago now.

When the bill was brought forward, as I mentioned, the appointed advocate would be an officer of the assembly; will hold office for a term of five years and may be reappointed for a further term of five years. Interestingly, the individual "shall work exclusively as an advocate and shall not hold any other office under the crown or engage in any other employment." Fair enough. But the point I was going to make is that it's strictly an advocacy role. Let me read you some of the functions of the advocate:

"(a) provide advocacy to children and youth who are seeking or receiving approved services under the Child and Family Services Act;

"(b) provide advocacy to young persons who are being dealt with under the Ministry of Correctional Services Act;

"(c) promote the rights under part V of the Child and Family Services Act of children in care and the rights under part V of the Ministry of Correctional Services Act of young persons in custody; and

"(d) provide any other advocacy that is permitted under the regulations or any other act," meaning if cabinet decided to increase the advocate's responsibilities, they could do so via regulation. Mr. Kormos had talked about that a little bit in terms of section 13 of Bill 165, functions and powers.

I do note, however, that this legislation does not go as far as one would have expected from looking at the acts that create the other officers of the assembly. I noted the Ombudsman and the Auditor General, to name but two. So if you're going to go down the path of creating an officer of the assembly, you wonder why you don't go whole hog and give the animal all the teeth that he or she would require. In many senses, the teeth have been replaced with gums. The teeth are missing and therefore gums are there, I guess, as opposed to being replaced.

In his remarks, Mr. Kormos had mentioned earlier, imagine if the Ombudsman had had the authority to investigate some of the abuses that were sadly brought to light by the Auditor General with respect to children's aid societies across the province of Ontario. It certainly was very upsetting to learn. In my office, I would say we have a very strong working relationship with family and children's services in Niagara. We appreciate their work in assisting children in need, in very vulnerable situations. Obviously, it's extremely difficult work to do.

But when you hear about some of these other cases, about the SUVs, the expensive vehicles, the expense accounts, money that should be going to children in need and families in vulnerable situations, it's certainly extremely upsetting. If the Ombudsman had the opportunity to investigate that, I think he'd turn it upside down in a matter of 40 days.

We're seeing that happening now with the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., which may cause a minister to step down. We saw, similarly, an entire change in the government's position on the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. We all remember that Dalton McGuinty, when asked to address the issue of skyrocketing property assessments, initially said, "We didn't run on that," and had no plan to address the issue whatsoever. Ironically, I don't think he ran on banning pit bulls either, or banning sushi or going after farmers' markets in the province of Ontario with all kinds of new inspectors. Nonetheless, initially Dalton McGuinty turned a blind eye.

I'm happy that some of my colleagues here in the assembly voted for my private member's bill, the Homestead Act, to cap the assessment increase at 5% a year. It's now part of official PC policy to be imple-

mented by a future John Tory government. I think that helped to stir things up a bit with Mr. McGuinty, but ultimately the momentum caused by the Ombudsman's report caused the government to react, finally. They suspended assessments for a couple of years. They've asked for some reforms at MPAC that don't go far enough, in my view, and their solution in the recent budget certainly was no solution whatsoever—more smoke and mirrors. Nonetheless, the point I'm trying to make is the Ombudsman has been extremely effective. As a matter of fact, the Ombudsman has probably been the most significant cabinet minister in the Dalton McGuinty government in terms of actually effecting real change.

Mr. Kormos: Protecting public interest.

Mr. Hudak: Protecting public interest, as cabinet ministers should be doing, but haven't been wont to do in some of the examples that I mentioned earlier on. It's hard to think of many real structural changes that Dalton McGuinty has actually made. You could say that the Ombudsman, in fact, has been more effective in bringing about change than the Premier himself.

I can't remember the exact remarks, but I was disappointed to see some Liberal insiders insulting the Ombudsman today in a National Post article. I don't have it front of me; maybe I'll get to that later on. It was disappointing.

I know my time is running short, and I didn't get as far into the bill as I had hoped in my 20 minutes. I will conclude by saying, again, I enjoyed the comments of our critic, Ms. MacLeod, the member for Nepean–Carleton. I appreciate the points she's brought forward on this. I do hope that we'll understand better if the government is truly creating an officer of the assembly who is independent and has authority to investigate and to make change or if it's just a dress-up advocate who ultimately won't advance the cause of vulnerable children.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): I'm pleased this evening to have a few minutes to speak and to comment on this bill. I certainly know that with my mother watching this debate this evening, which I know she is—

Mr. Hudak: Really? What's her name?

Mr. Brownell: Catherine. I know that having grown up in a family of 12 kids and having been a teacher for 32½ years, it is of utmost importance that I say a few words. I know Minister Chambers has been a strong advocate here in the Legislature for children and outside this Legislature. It was just last week that the minister understood that I came from this big family. I remember meeting her afterwards and she said, "It almost makes me tired to think about it."

The thing is, when I was growing up, I had a loving, caring family who were interested in myself and my six brothers and five sisters. My father passing away 35 years ago left my mum with eight kids at home. She was always that voice, and still is that voice. She's watching, and she still will comment about my performance here in

the Legislature and the performance of many other people in this Legislature. But I always had an advocate.

There are children in this province who need an advocate. Last night at the Big Brothers Big Sisters reception we heard of a young girl who had an advocate, who had a mentor. There are a lot of children in this province, many of whom do not have those mentors, do not have advocates, and whose voices are being lost. This advocate will be that voice—an independent officer, certainly as independent as the Auditor General and the Ombudsman. The appointment of this advocate is going to be by an all-party legislative committee. That means that all parties will be part of the appointment and there will be a strong voice for the children of this province in the future, and I'm very pleased about that.

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Mr. Arnott: I'm very pleased to respond for a moment to the member for Erie–Lincoln, who gave a very interesting speech this evening about Bill 165. As members know, this member is our party's finance critic, and he does a superb job in that capacity. Tonight, he demonstrated a breadth of knowledge about social issues that I think the House would want to commend as well.

I'm looking forward to speaking to this bill when I get the chance tonight, but it appears that the government side is standing down their comments tonight and reserving judgment on this bill. It's interesting when the government side isn't prepared to put up speakers to stand up in this House to explain their legislation, to justify their legislation and to explain away some of the broken promises and delays that are inherent in this bill. I would hope that we can challenge the government members, some of whom are here, to put up an argument in defence of their bill tonight. I would hope that that would be forthcoming.

Obviously, if the Legislature is in session—the government moved a motion to have us sit tonight till 9:30. Occasionally when the New Democrats have voted against that procedural motion, they were taunted in the House and it was suggested that we don't want to work. Well, we're here to work. We're happy to be here and happy to debate the government's initiatives, and bring forward our concerns and ideas with respect to government legislation, but if the government won't put up any speakers, it's very difficult for us—

Interjection.

Mr. Arnott: Well, we look forward to hearing at least one speech, apparently, from the government side tonight. That will give us an opportunity again to hear the current view of the government on this issue. I would hope there will be other speeches as well, so that we can have a chance to debate these issues. This is an important bill that has apparently been a long time coming, based on the information I have before me and that I hope to expand upon in a few minutes. Obviously we would want to debate the issues that are inherent in the bill, and I look forward to hearing more speeches from the government side tonight on this important issue.

Once again, I want to compliment and thank the member for Erie–Lincoln for his thoughtful presentation.

Mr. Kormos: I was pleased to be able to sit here and hear the member for Erie–Lincoln explain in a most eloquent way his position and the position of his caucus with respect to this legislation. He's a hard-working MPP who doesn't sit here like—we've used this phrase so many times in the last couple of days—a bump on a log, nodding his head, eyelids drooping. You heard Tim Hudak stand up and use the modest 20 minutes—all we have is 20 minutes; that's all that's allotted to any one of us. Tim Hudak makes sure he uses his 20 minutes. He knows his constituents deserve to hear where he stands on these issues. New Democrats stand up and make it clear where they stand on these issues and use all of the modest time available to them.

It's shocking to see well-paid Liberal MPPs not participating in this debate. To hear well-paid Liberal MPPs talk about the two-minute question and comment that takes place between speeches as participation in the debate is beyond silly. It's less than accurate. You guys call two minutes a speech—120 seconds representing your constituents here on the floor of this chamber? I call it cheating them out of effective representation, and I suggest that you return some of that pay for not having earned it.

Mr. Levac: I just want to put out that the last two minutes that was used didn't say anything about the bill, so I'll say it. There's a very old expression that works very well: Make your point and say no more. It's a great bill for kids. I look forward to passing it.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Erie–Lincoln, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. O'Toole: The Liberals think it's perfect.

Mr. Hudak: My colleague from Durham says the Liberals think it's perfect. I think it's far from perfect. There are a lot of improvements that could be made to the government's approach to children's services in a general sense, as brought forward by my colleague the critic from Nepean–Carleton.

There has been a rumour that one of the government members will speak tonight on this piece of legislation.

Mr. Kormos: For how long?

Mr. Hudak: I don't know how long. I don't want to put any particular pressure on.

I want to say hi to Catherine Brownell, by the way. Her son is working very hard this evening on night duty. Where were you in the family structure, of the 12, by the way?

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: Number two. Boy, a lot of pressure being at the top of that ladder.

In my remaining time—I'll have a chance to speak a bit more, hopefully, this evening. But I do want to raise—I know the minister is here; it's always good when the minister is here for her legislation.

Mr. Kormos: I want to hear from Berardinetti.

Mr. Hudak: Mr. Berardinetti may be the rumoured individual who is going to be speaking this evening. It's quite possible.

Mr. Kormos: Don't his constituents deserve to know where he stands on this bill?

Mr. Hudak: There's no doubt, I say to my colleague. There's no doubt.

But I do want to say—the minister is here—that the Niagara Peninsula Children's Centre has been doing an outstanding job for many years. The minister is nodding, I'm pleased to see. I know she is familiar with their work. They have a request in to the province for some additional funding, as do children's treatment centres across the province. There was some additional funding in the budget. Their hope is that more will flow to start fighting the waiting list. Of course, autism remains a very important issue in my communities, whether it's Beamsville, Fort Erie or Dunnville—communities I'm proud to represent. I meet with many constituents who want to see greater funding for therapy for children and the families of autistic children, and I do hope we will see that forthcoming, because I think the response to date has been inadequate. That inadequacy has to move to adequacy.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Arnott: I'm glad the member for Erie–Lincoln mentioned the issue of children's treatment centres, because it was a shortcoming of the budget that was announced last week, as far as I'm concerned.

In our riding of Waterloo–Wellington, we are served by KidsAbility, which is an outstanding children's treatment centre. Before the House resumed sitting this spring, we had an opportunity to hear from many of the parents and families who look to KidsAbility to provide their children with the best possible start in life. I was privileged to attend that meeting, along with the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, the member for Kitchener Centre and the member for Cambridge, who was there as well. We heard from a great many families who are concerned about the delays in terms of the initiation of services for their special-needs children. At the end of the meeting, we all expressed our support for doing something when the House came back, and certainly I brought forward letters to the minister and continued to advocate on this issue, as I have in the past. I know the member for Cambridge and the member for Kitchener–Waterloo have done the same thing.

When we had the chance at the standing committee on finance and economic affairs to write a pre-budget report after we had finished the public hearings that lead up to that concluding process, our party brought forward a motion calling upon the government members to support a motion that would have encouraged the Minister of Finance to provide adequate funding to eliminate the waiting lists at children's treatment centres.

I could not believe it, but the government members who were present at the committee that day voted the motion down. They did not support a recommendation asking the Minister of Finance in his budget to eliminate the waiting lists at children's treatment centres. A num-

ber of the motions our party brought forward were supported in the course of that day and were reflected in the final report of the standing committee on finance. In fact, I brought forward one asking that that particular committee have public hearings on the loss of manufacturing jobs, and that was supported by a majority of the members who were there that day. So it wasn't like they were just voting down all the opposition motions; they were picking and choosing. In some cases, motions from our side passed. This particular motion did not pass, and I was extremely disappointed and surprised.

But then, of course, the explanation was forthcoming in the budget. Because while the minister stood in his place and mentioned children's treatment centres and the fact that he had increased the funding for children's treatment centres, when you looked into the budget papers, into the fine print, you found that they only increased the funding for children's treatment centres by \$4 million, which wasn't nearly enough. They bragged about \$10 million last year as having been something great that they had done in the previous year's budget, but clearly that is not sufficient funding to eliminate the waiting lists, and I was very disappointed; in fact, I highlighted that in response to the budget.

So even though that issue doesn't directly relate to Bill 165—and I'm going to get to that—I'm glad that the member for Erie—Lincoln mentioned it. I would implore the Minister of Children and Youth Services to do what she can. I know that there's going to be a lot of money spent in the next few months leading up to the election—a lot of money announced. Surely we can make this a priority so as to ensure that the waiting lists for children at children's treatment centres can be eliminated. When you think of the fact that \$22 billion more is being spent this year by this government than when they first took office, you would think they would be able to find a few million dollars. I think the children's treatment centre organizations were asking for \$20 million. You would think they could find that amount of money for the children who are in need of these services obviously and who otherwise won't get the best possible start in life.

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This bill, Bill 165, An Act to establish and provide for the office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, has now been debated for a few days in this House; it was introduced on November 30, 2006. I think that when we look at this issue, we as MPPs should conclude that we should all want to be child advocates, all of us who are members of this House and privileged to serve in the Ontario Legislature, and be responsible for a very important social subject area. Certainly the well-being of all of Ontario's children should be among our highest priorities. That's why this legislation is very important. We also know that vulnerable children need special consideration and protection.

Our party has long understood the need to embrace these principles. I know that our party's critic for this ministry, the member for Nepean—Carleton, talked at some length in her second reading speech about the fact

that it was our party, when in government in the 1970s and 80s, that blazed the trail on this issue. It was Premier Davis who appointed the first child advocate in 1984. The man's name is Mr. Les Thorne. I know that he's been in the Legislature to observe the debates on this issue, and I'm pleased that he has been. She even went back further than that to 1977, some 30 years ago, when the interministerial provincial advisory committee, or IMPAC, was established to ensure that barriers would be broken down, silos would be broken down to ensure that children were receiving the services they would need.

She also pointed to the establishment, in 1978, of the Office of Child and Family Service Advocacy. These two organizations, taken together, were intended to bring together the government's responsibilities in child welfare, children's mental health, development disabilities, youth justice, education, health, family treatment and children's rights—all of these things coming together in terms of the government's responsibilities, so that the silos would be broken down. We as a party obviously embrace these principles and want to be supportive of continued efforts to ensure that children are protected.

Going back to 1985, we know that since that time the Child and Family Services Act has required that children in care must be made aware of the fact that the Office of Child and Family Service Advocacy exists and that those children must be informed of their rights under this act. That's a requirement of legislation that's been on the books for a long time now. Children in care must also be made aware of how complaints about unacceptable treatment should be made. If you can imagine trying to educate and inform a young child of this—I'm sure it's a very challenging thing and has to be done in a compassionate, sensitive and appropriate way, but it must be done. This information must be delivered in a language that the child or youth understands, and the information obviously needs to be explained to them in a way that they understand. Children and youth are entitled to privacy to communicate with their family, a lawyer or an advocate from the Office of Child and Family Service Advocacy. These are amongst the rights that these children have and must continue to have.

On average, the advocate's office receives more than 3,000 calls a year, which I'm sure is a huge caseload and volume for one person with a small staff. The majority of these calls are about standards of practice for children in residential care, peer-on-peer violence situations, children living at home with special needs and aboriginal child welfare. Again, obviously the child advocate's office is very busy with the responsibilities that fall under their jurisdiction at the present time.

The child advocate currently reports to the Minister of Children and Youth Services under existing legislation. Bill 165 would make the advocate an independent officer who reports directly to the Legislature. This is yet another officer of the Legislature; we have a number of them now already. I think the step of ensuring that the child advocate is an officer of the Legislature is an improvement, because it ensures that the government of

the day can't be in a position of unduly influencing that person. I think that's a positive reform.

When you think of the Office of the Ombudsman, the Office of the Auditor General, the privacy commissioner and others, all of these offices are officers of the Legislature, which should to a large degree depoliticize their responsibilities and ensure that the public interest is upheld, not necessarily the government of the day's interest.

The NDP, I know, has raised concern about the provincial advocate, that the provincial advocate would not have formal investigative powers and would not be able to summon and force the attendance of witnesses, compel testimony under oath or compel the production of documents or evidence. These powers have been granted to the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate in British Columbia. In listening to the New Democrats in this House on this debate, they have been very consistent in their views in this respect. I think that is a very important perspective that they're bringing forward that needs to be given serious consideration by the government to ensure that the child advocate has the power to do his or her job in the way that is appropriate and protects children.

If we look at the chronology on this issue since the Liberals took office in the fall of 2003 and even before that, we know that in the summer of 2003, in the lead-up to what became the provincial election, it's my understanding that the Liberal Party issued a news release in July 2003 promising and committing a future Liberal government, if elected, to pass legislation creating an independent office for the child advocate that would report to the Legislature rather than the government. As we know, the Liberals made a lot of promises leading up to the election—more than 240, I believe—and we also know that something like 50 of those promises have been broken. The government will have a lot of explaining to do when the government members go to the door in the next few months. In many cases, the Liberal members are running for re-election, and I know they're going to be—if they haven't already—hearing loud and clear from their constituents. They're going to be called to account, not so much by the Conservatives and the New Democrats in the Legislature but by their constituents when they're asked why they did not keep many of those key promises they had made in the last election. They know as well as I do, especially the experienced ones who've gone through a couple of elections—and when I look around the House, there are a lot of them here—that they're going to find when they make commitments going into the next election that a lot of people are going to question their sincerity because of their performance in the last provincial election.

So that promise was made in July 2003. In the fall of 2003, after the election, after the Liberals were elected to form a majority government in this place, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services commissioned researchers to study the Child and Family Services Act, developing recommendations regarding the establishment of a new office of the child and youth advocate. The contract for

this review was granted to a consortium of four researchers organized by Whitehead Research Consultants Ltd., a London, Ontario-based consulting firm. I'm not familiar with this firm, so I'm not going to criticize their professionalism or their capability, but I do recall a promise made by Dalton McGuinty in the election campaign that he was not going to hire outside consultants if the expertise existed within the provincial government, within the ministries, within the tens of thousands of employees of the Ontario public service that the Liberals purport to respect so highly. Obviously, the government felt that either the expertise didn't exist within the ministry—which I highly doubt—or they wanted to give a contract to this consultancy firm, breaking one of their key election promises. And this was within weeks, I would guess, of their election, because of course they were elected in October 2003 and it was in the fall that they engaged this consulting firm to do this work.

I'm told that in April 2004 the third party review began, so there was quite a period of time from the time the consultant was hired to when the review actually began in April 2004. In August of that same year, 2004, a few months later, the final report of the third party review was submitted to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. That was almost a year after the Liberals had formed the government. But it wasn't until March 2005, many months later, that the Minister of Children and Youth Services, the former minister, the member for Hamilton Mountain, announced that legislation to establish Ontario's new office of the child and youth advocate was imminent. Again, as the member for Erie-Lincoln pointed out—I don't have my dictionary handy, but when you think of the definition of the word "imminent," you would probably conclude that maybe it would be in the next week, maybe in the next two weeks. To me, that's what "imminent" means, even around here, where of course definitions sometimes have different meanings perhaps than in the world on the street. "Imminent," to me, means in the next week or two. Clearly—

Mr. O'Toole: How about the OLG investigation?
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Mr. Arnott: Well, we'll get to that later, but the fact is that "imminent" means in the next few days or the next week. Clearly, there was an expectation created in March 2005 that the legislation would be introduced at least in that spring sitting of the Ontario Legislature.

In fact, I understand that a news release was issued on March 8, 2005, stating, "The McGuinty government will introduce legislation this spring that, if passed, would better protect the interests of vulnerable children and youth by establishing an independent child advocate in Ontario." This is what the minister said that day. And again, that was two years ago—two years ago. Clearly, the definition of "imminent" means something different to this government than what it means in Waterloo-Wellington.

Between March and June 2005, the spring sitting came and went and the government did not introduce the bill that spring. It was on November 30, 2006, when a new

minister of Children and Youth Services introduced Bill 165, and this is the legislation we have before us today, “imminent” meaning to them 21 months. I think we can see that a number of promises were broken during the course of the development of this legislation.

I want to make reference to some of the key points our caucus is concerned about with respect to this bill. First of all, as I said earlier, we are very proud of the tradition and the history of our party with respect to this kind of issue. It was the PC government under the direction and leadership of the Honourable Bill Davis that was the first to introduce a child advocate in Ontario.

But I have to say, in criticism of this government and this particular bill, that it was the McGuinty government’s dithering and delays on the children and youth file that led us to such a long wait before this bill was introduced, and that in itself is unacceptable to the opposition. The Liberals made a promise in 2003 and then stalled by commissioning these private consultants that they promised they would not hire to undertake a review that took months and months. Almost two years after that initial promise, the Liberals stated the legislation would be introduced imminently, and then it took almost two years after that before the bill was actually introduced. Now we are here two years later and we’re still debating it at second reading.

Another important point I want to make on behalf of our caucus is that children in Ontario have suffered under the Liberal’s ineffective and unfocused government, as revealed last December by the Auditor General’s review of children’s aid societies in Ontario. As we heard at that time, and we were quite distressed—there was a great deal of press coverage—there were a lot of people very concerned about the fact that in some cases, in some children’s agencies, money was being spent in a way that quite frankly did not pass the smell test; it did not pass muster. I think anybody reading about the fact that some of the money that was allocated to children’s aid societies to be spent on the protection of children was being spent on very expensive luxury sport utility vehicles for the agencies, and in some cases paying for extravagant, expensive trips abroad for conferences, obviously—and I know when it was raised in the Legislature, I think the Premier was as concerned as the rest of us and had to express regret that this was happening.

But it brought to light and gave us an opportunity again to express concern about the fact that the Ombudsman does not have the opportunity to oversee or to receive complaints and act upon complaints about children’s aid societies. This is an issue that has been discussed at length in the Legislature too. My own view is that the role of the Ombudsman has become considerably enhanced in recent years, and if that’s going to continue to be a trend, then I think it’s reasonable to look at children’s aid societies as perhaps something that should be on the list of responsibilities for the Ombudsman, to ensure that those kinds of things don’t happen again in the future.

Our party’s critic, the member for Nepean–Carleton, when she had the chance to speak about this bill, expressed four principle concerns that I want to reiterate in this House at this time. She expressed her concern about the lack of consultation leading up to this bill. There are a number of groups that feel they were not given adequate consultation, even though this bill has taken almost three and a half years, which makes it very hard to explain why the various interest groups that would want to bring something to the table in terms of the development of legislation would not be given that opportunity to do so. Why we would hear complaints about groups that have something to say about this issue that can’t get in to see the minister, that are told they can’t have a meeting with the minister to discuss these kinds of issues, is beyond me, especially when it takes three and a half years to get a bill to this point. If there was an emergency of some sort and the bill had to be brought in overnight, you’d understand why in some cases not everybody who had an interest in the bill was consulted, but when it takes three and a half years and you’re still hearing complaints about groups that can’t get in to see the minister, obviously there’s a problem.

Our caucus critic, the member for Nepean–Carleton, expressed her objection, that this bill lacks teeth in many respects. She also expressed concern that access to the advocate isn’t guaranteed and that the bill leaves out certain groups that are presently protected by the child advocate. So those are obviously issues that need to be discussed in the course of this debate tonight.

As I said earlier, I’m concerned and disappointed that the government side apparently is not putting up speakers. We are here to do government business because the government has introduced legislation, and I’m certainly happy to be here. I’m quite prepared to be here till 9:30 tonight to listen to the debate, and I’m glad to have this chance to participate in it briefly.

I don’t understand why the government would be unwilling and unprepared to allow some of their members to speak to the legislation, many of whom would probably want to have the opportunity, would probably want to be in the position where they can be seen to be doing something about an issue that I’m sure many of them care about, so that when they go to the people in the month of September, they can talk about the important work they’ve done, the speeches they’ve given in the Legislature, the speeches they’ve given in caucus—and the government whip knows about those—so as to demonstrate to their constituents that they’ve done something while they’ve been here in Parliament between 2003 and 2007, to demonstrate why they were here and what they’ve done to earn the support of their constituents while they’re seeking re-election. Unfortunately, they’re not being given the opportunity to do that this evening.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Kormos: Of course, these are the two-minute slots that follow a speech, that follow an address to the chamber, in which one can comment on that address or

pose questions about it. I don't pretend for this to be my contribution to the debate; I made that earlier this evening when I used the modest 20 minutes that's available to each and every member of this chamber—to you and you and you and you. Yes, you with your head in your hands, and you. It's the modest period of time afforded each and every member of this chamber to stand up, speak out, speak up, on behalf of your constituents and, in the context of this legislation, on behalf of those kids in your ridings. I listened carefully to the comments by the member for Waterloo–Wellington, Ted Arnott, who always delivers a thoughtful and careful analysis when he addresses legislation here in this chamber.

New Democrats are going to make sure this bill goes to committee. We will do that at the time when the bill goes to second reading vote, and I have every reason to believe that it will pass. We'll do that by using the procedural “No” when the Speaker asks, “Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?” That way, opposition members force this bill to committee.

Perhaps government members will be a little more forthcoming. Has the cat got your tongue, or tongues, or is it that you just have nothing to say?

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Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): We have lots to say here on the government side. We could perhaps do it for hours, but you know what? The place to do it is at committee. We are now on second reading of this bill and the procedure—everyone wants to talk about procedure—is that you finish second reading or the second day of second reading. We finish the second reading debate—

Mr. Kormos: Third day of second reading.

Mr. Berardinetti: Third day. Thank you. The member from Niagara has corrected me.

So three days. For some reason, the Tories don't want this to go through. But we send it to committee and we debate it at committee. We bring forward amendments at committee. The minister, on a previous occasion, made a commitment that she will look at the input that has been put forward by the opposition and perhaps consider making some changes to the bill. But why sit here and take shots at each other when we could be more constructive at committee? The minister is present in the room today.

The member from Waterloo–Wellington spoke very eloquently. He brought up a number of key points. I think that at committee perhaps some of those ideas could be implemented; some of those ideas could be brought in. But that's where it should go. After that, it comes back here.

I'm new here, three years or whatever. My understanding was—and maybe the member from Niagara can correct me—did the Tories do third reading on debate? Did they do a third reading? We're going to debate this for third reading and, at that time, there could be changes made. But let's debate it at committee and then bring it here.

Mr. O'Toole: I always listen with reflection to the member from Waterloo–Wellington. I could repeat much of what he said with respect to the disappointment primarily in the promise and the timeline. Here we are, in the later hours of the debate, bringing in a bill that was part of their fundamental platform.

I think it is respectful to say that the minister is present. In her remarks—I'm reading from Hansard—she says, “The child advocate represents children and youth who are seeking or receiving services under the Child and Family Services Act. Those services could be in the youth justice system, in the children's mental health or complex special-needs systems, in the child protection and well-being system, or in provincial and demonstration schools for the deaf and blind. The advocate's office also reviews cases that involve complaints about the treatment or care of a child or youth in a program funded by the Ontario government.”

Last night, I attended an outrageous meeting in the riding of Durham. It was about the cuts made to Lake-ridge Health. Over \$3 million dollars was cut from program spending to the Pinewood treatment centre dealing with children's mental health issues. The advocacy there last night from the CAW and from the Ontario Health Coalition and others—we were there to listen, but I was moved. I also listened quite clearly to the comments with respect to the children's treatment centres and the inadequacy of the funding that's being provided. In any form of advocacy, it's concerning.

With all respect to the minister, I have the greatest respect for her intentions, but the delays have been brought about her ministry by Premier McGuinty and Greg Sorbara. I would say that she's been hoodwinked in the cabinet meetings to bring any concern—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Delaney: It's a real pleasure to stand tonight to talk about some of the people who really make western Mississauga go. I'm standing here to represent the people from central Erin Mills, from Churchill Meadows, from Meadowvale, from Lisgar—the home of our new GO train station—and from Streetsville. Of course, sitting beside me is my colleague from Brampton, a very hard-working, effective member. I'm proud to call her my colleague.

Some of our colleagues from across the floor have been challenging us to see whether or not we can engage in a marathon on a bill that is really a very simple one. It's about a Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. One of the things that I learned when I was doing marketing and advertising—and it's something that certainly comes through when you're doing a debate in this Legislature—is a slogan that goes a bit like this: “The job is not done when there's nothing left to put in; the job is done when there's nothing left to throw out.”

Brevity is an art. I think in a debate like this, over a bill that's pretty straightforward, let's be brief on it. This is about a Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, an advocate who speaks for children and youth who are unable to speak for themselves. Ontario's children deserve

this. We said four years ago that this appointment would take place through an all-party legislative committee, and we said that we would make the advocate as independent as the Auditor General and the Ombudsman. This is what Ontario's children deserve, this is what all three parties want to have here, and Ontarians deserve nothing less.

In conclusion, I will agree with all of my colleagues on both sides: Let's pass the bill; let's get on with it.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Waterloo–Wellington, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Arnott: I want to express my appreciation to the member for Niagara Centre, the member for Scarborough Southwest, my colleague the member for Durham and the member for Mississauga West for responding to my speech this evening.

I want to pick up on a point that was made by the member for Mississauga West. He said that brevity is an art, and I would agree with him on that. I think of probably the most important and famous political speech that has ever been made in the last 200 years, the Gettysburg address by Abraham Lincoln, and it was about two minutes long. School kids learn it by heart in the United States, and in many, many cases—

Mr. Kormos: Because they didn't have television then.

Mr. Arnott: Well, I think brevity is an art, but let's hear from all the members who are here. Even if they only speak for two minutes, let's see them stand up and debate the issues. They don't have to take their whole 20 minutes if they don't want to. If they express support for this bill or they have concerns about this bill, they can speak for even two minutes. It would be better than no speeches at all. That would be my point in response to the member for Mississauga West.

I was very interested to hear the member for Durham talk about his local hospital issue. Clearly, that's an important issue for the children in his riding—for all of his constituents, but particularly, in many cases, I'm sure, the children. I was glad to hear of his support for the issue of the children's treatment centres and the appropriate funding.

I would never for a minute question the sincerity of the Minister of Children and Youth Services in terms of her desire to clear up those waiting lists; I'm sure that she would want to. What I would question is why the Minister of Finance did not find more than \$4 million in his budget to deal with that particular issue, and I wish he would answer that question.

I'm going to be attending a KidsAbility function this Friday, where they have to raise money through the radio. It's sort of a radio-thon. I'm trying to help them in that respect. Really, they shouldn't have to rely on radio solicitations to ensure that they have sufficient funding to clear up those waiting lists, but because of the fact that the government has not been sufficiently forthcoming in this most recent budget, they will do so.

I would implore the government to take another look at that issue to ensure that those children get the services they need.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. O'Toole: The first comment I would like to make is that I'm respectful that Minister Chambers, the Minister of Children and Youth Services, is here tonight, and I know her heart is in it. I know when I've gone to her with respect to our advocacy, in our role to protect vulnerable children most essentially, she has listened. I would say that there have been issues, whether it's the Ombudsman's comments with respect to children's aid or other issues, where she has indeed listened when I've spoken with her.

The question that remains in my mind with respect to this bill and the importance of this bill, however long debated, is, does she have support at the cabinet table?

As the members from Erie–Lincoln, Waterloo–Wellington and Niagara Centre have all mentioned, I'm surprised and disappointed that the government members have been silenced on the issue, and I'm concerned about that. I'm concerned because, as a government initiative in the dying days of the debate here in the Legislature, I'm wondering what the silence is about.

To stay on topic, it's like the OLG: "I know nothing, I heard nothing, I said nothing, I do nothing," or something like that. They seem to be persuaded that silence is the best policy—don't get engaged—and I think that's what they've told their members, because I've heard some of the two-minute responses to statements made by ministers where a couple of members—the member for Mississauga West, Mr. Delaney: I felt there was a note of passion there; I felt perhaps he would actually make some comments.

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I'm drawn into this, as I said in my earlier remarks, because if I look at the minister's statements, I take this as her sincere commitment to do the right thing. In her opening remarks to address this bill on November 30, 2006, she was quite clear in saying, "I am pleased to announce the introduction of legislation to make the province's child and youth advocate an independent officer of the Legislature. In moving forward with this change, we are fulfilling a promise"—I think she was forced to do it, actually, or at least giving it a little bit of time at the end of the agenda; it was kind of an after-thought promise—"this government made on behalf of the most vulnerable children and youth to better protect their interests." I don't think there's a member here who wouldn't agree with the sentiment. We might have some differences on the process.

Why I was talking about the OLG earlier was that Mr. Marin, the Ombudsman of Ontario, in his first report and his second report on the OLG has clearly represented the integrity, the trust and the strength to deal with the victims of crime and the victims of the poorly managed part of the lottery and gaming commission. This leads me to ask, is there enough money in the budget? When I look at the bill, and this is the bill, it's more technical than perhaps—and most of the language in here is more or less about setting up an office here.

I know it's an independent office and all that stuff, but I'm going to explain it to the viewers tonight. Thank you for tuning in. This bill is a total of 10 pages. In the 10 pages, you have to realize that half of it is in English and half is in French, as it should be, so it's actually five pages. If I look at its structure, there is a small preamble which I will read in the limited time I've been given. There's a section here, subsection 1(1), that is the interpretation of "advocacy," which goes on for most of the first page. It's the "law enforcement" component and the ministerial exceptions.

The "sections" section, which is section 2 here, is the advocate: "The Lieutenant Governor in Council shall, on the address of the Legislative Assembly, appoint a person to be the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth."

It goes on to say that the officer of the assembly will set up this function, a temporary appointment perhaps, some of it.

Section 8 goes into administration. It's a very prolonged section on administration. I'm going to put on the record some of the particulars in the bill, with your indulgence.

In section 8, under "Administration," the first item is "Budget." I don't really see too much in this latest McGuinty election budget, this spend-a-rama budget. It says:

"(1) The money required for the carrying out of the functions of the advocate shall be paid out of funds appropriated by the Legislature for the purpose.

"Directives

"(2) The Board of Internal Economy"—which is sort of an all-party thing—"may from time to time issue directives to the advocate with respect to the expenditure of funds...." There is still no money.

"Estimates

"(3) The advocate shall present annually to the Board of Internal Economy estimates of the sums of money that will be required for the performance of all the functions of the advocate.

"(4) The board shall review and may alter the estimates...."—probably downgrade them.

"Audits

"(5) The accounts and financial statements of the advocate shall be audited annually by the Auditor General and the results of those audits shall be presented to the Speaker...."

"Premises....

"9. The advocate may lease any premises and acquire any equipment"—a lot of money being spent there, similar to the LHINs, the local health integration networks.

But it brings to mind, to bring it on point, that the Ombudsman has demonstrated clearly to the public, as reported in the media, that he is more than capable of oversight and having some avenue of advocacy that has proven itself in the last while. But what has not proven itself is that the minister of casinos and lottery hasn't proven adequate; that has been the issue.

The service of experts: The advocate, may enter into contracts to retain special services. Staff: Subject of the board, may retain staff. Benefits: The advocate will receive the employee benefits applicable at the time of the service and cumulative vacation and sick leave credits, plan for group life and medical.

What has this got to do with providing service to children? It's about setting up some bureaucracy here. The Ombudsman is in place. The Ombudsman has made an expression with respect to his oversight for the children's aid society, which really, quite frankly, starts to overshadow some of the issues that come into the role of the advocate. I don't disagree with the need to protect vulnerable children as described. These vulnerable children could find themselves in the youth justice system, children's mental health, a complex special-needs system, in the protection and well-being system or in provincial demonstration schools for the deaf and blind. The advocate's office also reviews cases that involve complaints about the treatment or care of children or youth in programs funded by the Ontario government. This could be the day care facility issues where certain things have happened, I think it was in the Philippines yesterday.

"Pension"—this is all under the administration section. There seems to be an inordinate amount of time spent on making sure that there's enough budgetary allowance for these things:

"(4) The advocate's staff are members of the public service pension plan....

"12.(1) The advocate may delegate in writing to any member of the advocate's staff the authority to perform any of the advocate's functions or to carry out any of the advocate's powers," subject to the terms.

"(2) The advocate may not delegate the power to make a delegation or to make a report...."

"Functions and Powers"—a lot of this bill is about setting up a whole brand new, independent bureaucracy. We have that in the role of the Ombudsman's office. I'm not in any way opposed, if I've read the history with respect to the minister, and her intentions are clear, to first and clearly and as expeditiously as possible set up this process. You talk about expeditious. The member from Waterloo-Wellington went on at some length, Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence. You've got to start out this process. If you want to know about the future, look to the past. Learn from history. Here we are in July 2003, prior to the election. The Ontario Liberals issued a press release promising—amongst other things, some couple hundred promises—a future Liberal government would pass the legislation to create an independent office of child advocacy and report to the Legislature rather than to the government, much as the Ombudsman would. That's the independence that has been suggested for some time.

That was 2003. Here we are in 2007, the twilight hours of this government, hopefully the permanent twilight of this government, no personal inflections intended. But it's a failure of leadership and a failure of a plan. At the 11th hour they bring in Bill 171, the revision of

the health services act, they bring in Bill 155, which is a revision of the Election Act. They're bringing in this bill here, 165, at the 11th hour of the 11th day at the 11th minute. I'm not surprised if they just let it drift away on them, despite the minister's commitment.

In 2003, the minister commissioned research, another delay mechanism. There has been much research done on this. There have been reports and debates when we were in government, and I criticize ourselves, personally. Perhaps we didn't respond appropriately to give the child advocate the independence. They have the independence as a person, as a human being, to professionally make those statements and those assertions and take, perhaps, the consequences of their convictions.

In August 2004, the final report—this is 2004; it's frightening—of the third party was submitted to the minister. I think there was a change at that time. She's now economic development or something. They had to move that on because nothing was happening. There was no commitment, like I see today. I say again, perhaps repeatedly, that I think the current minister is engaged in the issue. I give her that. My question initially was, is there support around the cabinet table, with all the OLG issues swirling around, transportation and Kyoto and other industry issues that are out there crowding her off the table? She has a side table, almost, of the cabinet, I'm sure.

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In March 2005, the Minister of Children and Youth Services, Marie Bountrogianni, announced legislation to establish Ontario's new office of the child advocate as imminent. The member from Waterloo-Wellington talked about the "imminent" commitment by the current minister of democratic renewal. Quite frankly, there again, the urgency isn't obvious in the expedited treatment of this bill. I'm sure it frustrates the minister; she wants to see this pass.

We probably, at the end of the day, will support it. Has there been proper consultation? Has it been thoroughly researched? Have they listened to the independent stakeholder groups? This is the process of democracy that's being truncated here. It's being robbed of the decency that this function in independence deserves. Mr. Marin has achieved it and hopefully the advocacy for children achieves it.

But what I see is quite a different agenda—not the minister. I think it's that Dalton McGuinty has no plan. Quite frankly, this is being crowded in amongst municipal renewal, municipal taxes, uploading, the budget, which is kind of an election budget. And there's \$4 million needed for the children's treatment centre in Durham. The member for Whitby-Ajax, Ms. Elliott, was chair of that, and she knows. In a personal way, she's committed daily, shall I say, in her life to this particular advocacy. She is an advocate on this issue. She would probably be happy with the minister's—but does the minister have the support? The evidence tonight, to me, is this: Not one will stand. They're obeying Mr. Levac, the whip, tonight, because if they move Mr. Caplan out,

the whip will have a say in who is ready. So they're all being silenced under the potential that they'll dump Caplan overboard. I hope that perhaps he resigns on his own.

But if I go through and I look at this, the immediacy debate, with Minister Bountrogianni saying that in 2005—it's now 2007, two years later. Immediacy? It's two years. The Minister of Natural Resources is here. He was here tonight on Bill 185, I think it is, endangered species. I think Mr. Caplan should be in the Endangered Species Act. In June 2005—the spring comes and goes; the government did nothing. On November 30, 2006, Minister Chambers introduced this bill and promised—this was promised imminently 24 months before.

"The advocate may, in his or her discretion, decide not to take any action"—this is important: independence. I'm sure they're an advocate or they wouldn't be in that position, with all the filters that occur in recruiting people for that—"on a complaint if the advocate is of the opinion that

"(a) the subject matter of the complaint is trivial;

"(b) the complaint is frivolous or vexatious; or

"(c) the complaint is not made in good faith."

First of all, what most of us here deal with in our constituencies in a non-partisan way would be the Family Responsibility Office and court orders on support and custody. It's a huge, huge issue. I wish I had the solution. As a parent—I have five children and three of them are married. I hope we don't have any encounters there. But I would say that's one of the serious areas where advocacy needs to occur and independence, outside of the court process, because the children are victimized in that situation, as I see it. I'd perhaps see a role there—if one of the advocate persons is here tonight—to say that the Family Responsibility Office and the process under family law does not consider the feelings and the vulnerability of the children in that process. I think there's a schedule of payments and visitation rights, and then there are applications to the courts about certain access. And now we have Bill 8, which is access by grandparents to children. These children, in their vulnerable and formative years, need to have a significant, caring other in their life. I say that as a grandfather, actually. I know that the minister probably has similar concerns.

"Where the advocate decides not to act on a complaint, or to take no further action with regard to a complaint, the advocate shall give the complainant notice in writing of the advocate's decision, and of the reasons for the decision." That's good. There's some accountability in that. That's good, because no one's perfect, beyond—I guess there might be a few people who are perfect. But many of them aren't here.

Again, I bring in the work that's been done by the Ombudsman, Mr. Marin. And I also want to respect the member for Nepean-Carleton, Lisa MacLeod. As a parent, working and serving the public as a very engaged individual, she's got some reservations as well. She raised these concerns over a period of time, not specific to this legislation but on the auditor's report and the

children's aid response, the CAS, and some of the comments the Ombudsman had there, at the way these independent agencies drift away from any sense of responsibility to their legislative mandate.

Our central theme is yes, advocacy for children, and yes, use existing resources. Don't create a whole new stream of rental space and staff, computer systems and harmonizing the systems and dealing with the FOI stuff and dealing with all the various administrative trivia.

On behalf of John Tory and our caucus, I want to assure Ontarians that we take this legislation very seriously. We've studied and we've welcomed the comments from stakeholders. We have to get this government to do the right thing. They are the government. Tonight they choose to say nothing. To repeat what the leader of the NDP, Mr. Hampton, said, "I know nothing, I see nothing, I hear nothing and do nothing."

Interjection.

Mr. O'Toole: I'm saying that about what has been the discussion here for some time.

I can assure you that our party, under the leadership of John Tory, will participate in a positive way to make suggestions on behalf of the children and vulnerable adults in the province of Ontario. You've got to look at the beginning and look to the history. Look back to 1980s when Bill Davis formed the first legislation for the protection of children. I'm proud to be part of the John Tory government, and I'm disappointed in this government's legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Kormos: I once again listened to the thoughtful contribution to this debate, in the modest 20 minutes allowed him, by the member for Durham, Mr. O'Toole. Mr. O'Toole stood up in his place and used that modest 20 minutes to explain to this chamber and to the folks he represents—in an effort to earn that recently significantly increased salary that he receives, he stood here and spoke up. He spoke up about children and about the office of the children's advocate, and he offered up a critique of the legislation.

Interjection.

Mr. Kormos: Now, a member from the Liberal caucus there, the Scarborough Southwest member, says, "What are we doing debating this here?" Well, this is where you debate things.

Interjection.

Mr. Kormos: Ms. Van Bommel, this is the place to do it. You don't go home and say, "Oh, nuts, I forgot to debate the bill today. I wish I—" Three and a half years ago, you Liberals were campaigning your buns off telling people how eager you were to get into Queen's Park so you could debate legislation, so you could speak for your constituents. And now what do we have? We've got the bump-on-the-log caucus in the Liberal ranks, led, no doubt, by the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Mr. Bump On The Log himself, Mr. Caplan. And here are his acolytes, fellow bumps on the log, bumps on the log in training, who want to sit there like bumps on a log. You're paid big bucks. Honest, you can get a bump on a

log for half the price you're paid. So don't sit there like bumps on a log, Liberal colleagues. Stand up. Use the 20 minutes available to you. Debate like Howard Hampton—

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The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I certainly want to add my comments to the debate on this particular issue. As I listened to the member for Durham talking about specific parts of the bill, and he talked about the budget, I see this role of the advocate as being something that's very dedicated. I don't see how someone speaking for children and advocating for children can be doing anything else. I think it's something that needs to be specifically for this.

If you look at section 14, which talks about powers of the advocate, it talks about doing things such as receiving and responding to complaints. But one of the things that I think is crucial in this bill is section 14(d), which is to use informal methods to resolve disputes. I think that speaks to the fact that we're talking about children and youth. We're talking about children who have to have a special approach, and when we talk about that, we also talk about the fact that that's going to take some specific—when the member for Durham talks about budget, I think that needs to be there. The flexibility for the advocate to approach these children and deal with them in the way that needs to be done, that funding, that budget, needs to be there. This is a dedicated role. I think this role is one that needs to be independent of government and needs to have the flexibility to deal with these children as needs to be done.

It talks about explaining to children in language that is suitable to their understanding. It says this right in the "Powers" part of the legislation: "Language suitable to their understanding, the children's right to a review." I absolutely agree with that. I think this is important for these children. This is a very dedicated role. There is no way that this should be mixed in with anything else.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I'm most pleased to comment on the talk of my friend from the great riding of Durham. I'm always most pleased, and have for the last 12 years listened to my friend speak. He speaks the truth for the most part.

We're dealing with a bill that is really important. It has an important, fundamental distinction as to whether a child advocate shall be part of a ministry and responsible to the minister, or whether that ombudsman, if you want to call the child advocate that, would in fact be independent of the government and report directly to the Legislature.

We just happen to have a function that is going on right now between the Ontario Ombudsman and the minister who is responsible for gambling in Ontario, and we can in fact compare what they're doing at the present time.

For instance, the Ombudsman said that in the last 90 days, they have been able to piece together five cases

where the retailers claiming tickets were liars. They lied about being retailers. They lied about where to get the tickets. And that represents about \$15 million paid to internal fraudsters. On the other hand, we have Minister Caplan—this is the government side—saying, “I saw nothing, I heard nothing, I know nothing, and I did nothing.” I think that’s an apt comparison.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I want to comment on the points made by the member for Durham. Let me say at the outset that I don’t always agree with the member for Durham, but I must say I agree with many of the points that he has made here this evening.

We all understand the importance of this legislation. We all understand the important tasks that it is supposed to fulfill. But we also understand that this legislation, the so-called independent child advocate, is not going to do many of the things that people across Ontario expect that it should be able to do and probably believe that it’s going to do.

That’s really what much of the debate is about here tonight. I know the government wants to put across the impression that this is going to be some kind of earth-shattering step forward. In fact, as the member for Durham has pointed out, if you read the legislation, the child advocate is going to be quite limited in his or her activities, quite limited in what they can do. I suspect that what this means down the road is that people across Ontario who have greater expectations of this office—and I might say greater expectations that have been fed by some of the media spin of the government—are going to be sorely disappointed. That’s why we need to debate this legislation with some care and why I was happy to hear many of the points that were brought forward by the member for Durham, who understands some of the history around this bill, some of the promises that were made and that are not going to be fulfilled by this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Durham, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. O’Toole: I want to thank the member from Niagara Centre, who is always passionate, as well as the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, who wants to speak, and I think she could have 20 minutes right now if she wanted. She did mention section 14, which I will get to. I thank the member from Cambridge, a colleague who I know is committed to many of the same themes that have maintained his status here, and the member from Kenora–Rainy River, the leader of the NDP. I appreciate his taking the time to respond. I agree with the work he’s done on the OLG file. In fact, I know—it will ring in my mind for years, the minister that didn’t step aside, as I recall.

But here’s the deal. The member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex mentioned section 14. For the viewer, I’m going to specifically address subsection (2), which says that “the advocate shall not represent a child or youth before a court or tribunal.” Restricting on that, “Nothing in this act permits the advocate to summon and

enforce the attendance of witnesses, to compel testimony under oath or to compel witnesses to produce records or things.”

“Power not to act on complaint

“(5) the advocate may, in his or her discretion, decide not to take any action based on a complaint....”

Now, there is some encumbrance on the advocacy and the independence in that section, which she referred to as a complement to the powers being bestowed on this independent officer of this Legislature. I challenge that observation, and my challenge—not in a negative way—is to stand, to take your 20 minutes, to be an advocate, to break free from the reins of the whip, Mr. Levac. Speak your mind on section 14. I’ll listen attentively. I’m sure the minister needs your support, but no one is standing in support of the minister, including Dalton McGuinty, and that’s disappointing.

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The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Hampton: I’m pleased to be able to put some comments on the record on this legislation. Let me say at the outset that New Democrats for some time have been in favour of an independent child advocate, meaning a child advocate who does not report to a minister or to a ministry, but a child advocate who is independent in the sense that they are an officer of the Legislative Assembly. So insofar as that principle is enshrined in the bill, we are supportive of it.

Having said that, there are a number of things around this bill that I think the public needs to take note of. The first thing I think the public needs to take note of is this: The McGuinty government promised an independent child advocate before the last election, they promised it during the last election, they promised it the first year of government, they promised it the second year of government, they promised it the third year of government, and we did not see any legislation. We did not see this legislation until the day just a few short months ago that the auditor brought down his report on the misdeeds and wrongdoings within the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, within the Ministry of Community and Social Services and within child and family service organizations across the province. I would say most people would find that quite a coincidence. Nothing happened until the auditor blew the whistle.

What does that remind you of? Oh, yes, I know what it reminds me of. It reminds me of what has gone on at the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. and with the minister responsible for lotteries. We have a lottery corporation being sued by an 82-year-old man who was cheated out of his \$250,000 lottery prize by insider lottery winners’ fraud. We have the 82-year-old man going to court and the lottery corporation having to pay him \$200,000 after they spent \$500,000 trying to defeat him in court. Then we have the lottery corporation spending \$200,000 trying to keep him quiet so the story doesn’t get in the media. And of course we have reporters filing freedom of information requests asking for information about other possible lottery insider fraud. And what did the govern-

ment do in the face of all this? What did the government do while other people were being fleeced out of millions of dollars? Well, the McGuinty government did nothing. In fact, the minister is now on record as saying he heard nothing, he saw nothing and he knew nothing.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Kenora–Rainy River, it may remind you of something but it has no relation to Bill 165. I'd like to hear about Bill 165.

Mr. Hampton: I'm coming to that. I'm just making the point that it's the same issue with the child advocate. This government did nothing until the auditor blew the whistle on them, and we have a repetition of the same situation with the lottery corporation. This government did nothing until the Ombudsman blew the whistle on them. That's just a bit of history that I think people across Ontario need to know.

This is not the McGuinty government so much fulfilling a promise as the McGuinty government finally being stamped into action by the Auditor General blowing the whistle on the misdeeds and misuse of public money within family and children's service organizations and within the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

It would appear, then, that the legislation that finally resulted—and I think it's fair to say this—is very limited. In fact, I would venture to say that it was probably drafted up the day before the auditor presented his report. There was a quick political decision that the government needed some damage control because of all of the damaging information in the Auditor General's report, so what was drafted up was very slender indeed. That's important, because if you read the legislation, this legislation does not provide anything near what the McGuinty government was promising. It does not provide anything near what the photo ops and the press releases and the media spin had told people would be in the child advocate's bill.

Let me give you an example of what's not here. We saw in the Auditor General's report on children's aid societies and on the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and the Ministry of Community and Social Services that much was amuck, that much was astray, that money was being spent on luxury SUVs and holidays in the Caribbean when it should have been used to provide services for children in need.

I think one of the things that people who care about kids, people at home, would want to know is, is this child advocate going to be able to delve into that sort of thing? The answer is no. So the very things the Auditor General blew the whistle on that were going on under this government this child advocate would not be able to report on. The child advocate would not have the tools, the machinery or the mandate to do any of those things.

One of the other issues that has come forward—and this is to raise the Ombudsman again—is the number of parents who have complained to the Ombudsman about some of the decisions and activities of some children's aid societies. Parents have said there needs to be an independent overseer of children's aid societies. Children's

aid societies should not be an authority and a power unto themselves. There needs to be an independent overseer so that if parents or grandparents—families—feel that a children's aid society has not acted appropriately or has not considered the facts and the evidence, they can ask for an investigation or an independent review. I have heard different representatives of the McGuinty government say that the child advocate will be able to do that, but if you read this legislation, this legislation will not provide for the independent review of the activities and decisions of children's aid societies.

Mr. Kormos: It will prevent it.

Mr. Hampton: In fact, it will prevent it. So the kind of independent oversight that the Ombudsman has been advocating—in fact, the Ombudsman has come to a legislative committee, the Ombudsman has made representations to the ministers, he's made representations to the Premier, he's written letters, he has issued reports where he advocates that his office, the Ombudsman's office, should have independent oversight capacity with respect to children's aid societies. He's cited chapter and verse why this is needed, given examples, given the history of that kind of independent oversight.

I know there are many parents, many families, who expect that that kind of independent oversight is going to be in this bill. I'm sorry to disappoint them, but it's not. It's not anywhere in this bill. In fact, if you read how this bill is set up, it is structured to avoid, to curtail the Ombudsman being able to provide that kind of independent oversight of the decisions and activities of children's aid societies. People at home need to know this. This bill is not anything near, not anything close to what was advertised and promoted by the McGuinty government over about a four-year period when they were promising an independent child advocate. That is not going to happen. We're not going to see that kind of activity.

So the question is, what kind of mandate, then, does the child advocate have? I always look at this from the perspective that we know government organizations or government agencies will often have bodies of information; they'll collect information. If I might use another example, a parallel, it seems that the lottery corporation in the most instant case had lots of information. They knew there was a lot of fraud happening, they knew there was a lot of insider taking of lottery prizes, but they just said, "Oh, we're going to keep this quiet. We're going to be very quiet about this, and any time anybody suggests that, we're going to pour cold water and ice on it and we're just going to deny that any such information, any evidence, exists."

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Mr. Delaney: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Recognizing the member's interest in another matter, it doesn't in any way change the fact that standing order 23(b)(i) restricts him to the matter under discussion, which is in fact this particular bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. I'm listening carefully.

The member for Kenora–Rainy River.

Mr. Hampton: I think some of the Liberal members are rather sensitive on this issue. The point I'm making here is that if a child advocate or another body like that is going to be effective, one of the things they have to do is to be able to reach into an organization and demand that the information be produced. If they cannot require that agency or that organization to turn over the information, then they are very much toothless. If the organization or agency that may be alleged to have been a wrongdoer or is alleged to have not fulfilled its mandate or not to have provided the services that were requested is able to command and control all the information, it becomes very difficult, very difficult indeed, to give the public a complete and full picture of what has happened or what has not happened or what may have gone astray. I think the recent fiasco in the lottery corporation reminds everybody across Ontario of this.

At the bare minimum, this legislation ought to provide the child advocate with the capacity to require that information be made available; to require people to come, to present themselves, to respond to questions and to turn over the records, the e-mails and the briefing material that might be required in order to give a full and informed picture of what has happened. Is the child advocate going to have that authority? No. I'm just looking for the particular section again because the degree to which the authority is limited is interesting. I'll find it in a minute. The important thing is that the child advocate does not have the legal authority to require someone to disclose the information that they may have. The child advocate does not have the authority to require someone to produce records or to produce the information that is required. Just to give you an idea of the limitation:

"In carrying out the functions of the advocate, the advocate may ... receive and respond to complaints." The advocate can conduct a review. The advocate can represent the views and preferences of children and youth to agencies and service providers; can use informal methods to resolve disputes between children or youth and agencies; can make reports as a result of the advocate's review of a complaint; can provide advice and make recommendations. But when it comes down to the real things that you'd want a child advocate to have—in terms of the power to require someone to turn over their records, the power to require someone to produce documents, the power to require someone to produce information which may be under their control—the child advocate doesn't have any of that authority.

I suspect what's going to result from this legislation is this: The child advocate will have independent authority. The child advocate may write reports, but because the child advocate does not have the power to require records, documents and information to be turned over, the child advocate is not going to have a great deal of power. While I think having an independent child advocate is a good thing in principle, having an independent

child advocate who does not have the authority, does not have the legal capacity to require documents to be produced or to require documents to be turned over means that in many cases, when it will be most crucial, the child advocate is going to be a rather toothless tiger.

I don't know that it would be so bad to the point where the child advocate would have to stand there and say, "I saw nothing, I heard nothing, I know nothing and I do nothing"; I'm not sure it would go that far. We saw that kind of presentation recently by the minister responsible for lotteries, and that kind of presentation is frankly unprecedented in the history of parliamentary government. I don't think anyone has ever seen a performance with such marked incompetence in the Legislatures and Parliaments anywhere associated with the British Commonwealth.

I would say that the child advocate may not be as lacking in use as the minister responsible for the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. obviously is. The child advocate will not be, shall we say, as diminished in capacity as that minister obviously is; the child advocate will at least have some relevance, even with this limited authority, in comparison to the current minister responsible for lotteries and gaming. But any objective reviewer of this legislation would have to admit that it does not come anywhere near matching what the McGuinty government promised to people across Ontario and does not come anywhere near to providing the legal capacity and the legal machinery that the child advocate will need to do his or her job properly. Since we are here concerned with the provision of services and the protection of children, I would say that will be a very important failing of the bill, and it will not be very long before the Ombudsman or somebody else will be pointing out publicly this very important failure of the legislation and what will come to be known as the failure of the office.

So I would hope that before the legislation goes any further, the government would rethink its position and provide the child advocate with some of the powers and the legal machinery they really need, because protecting vulnerable children and looking out for the interests of vulnerable children is a very, very important role. I would hate to see the child advocate placed in a position where the child advocate would have to say, "I didn't know anything because I couldn't get access to the information, I didn't see anything because I couldn't get access to the information, I didn't hear anything because I couldn't get access to the information, and therefore I was not able to speak up on behalf of these vulnerable children because I didn't have access to any of the information."

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The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): One of the things I've noticed about this place on a bad day is that the barrier to solving a multitude of our problems often relates to the smallness

of our politics. Maybe it's old school, but I've often thought—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, member for Durham.

Mr. McMeekin: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

I've often thought that rather than cursing the darkness, we need to be doing what we can, as little as it seems at times, to be lighting some candles of hope. The Ombudsman is a good example. Say what you want, but he's come up with some reports that, frankly, have been pretty scathing about government, and his reports—he's an independent officer of this assembly—have had some dramatic impact. In fact, governments race to get up on their feet to say, "We want to thank the auditor for his report and embrace all of his or her recommendations." I mean, that's been a pattern here. I think that's been good because we've been able to separate—

Interjection.

Mr. McMeekin: There goes the member from Durham again, Mr. Speaker.

We've been able to separate the issue from politics by putting in place independent folk who are less concerned about spin and more concerned about substance. We've been able to put in place a mechanism that can actually protect some of these concerns. This government has done it with respect to some changes with the Municipal Act around the ability of municipalities to appoint an integrity commissioner.

I think this is the way to go. I support it. I hope the other members of the House will as well.

Mr. Arnott: I was present in the chamber for much of the member for Kenora–Rainy River's remarks this evening. I had to make a phone call, so I was able to watch him make his presentation for part of it. He raised a number of issues relating to children's services. At one point you encouraged him to go back to speak to Bill 165, Mr. Speaker, but I think broadly speaking we should be discussing the whole range of children's needs in the course of this debate.

Certainly I had the chance to attend the association of optometrists' reception this evening, as many members would have done. They raised with me the need for ensuring that children have an eye exam before they go to school. A lot of members of this Legislature have heard the optometrist association's recommendation and request in this respect. It's something I would want to support. I think it would be of great assistance to our children's education that, if they had eye problems, they were identified before they went to school as opposed to after the fact. So I would ask the member for Kenora–Rainy River, in response to his comments, would he support the optometrists in this respect?

Mr. Kormos: It's been a long day. Mr. Bradley is still here, the member from St. Catharines. He's been sitting in that chair over in the corner section of the government caucus. He had to sit in front of the minister for infrastructure renewal, the minister for lotteries and gaming

and gambling and fraud and so on, earlier today. He's still there.

The problem, I say to Mr. Arnott, as the member for Kenora–Rainy River pointed out, is that the children's advocate, as designed by the government, will never be able to advocate for children when it comes to health care, optometric care. The child's advocate will never be able to advocate for children who are being denied IBI treatment, kids with autism. The child advocate, as designed by this government, will never be able to advocate for kids with special needs in the context of education. And that's what's tragic.

The government deputy whip, the member for Scarborough Southwest, earlier today said that he wanted this debate to wrap up, but here the government is going to drag this debate into yet a fourth day of second reading debate. We witnessed it tonight. Here we are. It's 9:15. Government members still haven't spoken. We're going to be forced into a fourth day of second reading debate. It's government members who are filibustering their own bill by dragging this into the fourth day. I find that stunningly remarkable. It's just breathtaking that we're into a fourth day because government members won't participate in the debate today but want a day all to themselves. That truly is shocking.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry–Prescott–Russell): I've been sitting here since 7 o'clock, and I wonder if the people watching the debate really know what we are debating tonight.

Mr. Kormos: Well, you don't.

Mr. Lalonde: I definitely know, to my colleague across the way. The debate is on the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, but we've been talking on just about anything but the advocacy bill we are discussing tonight.

I would just like to say what the interpretation of "advocacy" is:

"'advocacy' means promoting the views and preferences of children and youth as provided for in this act, and exercising the functions and powers outlined in sections 13 and 14"—which describe the functions and powers—"but does not include conducting investigations or providing legal advice or legal representation;

"'advocate' means the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth appointed under section 2;

"'Board of Internal Economy' means the Board of Internal Economy established by section 87 of the Legislative Assembly Act;

"'capable' has the same meaning as in section 2 of the Personal Health Information Protection Act."

We could go on and on to tell the people what we are debating tonight. It's the advocacy bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Kenora–Rainy River, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Hampton: I want to thank all members for their comments.

Would I support public provision of an eye exam for children before they attend school? Yes. What we know and what anyone who visited with the optometrists will know is that an eye examination is one of the most important elements of preventive health care in terms of diagnosing problems before they occur. I would agree with him on that front.

I just want to refer all members to subsection 14(3) of the legislation, which says, "Nothing in this act permits the advocate to summon and enforce the attendance of witnesses, to compel testimony under oath or to compel witnesses to produce records or things." Again, the reason that is so relevant is because we are in the midst of a huge lottery scandal in another ministry, and one of the key things that would allow us to determine what happened and who knew what would be the production of records, and we can't get a production of records, can't get it from the minister or the Premier. And now we're going to have a child advocate who is supposed to advocate on behalf of children who may be in a correctional institute or who may be in custody in one way or another, and the child advocate will not be able to require someone to attend and provide information under oath and will not be able to summon or otherwise require the production of records, e-mails, briefing notes or anything else. It sounds to me like the child advocate is going to be very much diminished by this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs. Munro: I'm pleased to join in the debate on Bill 165. Much has been made about various aspects of this bill this evening and I will take a very brief time just to look at some of those.

I think it's worth repeating the commitment this government made in its election campaign that it would create this independent office. In fact, after doing that as a promise in the election, we saw that in the fall of 2003 there was a research group commissioned to undertake developing recommendations. It was in August 2004 that that final report came out, and then, about six months later, then-Minister Bountrogianni announced the legislation to establish that this independent office was imminent. It's astonishing that that imminence actually translated into something in November 2006, at precisely the moment when the Auditor General announced a scathing report with regard to children's aid.

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The reason I wanted to dwell on that lead-up to the announcement, and its imminent announcement to coincide with the Auditor General's report, is because I think in the course of time there had been the growing expectation that an advocate would in fact have the kind of power that it would seem was missing in the ministry in relation to its children's aid societies. I think part of the debate that we have here this evening stems from the perception of what an advocate would actually be able to do. So I think that a great deal of what we are hearing tonight in our debate, and in the references to the bill

itself and some of the background to it, is disillusionment with the fact that, while there was a great deal of fanfare that this would be an independent office, it seems to be an independent office with very, very little in the way of a mandate.

I also want to go back to the question of where we stand in the country in terms of this kind of legislation. I raised the question, again about six months ago, about the opportunity for the group Defence for Children International in trying to secure a meeting with the minister on this issue. The reason this group was particularly anxious was, of course, that they had done a great deal of work on a progress report on child advocacy renewal in Ontario and an agenda for action. I recall reading this document, even though it was about six months ago, and it demonstrated very clearly the comparisons with other provincial jurisdictions and where we stood as a province within the context of the country. When I asked the minister, I was quite surprised that in her response she said to me, "You cannot start to imagine how many requests for meetings we receive." I'm quite sure there are many meetings, but it just seemed to me this was a particularly influential group who deserved that kind of recognition.

I want to come back to what I consider to be the failure in terms of what people in the public are really looking for. There are so many times that certainly the Auditor General was able to identify where there seems to be a disconnect, to use political language, between the ministry and its agencies. I don't think there's a member here who hasn't received many, many phone calls from parents, foster families, all of the players, children themselves, with regard to their frustration or their inability to get answers, their lack of understanding and having anything explained to them about the processes. I think perhaps that's where the disappointment in this bill lies for me, because I recognize that the public is looking for something that would provide that kind of support and what might certainly be referred to as advocacy.

I checked within the legislation to look at how the drafters of the bill have identified advocacy. They refer to it as the "means promoting the views and preferences of children and youth as provided for in this act, and exercising the functions and powers outlined in sections 13 and 14," which, we've already heard this evening, are extremely limiting. But it then goes on to say, as a very distinct part of the advocacy definition, "but does not include conducting investigations or providing legal advice or legal representation." When I look at the kinds of calls I get in my constituency office, I'm sure every one of us here has similar calls, and we all have to say the same thing. We all have to say that children's aid is something that is stand-alone and it isn't something that we can be involved in. I'm not suggesting for a moment that we should be involved in that regard, but what I am saying is that I fear that this bill and the office it is going to create, or is about to create, will fall short by a considerable margin and leave people in this province

with a sense of security and a sense of the advocacy being there in your corner. I have very grave concerns about that particular narrow definition of advocacy.

I think back to the public hearings on Bill 205 and the very articulate young people who came through the child advocate's office to discuss their experiences in the system. It's those witnesses I think of when I look at this bill. I am very concerned that the young people who

came that day would find this bill falling short of their needs. I think that a much stronger definition of advocacy is needed for those vulnerable children and youth in our society.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 9:30 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 10 of the clock Thursday morning, March 29.

The House adjourned at 2128.

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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	Trinity–Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Vaughan–King–Aurora	Sorbara, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (L) Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre des Finances, président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Parkdale–High Park	DiNovo, Cheri (ND)	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
Parry Sound–Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Whitby–Ajax	Elliott, Christine (PC)
Perth–Middlesex	Wilkinson, John (L)	Willowdale	Zimmer, David (L)
Peterborough	Leal, Jeff (L)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L) Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge	Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Windsor–St. Clair	Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L) Minister of Energy / ministre de l'Énergie
Prince Edward–Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (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
Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Yakabuski, John (PC)	York North / York-Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
Sarnia–Lambton	Di Cocco, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (L) Minister of Culture / ministre de la Culture	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	Ferreira, Paul (ND)
Sault Ste. Marie	Oraziotti, David (L)	York West / York-Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Duguid, Brad (L)		
Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est	Chambers, Hon. / L'hon. Mary Anne V. (L) Minister of Children and Youth Services / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse		
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.

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