



No. 160

N° 160

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)**

Thursday 19 April 2007

Jeudi 19 avril 2007

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Copies of Hansard

Copies of Hansard can be purchased from Publications Ontario: 880 Bay Street, Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1N8. e-mail: webpubont@gov.on.ca

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Exemplaires du Journal

Des exemplaires du Journal sont en vente à Publications Ontario : 880, rue Bay Toronto (Ontario), M7A 1N8 courriel : webpubont@gov.on.ca

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

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Thursday 19 April 2007

Jeudi 19 avril 2007

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS

JOSEPH BRANT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Todd Decker): Ballot item number 79, private member's notice of motion number 57, Mrs. Savoline.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): Mr. Speaker, could I ask for unanimous consent to suspend the House until the arrival of the member for Burlington and whatever time is lost be taken from the opposition's speaking time?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Agreed? Agreed.

This House stands in recess until the arrival of the member for Burlington.

The House suspended proceedings from 1003 to 1011.

The Acting Speaker: I recognize the member for Burlington.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline (Burlington): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care should immediately identify Burlington's Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital for inclusion on the ministry's capital projects priorities list; and the McGuinty government should then release to the proud people of Burlington the \$40 million needed for the Joseph Brant hospital renewal project.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Burlington has moved private member's notice of motion number 57. I recognize the member for Burlington for her presentation.

Mrs. Savoline: The Joseph Brant hospital takes great pride in the leadership role it plays in the delivery of health care to the people of Burlington and to the region around Burlington. It strives to fulfill this vision by making Burlington and the surrounding areas a strong and healthy community.

Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital opened in 1961. At that time, it was a 228-bed facility. There was some expansion in 1971, when two wings were added that nearly doubled the capacity of the hospital. Since then, however, there has been no expansion and very little upgrading.

The design is inefficient and outdated. The operating rooms were designed over 50 years ago. Very little

equipment was needed when those operating rooms were designed. In today's modern medicine, the equipment is larger—for example, there are lasers and operating microscopes—and the infrastructure does not meet modern digital networking and air-handling requirements for contemporary operating rooms. There are other deficiencies in the hospital as well, in the post-anaesthetic care unit, the intensive care unit and the patient care areas, which I will tell you a little bit more about right now.

The equipment used in day-to-day patient care is significantly larger as well. In the 1960s and 1970s, it was acceptable. But now, to navigate through the narrow halls and doorways, with the modern medicine we're moving toward, it doesn't cut the mustard.

We have moved to single-use supplies rather than re-using items, and that's a good thing to do—I think that's a great thing to do. But this has created the need for significantly more storage space—much more storage space. The narrow halls are not acceptable to the fire marshal for storage of supplies, so he has asked that the corridors be cleared. What this does is add to the inefficiency of how the hospital and the staff do their work. It forces staff to travel considerably long distances to get the items they need that they've had to put in storage.

I think that a considerable investment is due and appropriate at this point in time, to continue the good history of service of the Joseph Brant into the 21st century. We'd like to build for the future, and there is a plan that would be phased over 10 years; it's a \$150-million plan. However, the first phase of that plan is just over \$40 million. Joseph Brant hospital is now planning for that first phase. It's the creation of a new three-storey wing on the southwest corner of the current facility. The components would be 11 new operating rooms for the first phase. It would have the ability to free up existing operating rooms for specific types of surgeries such as knee and hip replacements and cataract surgeries. These are the kinds of surgeries that the ministry has put on its priority list.

A new intensive care unit in that hospital would provide more space and dedicated isolation rooms for patients with infectious diseases. We only have to remember back to our SARS experience to know how important properly isolated rooms are in a hospital when those kinds of pandemics or epidemics occur.

The new facility would tremendously benefit our residents in Burlington and around Burlington. It's more than just a convenience; it's a ready access that could save lives and provide urgent immediate care for our patients.

The long waiting lists that all hospitals in Ontario are suffering also occur at Joseph Brant hospital. We need

new facilities. It's not a matter of if; it's a matter of when. For the last three and a half years, there has been a proposal at the Ministry of Health for the first phase of this expansion with very little movement within the ministry staff for any response to our hospital. By coincidence, there was some response at the end of February as a result of the by-election and, I guess, the publicity that the hospital received then. So the hospital did receive \$1.5 million to do some planning work. But that planning work will go for naught unless this hospital sees its place on a priority projects list and they understand when it can be built.

We recently received \$2 million for an MRI scanner. It's great. Nobody is saying, "No, thank you," to things like this. But, Minister, unless you have the space to accommodate this new equipment in order to reduce waiting times, this equipment is not going to be used to its full extent. I don't think the people of Burlington or the people of Ontario feel that that is an appropriate way to do business.

There is no physical space. They need to expand in order to reduce wait times, and the demand for additional diagnostic imaging tests, such as CT and MRI scans, is increasing—it's increasing all over Ontario. Unless the hospital is expanded, we can't make dents in these wait times. So we're asking for this proposal to go forward.

In the greater Toronto area there is growth. I think the major growth in Ontario is increasing in our area. The gap between funding in the greater Toronto area and the rest of the province is also increasing. Joseph Brant hospital is not the least of those waiting for that gap to be reduced.

The government is well aware of the pressures that our hospital and other hospitals are having. It's noted in many statements made by doctors' associations and by actual studies the ministry has embarked on. Unfortunately, when these studies come forward, the minister dismisses them as being "not totally representative of what is really going on." So there is a dismissal of good information that's been asked for, provided and not acted on. I think that's irresponsible.

1020

That goes back to March 2005, when the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians, in a submission to the provincial working group of the minister, George Smitherman, examined emergency response times. They told the province that the primary cause of emergency department overcrowding is the lack of beds in hospital wards and intensive care units. So there's a domino effect. Our hospitals are crammed with people who should be in long-term-care facilities, but they can't be dismissed, discharged from the hospital, because there are no long-term-care beds available to them. So the medical beds in hospitals are then taken up with people who should really not be there.

I think this is most unfortunate because the last budget that we saw just a few weeks ago did not make a dent in this problem. The long-term-care folks who were so eagerly waiting for an answer from the ministry, for

answers to their issues—it did not happen in that budget. There was certainly nothing in there for hospitals like Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital to be able to move forward into the new millennium and to be able to treat people medically in a way that we in North America deserve and pay for in our \$2.5-billion health tax.

The people of Burlington felt that when the \$2.5-billion health tax came in, perhaps that would be a solution to our Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital problems with expansion. But the \$2.5 billion, ladies and gentlemen, has come and gone. The people of Burlington have contributed \$105 million to the McGuinty health tax, and we have received little back for it. In fact, in that same time period, 60 beds have been closed in our hospital. That's the answer we've had to the \$105 million that we've contributed. I think it's time that this government stood up and took notice and used the health care money for what it was collected for.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale-High Park): It's my pleasure to speak to this motion from my colleague from Burlington. It gives me an opportunity to, among other things, speak about medicare and the joys of medicare and what we're facing right now in the province of Ontario, which is, I hope, not the potential death of medicare.

It was 60 years ago, in 1947, that Tommy Douglas—who was voted by listeners in a CBC poll as being Canada's greatest Canadian because he's the father of medicare—first introduced, in Saskatchewan, public health insurance programs. What's interesting about that is that he did it in the face of opposition. Later, in 1962, he extended that program to include hospitals as well, again in the face of amazing opposition, really, looking back historically at it, from business, from doctors, from just about everyone else from the other political parties, yet he still made a go of it and, interestingly enough, balanced budgets at the same time. Tommy balanced budgets in Saskatchewan while still introducing this comprehensive plan that looked after the health care of, in those days, those who lived in Saskatchewan, now of course extending across the country.

If there's anything that marks us as Canadians that we're proud of across the political spectrum, I believe it is our publicly funded and public health care program. I know that our intern, Thad Chastain from Ohio, is amazed at the unanimity of Canadians on this topic—that we're proud of health care, that we're happy that we live with a system of medicare and that although we might want to add to it or subtract from it, you're not ever going to see somebody here running against it. So I want to note that.

Then I want to go on and talk about some of the problems that we're facing and that medicare is facing in Ontario. Frank Dobson, who is a British MP and also was the Minister of Health in Great Britain, was here not too long ago—just last week, in fact—touring around Ontario talking about the dangers of Ontario following in Britain's footsteps, and that is going down the road of

privatization. Even the Economist, which hardly can be accused of being a left-wing publication, has now come out and declared the British private-public system an unmitigated failure. So the jury is definitely in on the British experiment with their own medicare system, and we have some examples already now of so-called private-public-funded hospitals and the disaster they may very well present to the public as well.

I'm reading here about a town hall meeting the Ontario Health Coalition had in Brampton. It says here, taking it out of the meeting:

"As the Brampton hospital P3 nears completion, it is evident that not only did capital costs almost double from \$350 million to \$550 million, but the hospital has been cut almost in half. Bottom line? At almost double the cost, the new hospital will open with 350 instead of the announced 608 beds. The local coalition is calling a meeting to update the community with new information and discuss what can be done to hold those responsible to account for this hospital P3 boondoggle."

For anybody interested, that's going to be on May 9. Of course, we've heard in this House about the disaster that is the North Bay situation, again over budget. I used to be in business. I know that businesses do not invest in anything if they don't hope to get a profit out of what they invest in, and certainly the profit will come at the expense of patient care.

I heard the member from Burlington talk about long-term care. Certainly we've got some serious problems with long-term care in this province as well; again, chipping away at what should be a solid medicare system. We've been saying—the New Democratic Party and others, the Ontario Health Coalition, and of course those who have to work in long-term-care facilities, including many in my own riding—that they need more funding, that they need more staff, that they need at least a minimum average of 3.5 hours per patient per day. In this government's long-term-care bill they do not get that. In fact, those who are in our long-term-care facilities get about \$5.46 a day for food—imagine feeding someone on that—as contrasted with prisoners, who get about \$10. So that's the situation in our long-term-care facilities. I've delivered many petitions—so have others in this House—about that totally appalling and shameful situation.

Here is something in the Globe from another group, Cancer Care Ontario, who have presented something again. Here's another arrow into the heart of medicare:

"A proposal that would allow Ontario cancer patients to pay for unfunded, intravenous drugs in public hospitals is 'the answer for only a select few' and will leave a majority of patients without the care they need, a cancer advocacy group says.

"The plan put forward by Cancer Care Ontario—the arm's-length agency that advises the province on all aspects of provincial cancer care—sets the stage for a two-tier medicine system in a province where it should be 'based on equal access for all citizens, regardless of income,' the Cancer Advocacy Coalition of Canada says."

That's another group that is upset at this attack upon our medicare system—again, something held near and dear to all Canadians and certainly all in Ontario, I would hope.

Another interesting article here that's a little bit more recent is by Carol Goar, Toronto Star, and she's talking about home care. If you can't find a bed in long-term care and you're on a waiting list for a hospital bed, is there any chance that you'll have some of that same health care at home? Unfortunately not. She points out here: "What can be said with assurance is that unpaid caregivers (mostly women) are still struggling, home care services are still spotty and, according to unofficial estimates, just four cents out of every public health dollar goes into home care." So home care is not an alternative either to the waits for hospital beds and to the wait for a bed in long-term care as well.

It's interesting too that under the guise of the wait time strategy, another privatization move is happening. Again I read from the Ontario Health Coalition:

"The government is converting hospital budgets from global budgets to a wholesale plan to move towards payments for procedures—a market-style pricing system. They have begun to introduce price-based competition for services. In addition, they are moving specific treatments into regional specialist centres (starting with cataracts, hips and knees). Finally, the wait times strategy is focused on a narrow set of specialists' procedures following those set nationally: cataracts, cancer, cardiac, hips and knees, and MRIs and CTs.

"It is ironic that after years of trying to move physicians away from fee-for-service medicine, the government"—and by "government," they mean the government of Dalton McGuinty's Liberals—"is now moving hospitals towards this model."

1030

Shameful, really; absolutely shameful: another arrow at the heart of medicare in this province in a way that even the Harris-Eves government couldn't have foreseen.

It's interesting that those who are in the field—doctors themselves; doctors like Dr. Robert Bell, president and CEO of University Health Network—have both glowing things to say about medicare and disparaging things to say about the way that medicare is being attacked in this province.

I read from an article here that he wrote, and this was in the Toronto Star. He says, "Although health care costs have increased in Canada over the past 10 years, these increases are comparable to other countries and largely driven by increasing drug charges and new technologies."

He goes on to say, "When we compare Canadian public health insurance to private health insurance costs borne by American industry, it is obvious that tight public control of health care budgets offers a competitive advantage"—and this is an interesting point—"for businesses locating in this country.

"Consider the staggering health care cost faced by General Motors. In 2005, the auto giant's health insur-

ance bill totalled more than \$5.3 billion for its 1.1 million US employees, retirees and their dependants. This is at least 50% more than the cost of publicly funded care in Canada.”

He concludes by saying, “Access to health care based on need rather than ability to pay is an important defining characteristic of this country’s social policy that should be protected rather than deserted.”

He goes on to talk about the problem with wait times and fee for service that’s again creeping into what we have seen as a public health care system. This goes against what we think is common sense: that public care costs business less than private care. But we have a very good and a very bad example just south of the border of what could happen and what shouldn’t happen. We have another example across the ocean in Great Britain of what they had and lost and what we are in the process here in Ontario of perhaps having and also losing.

There’s phenomenal information on all of this, of course, but I think if you look at jurisdictional examples, it gives you a pretty good idea of what not to have. The Ontario Health Coalition says, “The introduction of what the British call the ‘internal market’ has doubled administrative costs.”

In our own examples in Ontario—I cited two: Brampton and North Bay—of publicly-privately funded hospitals we see exactly this happening right before our very eyes. We are repeating, unfortunately, British history here, and that’s what Frank Dobson came to warn us about just last week.

Of course, all of this is predicated on a broken promise, and that was Dalton McGuinty’s broken promise in 2003 that none of this would happen, that privatization would not happen in health care, that medicare was front and centre for the Liberal Party and front and centre on its agenda.

Here I read from our own Murray Campbell of the *Globe and Mail*: “McGuinty’s Forgotten Pledge” is the title of the article. He said, “Mr. McGuinty held firm, however. ‘P3s represent an extraordinary departure from our history when it comes to public hospitals,’” and decried the P3s of the Harris-Eves days.

Then, of course, upon election, that promise was readily forgotten, and he is going down the road of P3s faster than Harris and Eves ever did. As Murray said, “And then, miraculously, the concept of P3s died, replaced by something called alternative financing and procurement.” That’s Orwellian-speak for P3 hospitals, and that’s what’s happening in our province right now.

It’s a sad day across Ontario to see what is happening in medicare. It’s a sad day to see hospitals starved for cash. Certainly this particular motion to see more cash go into a hospital in Burlington—and I know there’s going to be another motion this morning calling for cash for yet another hospital, and hopefully I’ll have a chance to speak to that as well, dealing with mothers and babies and putting their health at risk.

Certainly we want to see more money go to these hospitals. We want to see more money go into publicly

funded hospitals and publicly funded medicare. Why? Because it’s safer, delivers a better quality of health care, and it’s cheaper. There are absolutely no reasons not to fully fund our public medicare system—absolutely none. Unfortunately, due to one-can-only-wonder-what pressures, we’re going down that road.

I’d like to conclude where I started with an homage to Tommy Douglas, the father of medicare, 60 years ago today. It’s interesting that in that same year, 1947, he also brought in Canada’s first bill of rights. We were talking about charter rights recently—well, this set the stage for charter rights a lot earlier than the federal government ever moved on that. So a bill of rights, the first publicly funded health care system and a provincial budget that didn’t go into the red: all of those possible but only possible where you have a fully funded, public medicare system.

I’m happy to support this motion and I’m happy to support the motion after it. I’d like to see a motion calling for full funding for all of our health care without corporate sponsorship, without selling off our health care facilities to private interests.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It certainly is a pleasure to join the debate this morning. I will say right from the start that it’s good to finally see a Conservative standing up for a hospital in Burlington. That’s about the best thing I can say about this motion and the only positive thing I can say about this motion we see before us this morning.

What needs to be explained is: How is this funding going to be given to all these hospitals while the leader of the official opposition has confirmed on a number of occasions that he wants to cut—not add—\$2.5 billion from the health care system in this province and build hospitals at the same time? This isn’t making a whole lot of sense.

This morning was a little ironic, I think, because the Progressive Conservatives in Burlington are a little late to this argument on Joe Brant funding. If it hadn’t been for Joan Loughheed in the last by-election raising the issue—Joan is a former Tory and makes no bones about it. Joan used to belong to the Progressive Conservative Party and decided, after years and years of that hospital being ignored by that party—she felt so strongly about it she was prepared to change allegiances because she saw what was happening around this province. She saw how our party was beginning to get its hands around this problem that we’d been left with.

What had we been left with? The Ontario Hospital Association, a non-partisan organization that gives us information on the state of hospitals, estimated that when we took over there was an \$8-billion hospital deficit in this province that had been left by the Conservative government. When Joe Brant decided that it needed to go ahead, where did it look to get support? Did it look to its own member in Burlington? Perhaps they did. I’ll tell you, though, I was at a meeting with the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, the member from Stoney Creek and the mayor of Burlington at the time, Rob MacIsaac. I was at another meeting with the member

from Flamborough–Dundas–Aldershot–Ancaster, asking for the same thing.

I'm the member for Oakville. I'm fighting for a hospital in my own community. The member from Stoney Creek and the member from Flamborough and other places are fighting for health in their own community. Who was fighting for the people of Burlington when they needed it most? Not Conservatives. Three Liberals had to go to bat to try and get the funding for this hospital. When Joan Lougheed decided she was going to be our candidate, she made sure that this was going to be the issue. While Halton region grew in size and while folks like Oakvillegreen and other people came forward to the region and said, "It's okay to grow like this. What are you doing about the infrastructure deficit? What are you doing about the hospitals? What are you doing about the schools? What are you doing about the greenbelt? What are you doing about the loss of green lands?" they were all but ignored. The growth was allowed to take place. Thankfully, in Oakville we've seen a change. We've got a new council in Oakville that understands that if you're going to grow in population, you need to plan for it.

1040

What have the Conservatives done to Joseph Brant hospital? You would think from listening this morning they had done all sorts of wonderful things. The Tories cut—not added, cut—\$3.3 million from that hospital. They cut acute care beds across this province by 22%. I don't think the previous member enjoyed that good a relationship with the hospital board, as I understand it. It's really none of my business, but I get the feeling that it wasn't the friendliest of relationships. The Conservatives closed 28 hospitals across this province, and now they bring forward a motion like this today as if during their time in office they had done just a wonderful job. We are delivering new hospitals. We're building new hospitals across the province. When the Conservatives were in power, they closed hospitals. People don't forget that.

This is a wonderful plan put forward by Joe Brant hospital. It's a plan I support. They've been given the funding from the Ministry of Health to move ahead with that plan. They're competing with other projects, obviously, all around the province. Since we've been in power, new funding that has gone to Joe Brant hospital is in the order of \$25 million—not closing hospitals; adding \$25 million to the budget. Thirty-nine new nurses have been hired at Joe Brant hospital since 2003.

We have a lot to be proud of in Ontario. I'll put the record of the McGuinty government and Liberals, when it comes to health care in this province, against the mess that was left behind by the Harris-Eves years that did nothing for the people of Burlington.

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby–Ajax): I'm very honoured today to rise to speak to my colleague from Burlington's first private member's resolution, but I also have to say I find it disappointing that tabling this resolution is even necessary. The fact of the matter is, I can't help but draw a parallel between my colleague and

myself. Like her, I was elected in a by-election in a 905 region outside Toronto, and also like her, funding for health care was the number one concern that I heard about as I went door to door in the by-election in March 2006.

As a result of this overwhelming concern, I made a commitment to the people of Whitby–Ajax, whom I represent, that I would make their voices heard in this Legislature on health care issues, and I honoured that commitment by tabling a private member's bill almost exactly a year ago that's quite similar to the one that was brought forward by my colleague today. I called on this government to immediately increase health care funding in Durham region to the provincial average and thereafter to develop and implement health care funding in Durham region based on population growth.

Taxpayer money from Durham and Halton represents 5% and 4% respectively of the total premium revenue generated by Dalton McGuinty's regressive health tax, yet there exists a \$740-million funding gap between what is made available for the GTA and 905 regions and what is provided to the rest of Ontario. That is simply not fair. Halton, Durham, York and Peel represent 25% of the population of Ontario, yet calls to equalize the massive funding gap that exists in our communities have repeatedly been ignored by this government. And not only that, we have recently heard specifically in my riding that Lakeridge Health Corp. has been directed by this government to cut almost \$3 million in children's mental health services, adult mental health services and addiction services, and this has had a devastating impact on our community, I can tell you.

All we hear from this government are self-congratulatory announcements such as the minister's continued claims to have reduced wait times for various procedures, including cancer surgery, hip and knee replacements and angioplasties, but we also know, thanks to the Provincial Auditor's report, that these numbers need to be taken with "a grain of salt," and I believe that was an exact quote.

We also hear from this government that they are committed to prioritizing access to health care services at home, yet in the GTA-905 area, our residents are continually forced to travel extensively outside of our region in order to receive the necessary services.

I say to this government that it's time to stop talking and start acting on this matter. Residents in the GTA-905 regions are sick of hearing about these laudatory announcements regarding your supposed commitment to health care as they wait desperately for funding for health care services, and especially for hospitals such as Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital in Burlington—and the need for a new full-service hospital in my own community of Whitby.

The McGuinty government decided to use their majority to defeat my resolution, a result that was very disappointing to my constituents. I would therefore like to use this opportunity to urge the government members to listen to the concerns that are being voiced through the

member from Burlington today, to listen to what we're saying and to renew the commitment to rebuild the hospitals in these communities and to grant the money that is so desperately needed for the Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital and for many other regions, including my own, Durham region.

The fact of the matter is that this issue is the number one concern of millions of Ontarians, and this concern is not going to go away. So I would urge the government members to listen to what is being said today and to support this motion accordingly.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member for Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot.

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): And all those other places, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

I'm pleased to rise today to speak, notwithstanding a failing voice, to this particular resolution. I want to say at the outset that Joseph Brant hospital has an amazing history. It is one of the finest hospitals in the province. Mr. Scott and his entire team down there work exceedingly hard, often under trying circumstances, to deliver the kind of health care system that the good people in Burlington and every other community in this great province deserve. I want to begin by applauding their efforts and the efforts of the staff there who work so hard every single day to care for our people.

I happen to live in a community known as Waterdown, just north of Burlington. About 8% of the people of Waterdown routinely use Joseph Brant hospital as the hospital of choice. I even have a spouse who's a family physician who's been known to deliver the odd child at Joseph Brant, a wonderful facility for those purposes as well. I want to begin by saying that.

I also want to say just in passing that I was a very good friend of Tommy Douglas's. We spent time together talking about health care. We'll never know for sure, but I think if Tommy were here today, he would be quite prepared to stand in whatever place he is and praise at least the direction of this government in terms of trying to deal with the infrastructure shortfall and meet the needs of people. Tommy always understood that there was a need for a balance between the private and the public sectors in terms of delivering health care. Even in Saskatchewan, he understood that. If you read some of his speeches from the House of Commons, you'll learn some important lessons there.

I want to just, in speaking directly to the motion, make a couple of observations. First of all, I understand the honourable member opposite wanting to stand up for her community. Any decent MPP worth his or her salt would be knee-jerk in support of their community, and so I applaud her for that. I do need to point out, however, that governments don't release \$40 million to the proud people of any community without there being a plan. I think the member opposite said, "And this \$1.5 million in planning money will go for naught if we don't get the \$40 million." Well, when the \$1.5 million to do the study was announced, there was absolute and overwhelming

rejoicing in the Burlington community, particularly in the hospital community, that we were finally getting on with it, that a government was in place that finally understood and was prepared to move forward. They understood. They made the leap of understanding that when you fund and undertake to fund planning a major capital project, particularly in the spirit that this new government entered into that discussion, that carries with it an understanding that if that plan, all things being equal, can be sustained in terms of showing a clear need, the government will come to the table with the funding. They understood that, and I think that will be the case. So the hospital sector is an important sector.

The member opposite also spoke about bed warmers, the people who should be in long-term-care facilities. I think that's an important issue too. This government, through the LHIN system and other initiatives, is trying very hard to direct increasingly more monies into the community sector. One of the ways to do that, obviously, is to get on with home care and long-term care, which is another priority we have.

I'm pleased to speak. We'll see how this resolution goes. But let's be real about it, not silly. You don't just write a cheque for \$40 million without the plan being in place first. That, in fact, would be irresponsible. Even Tommy Douglas would understand that.

1050

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): I'm certainly pleased to join the debate today, the resolution put forward by the member for Burlington which states that "the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care should immediately identify Burlington's Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital for inclusion on the ministry's capital projects priorities list," and, of course, release the \$40 million needed for the Joseph Brant hospital renewal project.

I want to congratulate the member from Burlington. This is her first private member's bill; yesterday she had her maiden speech. She has come into this Legislature with a wealth of experience. She is a highly respected individual who has served as a city and a regional councillor and as Halton chair. She has long taken a passionate interest in what is needed for the people in Burlington.

Unfortunately, in this case we have a hospital, Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital, that has a desperate need for renewal. We've heard about the operating rooms that are about 50 years old, and we all know that, with the new designs, they simply don't meet the needs of today with the new technology. We have an outdated facility, a facility that is not keeping up with the tremendous growth that we're seeing in the Burlington community, and that growth includes a lot of seniors, who also need increased care.

Since she has been involved in other levels of government—municipal and regional—she has been a strong advocate for the hospital. She continues to be a strong advocate for the hospital. I support her in this request. For three and a half years there has been a proposal on the desk of the minister of this Liberal government.

There has been no response to put this hospital on the priority list, despite the fact that if you don't deal with this inefficient, outdated structure, you simply are not going to provide the needed medical services that the people in the Burlington community deserve today.

It's impossible to reduce your wait times and it's impossible to decrease the emergency room response times unless you get moving on a plan for capital renewal. The plan is desperately needed. This government talks about improving health services, but I would say to you that we see little in the way of improvement. In fact, if you asked people today, they would probably tell you they're not sure where the health tax went. Yet the people of Burlington have paid more than \$100 million into the health tax with nothing whatsoever to show for it.

I would strongly urge this government to recognize the needs of the people in the Burlington community, as the member for Burlington has done. I would encourage them to support this resolution today and make sure that Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital is put on the ministry's capital projects priorities list. The people of Burlington deserve no less.

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to this motion. When I started out and I read it, I was very clear about some of the things I wanted to say. But when you listen to the debate in here, you go, "Gee, do I speak to this very deserving motion put forward by this member or do I try to unwind some of the weird spinning of tales that has been going on since she put forward her motion today?" But let's start with the importance of this motion.

Private members' time in the Legislature is probably one of the most valuable times for members because they get an opportunity to speak from the heart about the things that are very important to them, to the members of their community, to their ridings and their constituents. There isn't a person in here who doesn't know that probably the most important thing to the people of Burlington is Joe Brant hospital, and I know that—as was already alluded to by my colleague the member from Oakville—because I spent time touring that hospital.

I know exactly the things first-hand that you spoke of. I had a meeting with the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal; the member from Oakville was there, our member from the place of many names was there as well; and we have been advocating strongly for this as well. I know how hard it is because I have a hospital in my community that I had to fight for. It was slated for closure under the previous government. A 7,000-member candlelight vigil—just people of the community—got together and saved that hospital. Then they started the campaign to rebuild it, because it was built in the 1940s initially and they've added pieces on here and there.

I fought very hard to get my hospital on the agenda to be rebuilt, because the backlog in this province is horrific. Hospitals weren't being rebuilt under the previous government; they were being closed. Now we have kept them open and we are rebuilding and we are moving forward.

The member opposite talked about the need to change that hospital because of all the new technologies. That old hospital can't house the new technologies. Then I hear from the member from the New Democratic Party saying, "Oh, in Tommy Douglas's time it was all fine. Why can't they do it that way?"

You know what? It costs a lot more to do some of the operations that are required now. Why should we pay somebody to do an eight-hour operation when it can take one hour with the new technologies that are available? If we can buy a machine—a laser hip surgery machine costs \$300,000—how many of those should we buy? How many of your tax dollars do you want us to spend on \$300,000 laser hip surgery machines? How many should we buy? We have to balance that new technology, which is very expensive, and make sure that we strategically place them around the province so that as many people as possible can have access to them. Then we have to have the personnel to man them, so that as many people as possible can access that new technology.

Laser eye surgery at St. Joseph's—the community health centre right in my riding—we actually funded two state-of-the-art rooms there. There was a state-of-the-art room sitting there that could do laser cataract surgery but it wasn't being funded. So we flowed the money to that place, not in the big expensive hospitals but into that community care location. People can go in in the morning, and they have trouble seeing. They come out at noon hour and they can see. That is the wise use of dollars.

This isn't Tommy Douglas's time. You don't break your leg and we put you in an ambulance and you go and get a cast on. Everybody wants that quintuple bypass if they need it, and they want it now. That costs money.

So we balance, and we analyze the costs of the new technologies and how we can strategically place them in this province and how we can strategically get as many people as possible manning those machines so that as many people as possible in this province can have access to the surgeries that they are demanding.

I won't listen anymore to all this tale-spinning that I hear all the time. I am sick of people being really just not quite straightforward. Yes, there's new information, but it must be accurate information. I want people to critically think when they hear things. Ask tough questions and make sure you're getting good information.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Burlington has two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Savoline: It's disappointing to hear politics being played out in this chamber—talking about past members' performances and that kind of thing. I think that's disrespectful to the issue at hand, quite frankly.

The long waiting times that every community is suffering—even the member from Oakville knows that even though he has a new site for his new hospital, that hospital can't access money until 2013, long after the burgeoning waiting lists and the walls are expanding with the number of people who need services at the existing hospital.

Playing politics with these critical issues is not something that sits well with me. In fact, I've read this to

you before. On my opponent's website in the previous by-election, it said, "She can immediately start working from within government to get more beds and better services for Joseph Brant. As a Liberal MPP, she can deliver." What does that mean? That a member with any other political party stripe has no influence in this Liberal government? Shame.

Let me tell you that in 2003 McGuinty promised to unclog emergency rooms. In March 2005, the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians said that the lack of beds in hospital wards and intensive care units was a direct result of the overcrowding. ER physicians came to Queen's Park, and they said that Ontario's Ombudsman should investigate their complaints. The minister responded by saying that the coalition only represents 20% of the province's ER doctors.

The minister continues to dismiss people who bring good information forward to this chamber, and I encourage the members to vote for my resolution today.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time for our first ballot item.

1100

STEVENSON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Liberal government should provide Stevenson Memorial Hospital with the required \$1.4 million in new funding over the next three years so that it can reopen its birthing unit and ensure that enough obstetricians and health care providers can be recruited to supply a stable and ongoing service for expectant mothers in New Tecumseth, Adjala-Tosorontio and Essa.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Wilson has moved private member's notice of motion number 55. I recognize the member for Simcoe-Grey for his presentation.

Mr. Wilson: I just want to apologize to my over 200 guests today. We're having a little difficulty getting everybody into the House. I hope they'll all get in soon.

I'm happy to rise and lead off the debate on my private member's resolution to reopen the birthing unit at Stevenson Memorial Hospital in my hometown of Alliston. Alliston is where I was raised. Growing up, I pumped gas at my grandfather's Loretto Tavern and Store and bagged groceries at the Alliston IGA. My father owned Jack Wilson Appliances on Victoria Street and my mother, Theresa, taught at St. Paul's school for over 33 years. My family has lived in the area for more than 200 years. When I was growing up we lived on Banting Drive, just a stone's throw away from Stevenson Memorial Hospital. My parents continue to live in Alliston on Queen Street just behind the bowling alley.

For as long as I can remember, Stevenson Memorial Hospital has always provided a high level of care to the people of our community. In fact, in the past year they've been recognized as one of the top five hospitals in Ontario when it comes to providing shorter waiting times

for cataract surgery. Despite the challenges that almost every hospital in Ontario faces with respect to physician recruitment and coverage, they have managed to cope with 33,000 emergency visits a year. This is a number that is comparable to Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto and certainly higher than any other comparable community hospital. The staff, volunteers and health care providers deserve great credit for these accomplishments. Furthermore, our obstetrician and midwives, nurses and staff of the former obstetrical unit deserve our unending praise for making every effort over the past few years to keep the unit open, and we're all here to thank you for a job well done.

On December 15, 2006, the hospital chose to close its labour and delivery program as a result of funding and medical manpower shortages. The community's objection to this closure was so incredible that over 500 people attended a public meeting on this issue on November 30, 2006. That's one of the largest public meetings I've ever witnessed in my riding. Not only that, but several key hospital donors have put the hospital on notice, advising that their contributions are contingent on a local obstetrical unit. Honda, our region's largest employer, has voiced similar concerns directly to the Ministry of Health.

This closure is not only about pride and inconvenience, but moreover it's about safety. Since December, expectant mothers in our area have been forced to drive, at the very least, 45 minutes to another hospital in Orangeville, Barrie or Newmarket to give birth.

In the gallery today is Marie Quincy. She spoke out front just a few minutes ago. She gave birth in the emergency department during this closure, with the help of midwives. We're also joined by Tamara Fishcher-Cullen and Angela Cole, two expectant mothers whose babies should be born in Alliston. And there is another mother, Katie Able, who gave birth on the way to Southlake Regional Health Centre in Newmarket, not in the hospital but in the ambulance on the way to the hospital. Had we had a local obstetrical unit, this would never have happened. She was fortunate that this happened in the spring and not during the winter months when treacherous driving conditions on our rural roads often force the closure of Highway 89 and Highway 400 for hours at a time.

In such a prosperous province like Ontario, I find it passing strange that the government would use the back of a taxicab or ambulance as an alternative to being born in a local hospital. I find it also very strange that this government would campaign on a promise to bring health care services closer to home but is now telling expectant mothers to drive away from home to give birth to their babies.

Our community has taken great strides and concerted efforts to come up with a sustainable solution to this problem. Not long after the announced closure, a community advisory committee was struck to explore options to maintain a sustainable obstetrics unit. The community, under the very capable leadership of Sylvia Biffis, has presented a very workable plan. As well, we are waiting for a report from Jessica Hill, the provincially appointed

convenor. I'm hopeful that the government will look at these reports and see its way to fully funding whatever model is deemed suitable toward our objective of reopening the birthing unit and providing obstetrical care.

Stevenson Memorial Hospital has capacity for up to 584 births per year. The current estimated number of babies being born in the hospital's catchment area is 854. This includes New Tecumseth, Adjala-Tosorontio, Essa and Innisfil. What we need is bridge funding to repatriate these births back to Stevenson Memorial. It is assumed that in 2007-08, we could achieve 260 births at the hospital; in 2008-09, this could jump to 350; and in the following year, it could reach 500, which would provide the hospital with enough births to sustain obstetrics under its own budget. The help we need from the province is \$601,000 in year one, \$411,000 in year two, and \$351,000 in year three, for a total of \$1.4 million over the next three years.

Under present circumstances, there is no way that the hospital can afford full obstetrical and birthing services without the support from the province, and that's why we're all here today. This is a very small and reasonable request, I say to the government, when you consider we are dealing with a \$37.9-billion health care budget. Our request is merely a fraction of a per cent; in fact, it's 0.0037% of the health budget.

The government can't tell us they don't have the money. We know that provincial revenues were \$3.4 billion higher than expected this past fiscal year, and your debt servicing costs were \$600 million lower than expected. So that's \$4 billion more you have to spend than you expected to take in this year. With \$4 billion more than you budgeted, you could easily eliminate the health tax and put \$1.4 million into Stevenson Memorial Hospital.

In last month's budget, the government gave a \$50-million grant to the Magna corporation, hardly the poorest company I've ever heard of. You also found \$5 million for Tom Parkinson's severance package from Hydro One. And yesterday, we learned in the Toronto Star that you pushed \$20 million out the door in a year-end political slush fund. Yet you can't find \$1.4 million for expectant mothers and their babies in Alliston.

Just to help highlight what an emotional and important issue this is, I want to read part of a letter I received from Erin Watson of Alliston. She wrote:

"Mr. Wilson:

"Please continue to fight to keep the birthing unit at Stevenson Memorial Hospital. I delivered all three of my children there within the last eight years, and without the hospital being so close, I don't know what I would have done when I had my first two children. I didn't have a car at the time and was a single mom. We have many single moms in our community that don't have transportation to and from Barrie and Newmarket. I could go on for hours giving reasons that closing the birthing unit would be a disaster for this community.

"I am raising my three girls here in Alliston and I want them to have the opportunity to have their babies in the

same hospital that they were born in, years from now. With the outcry that this has brought forward, I am disgusted that it's being considered further. If there is anything I can do to help stop this, please let me know. I am more than happy to help."

1110

This is just a sample of the many, many letters and e-mails I have received. It speaks volumes as to how important and emotional it is to welcome into the world new human life. Mothers deserve this government's full support.

I must remind the government that prior to the announcement that our birthing unit would be closed, you secretly agreed to let the birthing unit go and you helped the hospital establish new prenatal and postnatal programs, but so far you won't fund birthing. So I ask, don't you think it's cruel to force women to have their prenatal and postnatal care in different places and then give birth somewhere else? What about continuity of care, and the need and ability to develop good relationships with doctors and midwives? What about privacy? After all, giving birth is a very personal matter, and having to deal with different health care providers at various locations can't be of much comfort to expectant mothers.

For as long as I am the member of provincial Parliament, I want to see a general hospital in Alliston with as many services as can possibly be provided to the public, and I'm not alone in this view. As I said, with me today are 200 people in the public galleries who have travelled from my riding to be here for this debate. They are hard-working, community-minded people who are very much representative of our area and are truly passionate about the need to provide obstetrical care in Alliston.

Our goal is to build the best birthing unit in Ontario, but we can't do that without the government's help. We're not here today to criticize the government or to make this issue a political football; we are here to ask the government to give us a chance to prove that we can do it. In my 16 years as an MPP, I can say that today represents the largest group of concerned citizens that have ever come down from my riding to Queen's Park to show support for an issue. They are here to show the government that our community is united in its determination to reopen the birthing unit. After all, as our slogan says, our babies deserve to be born in Alliston.

The Acting Speaker: I have to ask our visitors: You are not allowed to clap, as much as you might agree with your MPP.

Further debate?

Mr. Shafiq Qadri (Etobicoke North): First of all, it's a privilege to speak on this particular ballot item. I would first of all like to commend the MPP for Simcoe Grey, Mr. Wilson, for not only publicizing this issue but also reaching out to his own constituents and bringing this to our attention.

I would like to speak, with respect, on a number of different fronts. First of all, I speak not only as a member of provincial Parliament in Etobicoke North but also as a family doctor who has delivered probably several hun-

dred children in different hospitals across this province; as well, I might add, as the son of an obstetrician-gynecologist, and hailing from, I guess, an obsessively medical family, if I can put it that way. So I hope that I might be able to contribute at least some perspectives, wearing these dual or triple hats: as a practitioner, as an individual who is engaged in obstetrics and gynecology and, as I say, with my particular family background.

While I can certainly appreciate the concerns that Mr. Wilson, the MPP for Simcoe–Grey, has brought forward, particularly as it echoes the hearts and minds and aspirations of so many of our visitors, I would, with respect, like to inform not only you but the people of Ontario, and particularly our visitors, about his own record with regard to hospital funding and the diffusion of medical care across Ontario. I would like to say, with as much respect as I'm capable of, that his recent conversion to the expansion of hospital services—yes, for his particular community—is particularly difficult for us as the government now to digest or to accept, given his own record in power. I would like to share that with you, if I may.

To begin with, from a press release of February 23, 1996, the then sitting Minister of Health who, as he quite rightly says, was at the forefront, at the helm, of a multi-billion dollar budget, who had his opportunity to fund, to build and to expand as much at will as he possibly could, given the advice of the day—his new funding approach for hospitals was this: “Transfers to hospitals will be reduced by \$365 million in year one; \$435 million in year two and \$570 million in year three.” So I'd like it to be clear about where the cuts, the diminishment, the reduction of hospital care, health care in this province occurred. I can attest to that not only as an MPP, not only with research that's being provided to us through government circles, but, as I say, as a practising physician who was in that system when all of these cuts were happening.

Now having said that, the record extends and the—

Interjection.

Mr. Qadri: Sir, I listened to you with respect and with dignity, and I would simply ask that you yourself, MPP for Simcoe–Grey, particularly given your community members are here, do the same.

I would also like to inform all members, not only members of this Legislature, but also the people of Ontario and, in particular, the community members from Simcoe–Grey, that during that particular record of the Tories from 1995 to 1998, the golden era of the Mike Harris regime, they cut \$500,000 from Stevenson Memorial Hospital.

So again, I would simply say to you, Speaker, to the people of Ontario and to those assembled here, that the recent conversion, or, yes, your heartfelt request for funding, is slightly difficult for us to digest because when you, sir, and your party were at the helm, were in the corridors of power, when you had the full opportunities to increase funding, to expand, to maybe create a local centre of excellence of obstetrics and gynaecology, we wonder why that did not happen.

The other thing I would like to also extend—this is old news; it's 1996. We've moved on 10, 11 years. We can't

always be citing elements from the past. As Oscar Wilde said, no man can run from his past, even though some may try. But let's bring it up to date. The current Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Tory, has committed to reducing health care funding by slashing or removing the health premium by \$2.5 billion. Now let's be clear about that. That's a matter of public record. It's not something that is being done in a covert ops kind of way. It is on the public record. Those of us who are in health care and who watch health care and babysit health care are slightly beside ourselves to reconcile these requests that continually come from the opposition for projects across Ontario with this initiative or this commitment for reducing health care by \$2.5 billion. The two cannot happen.

So while I salute the MPP for Simcoe–Grey for bringing this to our attention, which, by the way, an expert panel is considering at this moment, as I say, you really have to live your own record and walk your own talk, because for those of us who are in health care, who deliver babies, who take care of people on a day-to-day basis, these are not mere words to us. This is not mere political posturing or gesturing. These are things that are going to help people and deal with people and reach people on a day-to-day basis long after any of us are still in this place. And with that, I would now offer the floor to my colleague.

1120

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): I want to follow the footsteps that my colleague just presented. First of all, I understand why the folks are here today. I understand why the member for Simcoe–Grey has brought this ballot item forward. I come from a rural community. Health care and education are probably the things that are closest to the ground these days in our communities. I represent a riding that has an elderly population, and health care is even more important. That's not to say that obstetrics is not; it is very important.

I guess I best relate to things that I've experienced. I'm one who believes in “touch, feel and see”; I can relate to it better than just reading from a script. About 10 years ago, the community that I happened to be mayor of, Brighton, in the county of Northumberland, was faced with the closure of a hospital in Trenton that served probably 90% of that community. It was done under the auspices of the Health Services Restructuring Commission. We were going to lose that hospital that was very dear to the folks of Trenton and Quinte West, very dear to the municipality of Brighton. And the same thing happened: Busloads of people came to Queen's Park.

Interjection.

Mr. Rinaldi: You know what? I didn't come that day. I guess we are really touching a nerve here.

Interjection.

Mr. Rinaldi: Do they want their time, Mr. Speaker? We listened attentively because I know it's very important to those people, and I'm quite disturbed that they're not even—

Interjection.

Mr. Rinaldi: So those people came here, and do you know what? They managed to save the Trenton hospital site. They managed to save it, but they lost obstetrics out of it. So when I talk about the personal feeling towards that type of function—the folks in Brighton and Quinte West now have to go to Belleville for obstetrics, which has probably one of the finest obstetrics departments in that part of the province.

I guess it will be five years ago next month—I've got to count now; my wife will probably get upset at this. It was probably my fifth grandchild, and yes, we had to drive about 20 minutes. My son and daughter-in-law live in Colborne, a little bit farther west, and they had to go to the Belleville hospital site. But I can say without regret that, yes, if there were obstetrics in Trenton, they were probably about 20 minutes closer, but I know that the obstetrics in Trenton didn't have equipment, even when it was running, as good as the one in Belleville.

There were some complications which, thank God, don't happen very often. This was a serious situation, and I can tell you that the team of doctors at the Belleville hospital unequivocally assured my son, his wife, my daughter-in-law, and the grandparents on both sides that if it hadn't been for the equipment available at the well-equipped obstetrics department in Belleville, I would be less one grandson today. That's a sad thing to say.

So, not to devalue the issue of why these folks are here today and why the member from Simcoe–Grey is fighting, but I think we all go through those things of trying to have the best possible equipment anywhere, you know, in our backyards. With today's technology and today's availability of that type of equipment, the reality is that we cannot have a fully equipped hospital in every one of our backyards as much as we would like to. I would be the first one to fight for that, but we have to face reality.

I know there have been some challenges at this particular hospital, at Stevenson Memorial. I'm sure it's a great hospital, otherwise these people wouldn't be here today. They need to be congratulated for speaking up for their hospital. I think we all do that, whether we are in government or not in government, in the opposition. I can tell you, although I wasn't here, that I lost a hospital in Port Hope. The folks in Port Hope, in the west end of my riding, still remember. They all had given money, there was a foundation and all those good things, but they did lose a hospital. So not in this capacity but as a local mayor from a neighbouring municipality, I fully understand what it is like to lose services.

One of the things I will add to this is that there has been—at least from the information I was given, and hopefully I'm correct—in this particular case a lack of obstetricians to fulfill the commitment. And yes, there is a lack of specialists, there is a lack of doctors, not just from this government but from the previous government as well, and the government before that, I must say. So we can blame all we want, but the reality is that there is a lack of professionals out there that we all need to work together to rebuild.

I have three hospitals in my riding, and do you know what? There's a shortage of physicians. There are short-

ages of family doctors. It's particularly an issue in rural Ontario.

I would say to the folks in the gallery and to the member opposite from Simcoe–Grey that nobody is objecting to the reality of this issue. The challenge is, how do we keep an obstetrics wing open when there are no obstetricians to look after it, when there's not the proper equipment? I think we have to be very concerned about safety, because when people walk into a hospital, whether it's for obstetrics or whatever other emergency, we want to make sure that we have the best professionals, the best equipment to deal with them. I think as Ontarians we deserve that.

We know we've had this. This is non-partisan. I have no problem going to my doctor or to a hospital, because when I go through that door I know that they are the best possible people. Unfortunately, there is a shortage. I guess I could stand here and point fingers, but that's not going to solve the problem.

We need to move those yardsticks. I know, from my notes, that there's a panel that has been appointed that's working on the issue in this particular case. I would encourage the folks from the community to work with this panel, recognize those needs, and let's try to move forward.

For somebody to ask, "Let's just do this," without any proper background, without trying to deal with the tools that we need to solve the issue, it would be just as well to say, "I want to go to the moon today." Well, that ain't going to happen that quickly. So I would suggest that we follow a process. Just to support this motion on a whim, at will, is going to be very difficult for me to do.

Having said that, I see my time is expiring. I congratulate the folks for being down here today because I know how dear this is to them. We're working with you and we're hoping to solve the problem as soon as possible.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): I want to congratulate the member for Simcoe–Grey. He is a former Minister of Health and he has fought passionately for 16 or 17 years in this Legislature on behalf of the people in the riding that he represents. Certainly this is one of the issues that he has been most passionate about, and that is to ensure that women and families in his community continue to have access to the birthing unit and the obstetrical care that is needed as close to home as possible.

In that desire to ensure that \$1.4 million is provided to Stevenson Memorial Hospital, I would say to you that this member is right on track with the recommendations of reports that have been released in recent months here in the province of Ontario and elsewhere. In fact, there is a report that was done by the Ontario Women's Health Council. It was released last September, 2006. Unfortunately, this government has taken absolutely no action on the report whatsoever, despite the fact that I have a letter here from the Association of Ontario Midwives and I have received other letters from those who are involved in the delivery of obstetrical and birthing care. We are headed for a crisis in maternity care in Ontario. There is a growing need to take action.

If we take a look at the report that's been sitting on the minister's desk, the vision that this panel had is this: Every woman in Ontario should have access to high-quality woman- and family-centred maternity care as close to home as possible. That's what this member is trying to ensure happens in his community in order that his hospital can continue to remain open and that the births will continue to take place. As a person who has given birth myself, I know how important that is.

This report of the Ontario Women's Health Council, which we set up when we were in office, goes on to state that we must ensure we can integrate services so that women and newborns can receive health care services close to home.

1130

You know what else it says? And maybe that's why this government is taking no action. It also says that we need to declare a moratorium on maternity care program closures in those communities where there are decisions being made. Certainly, Stevenson Memorial Hospital would qualify. If these recommendations had been implemented, if it wasn't sitting on the minister's desk, then the people in the Alliston community would have had support from the government, the \$1.4 million would have been provided, and we wouldn't be debating this resolution today.

The government has an opportunity to step up to the plate. We have a crisis not just in the Alliston community; we have a crisis throughout the province of Ontario. The reality is, we have a growing population and we need to respond to the concerns. More and more women throughout this province are currently unable to access the care they need, and there are certainly reasons for concern. We are seeing closures, such as the one that has happened at Stevenson Memorial Hospital, across the province, and that is reason for concern. We know that, unfortunately, the communities that are impacted by the closures are rural and northern communities.

That report and other reports also talk about the fact that when you have these closures in communities and women and their families are forced to travel distances for care, you are putting these women at enormous risk. I think my colleague has alluded to some of the situations that have occurred. When I was about to give birth to my first child, I was glad that I didn't have to go miles and miles and miles, because, I'll tell you, things happen pretty quickly. I was glad that the hospital was in my local community. If you take a look at the reports, they state that once you start to remove these birthing units and the obstetrical care further away from home, women are put at risk when they are required to travel longer, and we know that in this province, with our winters and our weather, it is potentially unsafe at times to travel by car. We need to take that into consideration.

We need to move forward. We need to recognize there is a crisis in the province of Ontario. We need to recognize that a panel report has been released; it is recommending changes. However, the government has not acted on the changes whatsoever. We need to take in this

province a woman-centred approach to maternity care. It is important that women have access to birthing units within their communities and that they can be attended by the maternity care provider of their choice. We need to always place the needs of the mother and the child at the centre of any care that we provide.

Today I strongly support the resolution that has been put forward by my colleague. It is really in the same vein as the recommendations coming out of the women's health council report, and that is that we need to put a moratorium on these closures of birthing units and the provision of obstetrical care in these smaller rural and northern communities. There are definitely advantages to making sure—in fact, it is recommended. Every report you look at talks about the need for the care to be provided as close to home as possible, and we need to do this. We need to recognize that maternity care is important. It is a priority, and it should be for all governments. We need to be developing a comprehensive provincial strategy. I hope that this member's resolution, which has been put on the table and which speaks not only to the situation in his community but the situation throughout the province of Ontario, will finally motivate this government to develop a strategy that would recognize the need to put women and their children at the centre of health care, a strategy that would ensure that they are able to deliver their children as close to home as possible and that recognizes that there are obstacles and safety risks if that is not allowed to happen.

I congratulate my colleague. He has worked hard. I have been in this Legislature since he has, since 1990. He has been a passionate advocate, and I'll tell you, to bring out more than 200 people from your community is remarkable. I want to congratulate and thank the people for being here, for speaking out and letting the government know that you want to make sure your children, your future generations, will have the opportunity to be born at Stevenson Memorial Hospital. Thank you for coming, and thank you to my colleague.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): It is a privilege and a pleasure to stand today to speak in support of this motion from my colleague from Simcoe–Grey.

First of all, I would like to thank the people who have taken the time, I'm sure, out of their very busy lives to come down here to the Legislature to see exactly what happens and perhaps how government does not work.

This is the second such motion today. Private members' business is an opportunity for a private member who cannot otherwise get something accomplished through the various machinations of government to come before the Legislature and put his or her case before colleagues, to try to indicate, usually to backbench members and members of the opposition, how the government in some way is not listening to the needs of his or her community.

I think the member from Simcoe–Grey has done an admirable job today in putting forward the need, and why there needs to be a birthing unit in Alliston. It seems to me rudimentary, it seems to me absolutely plain, that this

is something every community would want to have. I cannot understand why the government would not provide a facility to your community or, quite literally, any other community in this province that asks for something as simple and as basic in a hospital as a birthing unit.

What he is asking for today by government standards is probably one of the smallest amounts of money I've ever heard anyone ask for—\$1.4 million. From time to time there are people who ask for less, but in the grand scheme of a \$70-billion or \$80-billion amount of money that is spent in this province annually or in the small scheme of \$38 billion that is spent for health care in this province, \$1.4 million spread out over three years is pretty small potatoes.

As a private member, he has put forward this motion, and as a private member, his colleague the member from Burlington put forward a similar one about an hour ago, simply asking that their community be listened to and that they be granted what the rest of us in the province seem to take for granted. The reason he has had to do this is that he believes, and I believe all of you by your very presence here believe, that you are not getting your fair share from this government. It seems to me quite obvious that that's what this is about.

There is money galore for many things in this province. There is money galore for many hospitals. There is money galore for Magna International that's been talked about. There is money galore, we learned yesterday, for people to be handed out, willy-nilly; \$20 million to every group that seems at the last minute to not even put in an application, but get money anyway. Why isn't there money, I have to ask—and I have to ask on his behalf because it's my turn to speak—for the good people of your community to get a birthing unit?

For many years before I came to this place, as a municipal politician, as a mayor, as a megacity councillor, I served on the board of health of two communities. One of the things that was very apparent to me was that where money needed to be spent and was spent in my communities of East York and Toronto was in birthing units, because we had a policy through the board of health on low-birth-weight babies. We had a policy on giving the very best care to expectant mothers so that babies were born healthy. We had a policy on making sure they didn't smoke, they didn't drink, that they ate sufficient foods. We even had a policy of topping up welfare payments for those who didn't have enough money, to make sure they could have milk and protein so that when they were in the gestation period, those women would give the very best advantage to their child.

1140

I don't understand why this government thinks this is not a priority. They seem to find priorities everywhere else. They seem to find priorities when it comes to hip and knee replacement surgery. I'm not saying that's a bad thing; that's a priority for this government. But I have to ask, is it not a priority to make sure that each and every child is born in a safe environment, that each and every mother gives birth in a safe environment, and in

those cases where there are complications, there are trained people there at the time of birth and immediately after to look after the health of both the mother and the newborn child? It seems to me that's a far greater priority than hip and knee replacement surgery.

I'm sure I'm going to get some letters and e-mails when I say that, because there is of course a waiting list, and we have many people in this province who need that surgery, but always we need to look at who is in the greatest need. Who could possibly be in greater need than a young child who is born with complications, a young child who needs immediate service, a young child who needs to be born in a hospital, not in an ambulance, not at home—unless of course it's uncomplicated—and not in the back of a taxicab?

So I ask the government: Please find the priority. One point four million dollars is a very small amount of money. If you can find it for Magna International, and if Mr. Colle, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, can find it here, there and everywhere for groups that haven't even made an application, surely you must know that this need is one to be met. Budgets are all about priorities, and this should be your priority.

I have to question you. I ask you to ask yourself these two simple questions: Are the needs of the women and children and families in this and other communities less than those in communities like my own in Toronto? I have lived in this community my whole life. There are five major hospitals right down the street, within a couple of hundred metres of this location. I was born in one of them, at Women's College Hospital, several hundred metres from where I'm standing today. There were services then and there are services now for this great metropolitan place. But those of us who choose to live in smaller towns, those of us who have jobs in other locations, need and should expect the same kind of quality service that the rest of us here take for granted. What I have for myself, I want for all of you, and what I have for myself and my community should be vested in your community as well. Certainly for \$1.4 million, it can and should be there.

The second question I have for the government is: Would this not have been included in the minister's budget? I know my friend has talked about this many times in this House and I know that this issue has been raised. I'm very curious as to why it would not have been included in the budget. Why was the birthing unit for Alliston passed over when the Minister of Finance stood in his place and got up from his seat a few weeks ago and announced how he was spending gazillions of dollars on all kinds of things and saying he had priorities? Why was this not a priority? It's a pretty simple question.

I'm asking the members opposite—and two have spoken from the government side. They have not said they're going to vote for this and they have not said they're not going to vote for it, but they have spoken in terms which would cause me some concern. They have spoken about what the Conservatives did when they were in government. I'm tired of listening to that kind of stuff.

I'm tired of listening, every time there is a sensible question or a politician stands in this place, and the only answer is, "When you were in government, you did something." For people like me and like my colleague from Burlington who have never been in government, I think it's an idle statement to make. What I'm asking you to do is, first of all, to support this motion and then leave this place and impress upon the Minister of Health that he find the monies. We were able yesterday to find year-end funds for a whole broad range of things and we learned all about those yesterday. Certainly this is as deserving as or more deserving than some of those who received the funds yesterday.

I want to leave a few minutes for my colleague, but I would like to close by asking the members of this House to simply give this application the priority that it deserves. If ever, in my riding of Beaches–East York, I could bring out 200 people like you have brought out here today, I would know that this is an issue upon which my community was seized. I know that the people here have great expectations.

I hope they learn today that government can work. It can only work—not by my speaking or the member from Simcoe–Grey—when those who hold the purse strings, i.e., those in the cabinet, decide to loosen them. It can only work when the backbench of the Liberal government stands united and tells the minister that there is a priority that is not being met and that the money needs to be found.

It can only work when a government and a Premier understand that they have an obligation to you, the same obligation they have to everyone else in this province, to do what is best for all of us.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I'm pleased to stand today to speak to the resolution put forward by my colleague from Simcoe–Grey, and to congratulate him and thank him for all the hard work he has done on behalf of his community on this very important issue.

He has brought it to the Legislature through every means possible—petitions, questions, resolution, debate—a tireless effort he has made on behalf of his community, and I want to thank him for that. He has worked with community organizations, and I want to welcome all the people in the gallery here today. For over 200 people from a community to come forward is just outstanding. I praise Jim for the work he has done to create the plan to have the birthing unit reopened. He was first elected to the Legislature in 1990. It's clear from all the hard work that he has done—he's been re-elected four times—that he is a very strong advocate for his riding.

I'm pleased to support the resolution that was brought forward here—that of the Stevenson Memorial Hospital with the required \$1.4 million in new funding over the next three years so that it can reopen its birthing unit—and to emphasize to the government that it is a priority. You should put it in the budget. You should address it.

When you recklessly throw over \$20 million away at year-end spending—and here we have a community that

only requires \$1.4 million in new funding over the next three years for the birthing unit—you should be embarrassed that you have not addressed this situation, because you've heard about it for a long, long time.

I can speak as a registered nurse for over 20 years and the time I spent in hospitals, in my local hospital in Lindsay, how they had worked towards and got a new birthing unit, and how important it is for communities that women can get the care they need close to the communities they live in.

We live in rural ridings—winter conditions, treacherous roads—and you have to bring this down to the safety of people in Ontario. By ignoring this request—which is not over the top, it's practical; it's a member of provincial Parliament repeatedly telling you the needs of his community, something that could be done easily. That you haven't made that a priority is unexplainable.

He's had to come here for private members' public business on Thursday mornings to bring a resolution forward to you to deal with this, when it's a logical thing that you should've done.

I hope the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care does come here and I hope to see how he votes on this resolution today. This is just an embarrassment for this government. You put a health care tax on, an extra \$2-billion kitty. Is that money going to health care? Well, we have to question where that money is going. You did a tax grab to the people of Ontario, and the people of Alliston—are they getting better care for paying more money on their health care tax? I think not, when they're here. There are 200 people here today to say to you, the McGuinty government, "We are not getting better health care. You have not put our health care tax dollars, that you have taken out of our pockets, to work."

It is embarrassing. It just is embarrassing. There are over a million people in Ontario alone who don't have a family doctor—130,000 children. Are you addressing those needs? You're taking more money from them for the health care tax. Are you addressing those needs? Those are terrible statistics. The number of underserved areas has gone up dramatically since you've been in government. They peaked at 143 in June 2005—143 underserved communities in our province. What have you done to fill that doctor shortage? You could go on and on. I'm glad the member has brought this resolution here today because we need to highlight to the people of Ontario that you are not spending their tax dollars wisely.

1150

According to the piece by the Stevenson Memorial Hospital in the Alliston Herald on April 13, hospitals in small rural communities do not have enough births to provide the income expected by specialists such as obstetricians. The community hospitals have to give the specialists an income guarantee, meaning the hospital has to use operating funds to top up doctors' salaries if their fee-for-service income does not rise to the level of expectation in a certain amount of time. According to the Stevenson Memorial Hospital, this has cost the hospital hundreds of thousands of dollars in recent years.

Like I said, the government could have assisted that community in different means. It is not a large amount of money they are asking for when you look at the huge health care budget the government has and the dollars involved there. They're not asking for a huge amount, and they deserve to have a birthing unit in Alliston. The Women's Health Council—the issues brought forward by the Women's Health Council—is recommending that there be a moratorium on closures, that there be more assistance for women in communities. They shouldn't have to call a cab to go to another community in an emergency or put their family at risk of driving in treacherous conditions to go to a birthing centre. People in Alliston are so extremely upset, and they should be.

The member from Simcoe–Grey was quoted in a local newspaper as saying, “I am not backing down,” and today, true to his word, with this huge group of people here from his community supporting this resolution, he said that the residents in the area of Simcoe–Grey deserve to have their babies born in Alliston. He's been a great champion; we all know about it. The member from Beaches–East York also has spoken passionately about it. The critic from our party for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has spoken from her experience as minister, but as a mother also, on the importance of having a birthing unit close to home and the security that women need.

I thank the member from Simcoe–Grey for bringing this forward. I thank the member from Burlington for bringing her local health issue forward to the Legislature earlier today to highlight the needs of their communities and to try and force the government to act, and to act now. They should be embarrassed into acting.

I see the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has come into the room, so I'm sure he's been anxiously listening to the debate. We'll be very interested to see his response to both of these resolutions that have been brought before the Legislature today to increase the level of health care in the communities of Ontario. I thank the member from Simcoe–Grey again for bringing this forward and for the opportunity to speak in support of it this morning.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): It's a pleasure to speak in support of this bill. For all of those gathered here, I have to commend your show of support and concern for your community. It's wonderful and it's rarely seen here, so thank you.

I speak in support of the member from Simcoe–Grey. You have to know the frustration that has brought him to this point, the frustration for such a small amount of money over such a long period of time, to have to stand up in the House, to have to present a motion just to get what should be forthcoming without really much thought. That's the frustration we, on this side of the House, all feel right now with this government.

I was not here to hear some of the concerns. I did raise the fact that we're now in the 60-year anniversary of the introduction of the first medicare system in Saskatch-

ewan, which was introduced in 1947. I feel the spirit of Tommy Douglas upon this place and hope that inspires those across the aisle to do the right thing in this regard.

I also want to point out in relative terms how little this amount of money is. Perhaps those who are gathered here are not all aware of the fact that this is the government that voted themselves a 25% pay increase eight days before Christmas and just got another 2% on top of that. That is far more money over the next three years than what you're asking for here in this birthing unit for women and children, many of them at risk if they don't get it. There's a comparison for you. You don't even have to look at the \$50 million to Magna. But clearly, we see where this government has its priorities, and it's not with the women and children of this community—just to put that in perspective, as well.

Again, I come back to what makes us proud Ontarians and what makes us proud Canadians. When you go south of the border, it always comes down to those two wonderful aspects of Canadian and Ontarian life: medicare and funded public schools that you would want to send your children to and public secondary schools that you would want to send your children to, that don't cost you another mortgage on the house, the way they do for our neighbours south of the border where a third of their population are not covered by medicare or health care of any sort.

Here we see an instance of frustration, an instance of where it has had to come to the floor of the House. You've had to drive many miles to sit in this gallery to listen to two hours of this, just to get such a paltry sum of money extended to such an absolutely necessary service. This government should be ashamed. They certainly didn't run on that platform. They certainly didn't run on a platform of increasing privatization of the health care system and not fully funding institutions of health, hospitals and others. They certainly didn't run on that. That wasn't the promise we heard in 2003. Of course, we heard a lot in 2003 that we haven't seen delivered in this House.

Here is one instance where we could call upon everyone to vote with their hearts and not along partisan lines. There are many here who sit in the back benches of the Liberal Party, who know what it's like to be the MPP in a smaller community and to answer to people who don't have 200 members of their community sitting here today, but who can appreciate what went into this action and what went into this motion, and can vote not along partisan lines but with their hearts, minds and souls, and say yes to what is clearly a very small request for a very important service.

So absolutely, I think that we should all in this House support this motion. It's an unfortunate set of circumstances that have brought us to this moment where we have to talk about such a paltry sum in the House, but that we have; so be it. Let's do the right thing.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Simcoe–Grey has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Wilson: Again, I want to thank, as my colleagues have very kindly thanked, the over 200 people who have come down from Alliston, New Tecumseth, Essa and Adjala-Tosorontio and Innisfil—there are some people here from Innisfil. Some people have taken time out of their work here in Toronto to come over today, too. I want to thank the midwives who are here, and the doctors, physicians, nurses and staff at our hospital who do good work every day.

I'm very, very pleased that the Minister of Health has joined us this morning. I have tried, as members have pointed out, everything possible to get \$1.5 million out of you. This is a hard figure, George; this isn't a fudged one. So many other people ask for the moon and meet you halfway.

A study has been done. We are waiting. I do thank you for appointing Jessica Hill, who was my assistant deputy minister when I was Minister of Health, and went on to be a deputy minister in the children's ministry. She is highly respected. I thank the government for appointing the provincial convenor. Her report will come soon. I hope you will take her report, along with the report done that was by the community advisory committee, a committee of the hospital board that was ably chaired by Sylvia Biffis, and consider our request.

All we're asking is that you give us a chance. Give us a chance to develop the best birthing unit in Ontario. Kate Mooij just reminded me with a note that she sent down from the gallery—and she's our physician recruiter at Stevenson Memorial Hospital—that we have eight obstetricians waiting to be interviewed. So I say to the member for Northumberland, who said it must be a case of not having enough doctors around, that we have eight who want to come to Alliston.

Alliston is the potato capital of Ontario. With the greenbelt now in place, it is the place of choice for people to move to, out of Toronto and into south Simcoe and the Alliston area. Honda is expanding and creating another 1,200 jobs. There are over 7,000 people who work in and around that plant. They are young families. They are in their baby years. They want to have their babies born in Alliston, and their babies deserve to be born in Alliston.

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

JOSEPH BRANT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We will first deal with ballot item number 79, which stands in the name of Mrs. Savoline.

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

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will call in the members after we've dealt with the second ballot item.

STEVENSON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We will now deal with the second ballot item that has been debated this morning.

Mr. Wilson has moved private member's notice of motion number 55, ballot item number 1. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1201 to 1206.

JOSEPH BRANT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mrs. Savoline has moved private member's notice of motion number 57. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

DiNovo, Cheri	Miller, Norm	Savoline, Joyce
Elliott, Christine	Munro, Julia	Scott, Laurie
Ferreira, Paul	O'Toole, John	Sterling, Norman W.
Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Wilson, Jim
Klees, Frank	Prue, Michael	Witmer, Elizabeth
Kormos, Peter	Runciman, Robert W.	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed to the motion, please rise.

Nays

Balkissoon, Bas	Kwinter, Monte	Ramal, Khalil
Delaney, Bob	McMeekin, Ted	Rinaldi, Lou
Dhillon, Vic	Milloy, John	Ruprecht, Tony
Duguid, Brad	Mitchell, Carol	Sandals, Liz
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Sergio, Mario
Jeffrey, Linda	Qadri, Shafiq	Smitherman, George

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 17; the nays are 18.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

I will now direct the Sergeant at Arms to open the doors for 30 seconds.

STEVENSON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Wilson has moved private member's resolution number 55. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

DiNovo, Cheri	Miller, Norm	Savoline, Joyce
Elliott, Christine	Munro, Julia	Scott, Laurie
Ferreira, Paul	O'Toole, John	Sterling, Norman W.
Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Wilson, Jim
Klees, Frank	Prue, Michael	Witmer, Elizabeth
Kormos, Peter	Runciman, Robert W.	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed to the motion, please rise.

Nays

Balkissoon, Bas	Kwinter, Monte	Ramal, Khalil
Delaney, Bob	McMeekin, Ted	Rinaldi, Lou
Dhillon, Vic	Milloy, John	Ruprecht, Tony
Duguid, Brad	Mitchell, Carol	Sandals, Liz
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Sergio, Mario
Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq	Smitherman, George

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):
The ayes are 17; the nays are 18.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

All matters relating to private members' public business having now been completed, I do now leave the chair, and this House will resume at 1:30 p.m.

The House recessed from 1210 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke):
I want to set the record straight on a couple of things with regard to funding for the Phoenix Centre for children's mental health in my riding and some statements the Minister of Children and Youth Services has tried to take credit for, and also for solving this crisis.

For months we have been looking for money for this centre, and the minister turned it down repeatedly. I want to read her quote from the Ottawa Citizen, citing the fact that she felt the federal government should pay for it: "The federal government needs to understand that the province of Ontario cannot pick up the tab for the impact of that effort on the families of military personnel." She denied the funding on that basis.

It went to the Ombudsman, and I want to read what the Ombudsman said: "It is absolutely undeniable, indisputable, that the provincial government is solely responsible for providing mental health services to children of members of the Canadian Forces in Petawawa."

Then the government ponied up with some money, but the minister tried to take some credit for it and said she brokered that with the federal government.

I want to read what he said in his report as well: "The federal government I found to be quite reasonably disposed to speak to the province, but their phone never rang. The Minister of Children and Youth Services would say in the House ... in letters that she wrote, 'Address your concerns to the federal government' ... but there was no effort by the ministry to contact the federal government and say, 'Can you guys cough up some cash?'"

It is a shame—it is reprehensible, in fact—that it took the Ombudsman to get this government to act and stop victimizing the children of the Canadian Forces base in my riding.

GRAPE AND WINE INDUSTRY

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): I just want the let everybody in the Legislature and beyond know that our world-class wine industry has just become that much more world-class and cutting-edge with some tremendous leadership, vision and foresight. Yesterday the Wine Council of Ontario launched Sustainable Wine-making Ontario, the first program of its kind in Canada, in an effort to preserve and protect the environment.

It is a comprehensive program which will be a great asset for wineries in helping them with continuous improvement in sustainability of our environment. They have been working on this for three years now, and there is some tremendous foresight that's gone into this. The program will not only cover the areas of winemaking, but also grape-growing and winery hospitality.

The goals of the program include improvements in energy use per unit of production, decreases in water use, improved management in waste water and more efficient use of materials throughout the businesses. Long-term objectives include measuring improvements in air quality, water quality, waste water management, natural resource management, resource use and management of water resources including watershed management.

This is all tremendous forward thinking, and I applaud the Wine Council of Ontario in their actions. We've talked for decades about sustainable development and sustainability. It's programs like this that actually turn this into a reality for us and think about the future. Our government has tremendous faith in the future of that industry, proven by our greenbelt and also by the new wine secretariat, which is being chaired by our own dean of the Legislature, Minister Jim Bradley.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): Yesterday, we learned that the Liberals have been handing out hundreds of thousands of dollars from a Ministry of Citizenship slush fund, with no accountability to the taxpayers. The funding was given out at the behest of the federal Liberal MP for Beaches–East York. The recipient group is headed up by her riding association vice-president.

The minister tells us that "there isn't time" at the end of the year to seek out proposals from alternate groups. Of course there isn't time if you deliberately set up a slush fund to give out money at the end of the year.

How can we have confidence in a program with no standards and no accountability? Taxpayers deserve to know that their money is spent responsibly. They want to know that the government is making its decisions in a fair and impartial way. If this government wants to help immigrants build new lives in Canada, it must set clear standards and outcomes so we can be confident that the money will actually help.

What is clear is that this minister puts the re-election of Liberals ahead of helping new immigrants. A John

Tory government will put helping new immigrants and all Ontarians first.

POVERTY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): The Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition is meeting as we speak in a day-long conference. I want to read some of their statements about the McGuinty government:

“Despite a recent budget promising anti-poverty measures, Ontario’s poorest citizens remain worse off now than when the McGuinty government was elected in 2003. Nearly half a million Ontario children are growing up poor. Meanwhile hunger is widespread, with food banks serving 330,000 Ontarians each month. Many are working people whose low wages trap them in poverty....

“The facts, outlined in *Lives Still in the Balance*,” their report, “are disturbing. Combining up-to-date analysis from leading anti-poverty advocates and academic analysts with first-hand accounts from low-income people, the book sketches a colossal social deficit of poverty, hunger and homelessness....

“‘We chose the book’s title because people’s lives are at stake,’ says editor Murray MacAdam. ‘Why does our wealthy province tolerate allowing one citizen in six to live in poverty? Where are our values? Will the government, and the opposition parties, develop and promote a credible anti-poverty agenda?’”

They are saying that as we speak, and they are meeting—faith leaders across the faith spectrum who are sorely disappointed in the outcome of all the promises that Dalton McGuinty and his government made.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I rise in the House today to highlight the leader of the official opposition’s record on health care and the legacy of cuts, damage and neglect his party left on our health care system.

Our government is putting more money and resources into our health care system, and we’ve been moving forward with our plan to revitalize Ontario’s health care system.

The previous government left our health care system in ruin, downloading funding for public health on to local property taxpayers and voting against our legislation, the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, which bans two-tier health care. The leader of the official opposition has promised that he will take \$2.5 billion out of the health care system and then work to implement for-profit, private health care. That is unacceptable, and we will not let this happen.

The McGuinty government has already greatly increased Ontario’s spending on public health. With our recent budget, funding to our public health care system is up by \$8.5 billion, or 29%, since we took office. We’ve invested \$156 million for three new childhood vaccines

and are uploading 75% of the cost of public health from municipalities to the province. We have also invested \$114 million to help the William Osler Health Centre get ready to open its doors this fall. I’m incredibly excited about this new project for Brampton and what it means for the people of my riding.

We know there’s more to do, but our public health care system is beginning to flourish under the McGuinty government, and we won’t let the Leader of the Opposition turn back the clock on our progress.

GOVERNMENT’S RECORD

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): We have recently learned that this government is using political slush funds to try to keep themselves afloat. Once again they are demonstrating a complete lack of integrity. Let’s remember who these people are:

—The Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship, who was the first member in history to be formally reprimanded by the Integrity Commissioner for breaching the Members’ Integrity Act. What did the Premier do? Nothing.

—The Minister of Children and Youth Services, who allowed money to be spent for fancy SUVs and trips instead of children, and who only dealt with the problem when she was caught by the auditor. What did the Premier do? Nothing.

—The Minister of Health Promotion, who gave away his \$26.4-million slush fund and never gave municipalities a chance to apply, so most of them were never even considered. What did the Premier do? Nothing.

—Don’t forget the minister responsible for lotteries, who found out about a \$100-million fraud and, instead of taking action to fix the problem, tried to cover it up. What did the Premier do? Nothing.

—And now we have the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, who gave away \$250,000 to an organization with Liberal ties without an application process, without letting anyone else apply for the money. What did the Premier do? Nothing.

When will the Premier start holding his ministers accountable? I think the time is now.

1340

ONTARIO COACHES WEEK

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I rise today to celebrate and recognize Ontario’s 300,000 community sports coaches. April 14 through April 21 has been designated as Ontario Coaches Week, an initiative launched by the Coaches Association of Ontario with the support of both the province of Ontario and the government of Canada.

During Ontario Coaches Week, close to 1,000 men and women will attend clinics and workshops across Ontario to develop their skills and learn more about coaching young people and becoming better coaches. Coaching workshops will be held in 40 different communities, like

Kenora, Port Hope, Hawkesbury and Grand Bend. A number of Ontario's First Nations communities will be opening up free coaching education opportunities in places like Constance Lake, Christian Island and Alderville.

The goal of the week is to help bring quality sport programs to thousands of children by inspiring more Ontarians to take up coaching as their volunteer activity. Good coaches can positively influence a child's self-confidence and attitude toward sport, fitness and health as a life-long pursuit.

Present in the House during my statement are the following members of the coaches association: Susan Kitchen, Jessica Taggio, Jamie Beblow, Mike Naylor and Faye Blackwood. Perhaps members could welcome them to the House.

COAL-FIRED GENERATING STATIONS

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): I rise in the House today to talk about John Tory's latest scheme. It's about power, and frankly, I'm shocked. It's now clear that the Leader of the Opposition has run out of steam with his stale ideas, and Ontarians deserve to know more.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

Mrs. Mitchell: John Tory is pro-coal.

Interjections.

Mrs. Mitchell: Unfortunately for Ontarians, his ideas are stuck in the past. John Tory and the Conservative caucus continue to defend dirty air and false science.

Last night, the member for more coal finally uttered the words the rest of us knew he wanted to say for quite some time. John Tory wants to spend more and get less by wasting tax dollars on scrubbers that don't work.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The member tends to insist on calling the Leader of the Opposition by name, as opposed to "Leader of the Opposition."

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you for the reminder. I remind all members—all members.

The member for Huron–Bruce.

Mrs. Mitchell: The science is clear: Scrubbers don't work. The Leader of the Opposition has obviously been listening to his caucus colleagues, who all voted against Kyoto in this Legislature. Under the previous government, coal use increased 127% and harmful emissions from coal plants increased by 120%.

The details are foggy, but one thing is clear: The McGuinty government has a balanced plan and we will ensure that the people have a steady supply of clean, affordable power that tackles climate change and smog. We are the only party committed to—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): I rise today to talk about nuclear energy and the Leader of the Oppo-

sition's reckless new plan to rush environmental safeguards and build more nuclear power plants in secret locations.

Interjections.

Mr. Fonseca: Last night John Tory revealed, "We need nuclear; we need more than they are saying we need." The public deserves to know: Where does he plan to put these new nuclear plants? Orangeville, Renfrew, Lanark, Haliburton or maybe all of the above? And let's not forget the people of Mississauga, who deserve to know where Tim Peterson and John Tory would build new nuclear plants.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member, just take your seat for a moment. The clock is stopped, so you'll get your time, and I am sure the members will sit and listen, and give you the floor.

The member for Mississauga East.

Mr. Fonseca: Let's not forget that the people of Mississauga deserve to know where Tim Peterson and John Tory would build these new nuclear plants. It sounds to me like the Tories are pitching for a new nuclear plant in Mississauga. I know the people in my community don't want one there, and neither do I.

Interjections.

Mr. Fonseca: Tim Peterson and John Tory need to come clean. It's the least they can do. John Tory has an outdated, shoot-from-the-hip approach to energy. It's reckless, unworkable and irresponsible.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: I thought Thursdays were quiet days around here, so let's try to keep it that way.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): This week I had the pleasure to address the delegates at the annual conference of the Industrial Accident Prevention Association, and the annual conference of the International Association of Labour Inspection. IAPA's conference is one of the most important annual health and safety conferences in Canada. The added presence this year of the International Association of Labour Inspection's conference is of particular importance. It was Ontario's record of achievement in the field of workplace health and safety that attracted the association to hold its conference here. It's the first time that this conference has ever been held in North America. Here in Toronto this week, there are delegates from 50 countries around the world.

I had the opportunity to share with the participants some important news about workplace injury prevention and cost avoidance for businesses here in the province of Ontario. In less than three years, there have been 30,000

fewer lost-time injuries to Ontario workers than there would have been had lost-time injury rates remained constant.

This means 30,000 fewer cases of human suffering. It means that 30,000 families have not had to see their loved ones injured or possibly even permanently disabled or, worse, killed on the job. Stop and think about this for a moment. I'm talking about 30,000 people. That's equal to about the population of Orillia. It means that Ontario businesses have avoided over \$2 billion in costs associated with workplace injuries. These costs include employee replacement, injury investigation, overtime pay for other employees and reduced productivity due to the loss of a skilled employee.

Our goal, which was announced in July of 2004, is to reduce lost-time injuries by 20% in this province. We said we would do this through a comprehensive, integrated health and safety strategy. The strategy would use education, training, legislation, regulation and enforcement. Most importantly, it would encompass all of our health and safety partners. Our goal is that by 2008 in this province, there will be 20,000 fewer lost-time injuries per year in Ontario than otherwise would have occurred had lost-time injury rates remained consistent, and that this reduced level will be maintained thereafter.

I'm here to tell you today that we are succeeding. In 2006 alone, more than 15,000 injuries in our workplaces were avoided. This is an achievement that we all should be proud of. Our workplace health and safety strategy is saving thousands of workers the pain and suffering of serious workplace injuries.

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Peters: I hear a member mocking 15,000 fewer injuries. How disrespectful, Speaker. How very disrespectful.

With fewer accidents, employers are benefiting from reduced production losses. Employers are benefiting from lower retraining costs. Employers are benefiting from less equipment damage and other cost avoidance savings.

One key component of this strategy is our high-risk workplace initiative. The initiative focuses on workplaces with the highest injury rates and the highest costs. When we launched this initiative in July of 2004, these firms represented just 2% of all firms insured by the WSIB, but that 2% represented 10% of all lost-time injuries. Worse yet, that 2% represented 21% of the injury costs in the province of Ontario.

1350

Our initiative assists and educates people in these workplaces about healthier and safer work practices. At the same time, though, we continue to give priority to investigating workplace fatalities, critical injuries, work refusals, work stoppages and immediate hazards. I am pleased to report that since 2004, 11,000 firms in this province have improved their health and safety record.

Another key element is our last-chance program. In 2005, our partners, the safe work associations, were challenged to work with the Ministry of Labour by providing

5,000 workplaces with a last chance to voluntarily work to improve their health and safety records. I want to take this opportunity to thank the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board and all of our 12 safe work associations that rose to that challenge, because the work that I am describing depends on partnerships and co-operation: partnerships between both business and labour. A good many companies have stepped forward and have taken significant steps on their own to improve their health and safety record. We are pleased to see their progress, and we commend them for the progress they have made.

Speaker, we have to remember the history in this province. The NDP cut health and safety inspectors, the Conservatives cut health and safety inspectors: a terrible track record; no commitment to looking after and protecting our workers in this province—cuts by the NDP and cuts by the Tories. But I want to say that our ministry staff and our dedicated inspectors deserve a lot of credit for our success, because when we launched this high-risk initiative, we set about not cutting inspectors, but adding inspectors to better protect people in this province. We moved forward in hiring 200 additional health and safety inspectors, nearly doubling their ranks. All of those 200 are now on the job.

Our government is working hard to build a culture of prevention in Ontario, and I am proud to say that we're seeing dramatic results. Those dramatic results mean better workplace health and safety, and it is good news for families in the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Response?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): As perhaps one of the few members, if not the only member, of the assembly who suffered a very serious industrial accident many years ago, I have to emphasize my appreciation of the importance of workplace safety and the involvement of the Ministry of Labour in ensuring that the rules of the province are complied with and that there is indeed a spirit of partnership in working together with both labour and management and the owners of businesses, large and small.

However, I think perhaps the minister is patting himself on the back a little too much in terms of credit for the reduction of workplace accidents over the last two and a half years. I think there has to be, Mr. Speaker, in the minds of most fair-minded people, a correlation between the reduction in workplace accidents and the significant loss of manufacturing jobs in this province. In the past two and a half years, we have witnessed close to 130,000 manufacturing jobs lost, and manufacturing jobs lost equals reduced workplace accidents. That's a reality. I think you could juxtapose those job losses with the numbers which the minister is talking about, and it's not all that much to rave about in terms of accomplishment.

He talks about partnerships, and certainly in the small business community, I am not hearing much in my own riding, my own area, about partnerships; in fact, quite the opposite. There is not an effort to work together with many of the small businesses and those who are facing

real challenges in the economic climate that Ontario is in at the moment. In fact, warnings or working together on a partnership kind of basis is not what we're hearing about back in many of our ridings. The ministry seems to take great glee in every day posting and sending us e-mails with huge fines for small businesses in this province—\$75,000 to a small construction firm, that sort of thing—without any warnings or any advice. Business is having a very difficult time in this province, and this can only work if we do find ways to work together. Certainly, my experiences over the years in manufacturing, as a former union president as well—

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): A union boss.

Mr. Runciman: I don't talk about that too often, but this is certainly an area where I have significant experience, and it's unfortunate, I think, the approach this government is taking.

When we look at what's happening in my region of the province, and I'll talk about that specifically in terms of manufacturing job losses, we have 1,200 at Domtar in Cornwall alone; Chesterville losing the Nestlé plant, 300 jobs; Gananoque, in my riding, just announcing the Collins and Aikman plant closing, 125 to 130 jobs; in Prescott, Hathaway shirts—the history of Hathaway shirts in Prescott lost forever under the reign of the McGuinty Liberal government; and most recently, the Hershey plant in Smiths Falls. We know what a significant part of eastern Ontario the Hershey plant is, not just in terms of the 500 jobs, but drawing tourists to our part of the province, 400,000 to 500,000 visitors who annually visit the Hershey plant to watch the chocolate-making operations. It also supplies something significant in terms of a destination market for dairy producers in our part of the province, significant quantities of milk that have been destined for that Hershey plant, and that market is now lost.

Those are the kinds of things that have impacted in terms of the number of injuries, and you can extrapolate this across the province, especially in rural small-city Ontario. The manufacturing sector and the good jobs that go with it are being hollowed out under this government, and they don't seem to have any kind of plan. We've asked them for a plan. They agreed to develop a plan two years ago, and nothing happened. We're still seeing these almost weekly announcements of job losses in the province.

We've proposed a couple of things: an eastern Ontario secretariat, which would give eastern Ontario a window into government, lodged within the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade—absolutely nothing. One of my colleagues has proposed an eastern Ontario prosperity fund. What's happened in regard to that? Absolutely nothing.

We now have legislation before us, Bill 69, which creates a super-inspector. This is the sort of thing where, in terms of co-operation and help in making sure that we do have safe workplace environments in this province, this Liberal government is doing very little indeed.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I can certainly tell you that New Democrats are very concerned about the incidences of injuries in the workplace of workers in this province. We think the government can do a heck of a lot better job. In fact, a number of private members' bills have been put on the agenda here in this House by members of the New Democratic Party caucus.

I'm going to start with the one by my friend and colleague from the Nickel Belt riding. What she has done is put in a bill that talks about the 33,000 needlestick injuries that occur in Ontario on an annual basis. Members of this House know that these injuries are taking place day after day after day in our hospitals and in our health care sector, and each needlestick injury on average costs the health care sector \$2,000 in testing and treatment. That doesn't count any of the costs for the suffering of families or for the health care that's required for those people who are injured after they contract serious disease as a result of these needlestick injuries. The fact of the matter is that people don't need to suffer from needlestick injuries in this day and age, because there are safety-engineered medical devices that reduce the injuries and create a more safe environment for workers in the health care sector. We think this government needs to move on that issue.

People in this Legislature should know that the Toronto East General Hospital did a detailed audit of sharps-related injuries in the workplace and it showed an urgent need for best practices to deal with this serious health and safety issue. As a matter of fact, the statistics show that injuries from sharps were reduced 20% in the first year. They went down to having only eight injuries in 2004—only eight. So not only were these injuries reduced, but so were the costs, of course, for these needlestick injuries.

We know that this government has before it an opportunity, right now, today, to pass the member from Nickel Belt's bill, Bill 30, the Safe Needles Save Lives Act, right now.

1400

We also know that the member from Niagara Centre has a bill on the table to deal with some of the recommendations from the late Archie Campbell, the judge who gave us the SARS report, talking about masks in the hospital and health care sectors and the fact that we need to equip health care workers with masks to prevent them from contracting communicable diseases.

We also have Bill 45, my own workplace harassment bill, which could help reduce injuries in the workplace from harassment of workers. We also know there is a significant dearth of commitment by this government to even cover workers in Ontario for workers' compensation, for example. Some 30% of workplaces in this province are not even covered by WSIB. This government has the Brock Smith report, which that party when in government produced, that says there is no reason not to make sure that all workers in Ontario are covered by WSIB.

I can continue on. There is a significant request on this minister's plate right now from health and safety activists

around making serious regulation inclusions on repetitive strain injuries or musculoskeletal disorders. This minister knows very well that we need to have real regulations that are really enforceable to prevent musculoskeletal injuries in the workplace. That would be a good step for this minister to take. Instead, what does he do? When workers are injured, he doesn't even appropriately make sure that they're being compensated.

I think about Bill 111 and the firefighters who should be having presumptive legislation for the illnesses and cancers they contract on the job.

For injured workers who are suffering in this province and have been suffering under a reduced income for decades and decades, what do they get? They get crumbs, crumbs, crumbs—crumbs that have a stale date on them, because the crumbs they get only last until 2009 when they have to come begging, cap in hand, once again—one of the things they want to put an end to in this province. But no, this minister gives them a little bit of hope that maybe might get him through the next election, but injured workers know that what they wanted was not delivered by this minister, and there's simply no doubt about it.

The bottom line is this: Yes, New Democrats are pleased when there are initiatives that reduce the number of injuries in the workplace, but you know what? What that minister needs to do is listen, because we just went through a process at committee, and he was told by the Ontario Federation of Labour and other stakeholders that in more than 50% of workplaces in Ontario, joint health and safety committees with trained worker reps don't even exist. So the committees that he is supposed to be in charge of to make sure injuries aren't happening don't even exist. It's unacceptable, and he has a lot of work to do.

VISITORS

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: I rise on a point of order and ask your indulgence to introduce some very important people who have joined us in the chamber today. These are Dr. Warde and others from the University Health Network, especially representing Princess Margaret Hospital; Dr. Paolo De Paoli from the Centro di Riferimento Oncologico, Aviano, Italy; and Mr. Ezio Beltrame, a representative of the Italian government; and that region's health minister. He is here as well today.

They are here to sign a memorandum of understanding between two great institutions, one in Aviano, Italy, and the other here at Princess Margaret, to co-operate on cancer care research. Two others who have also joined us in the House are Mr. Primo De Luca and Mr. Julian Fantino, both organizers of this great signing today. Welcome to the House.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: I would like to welcome Mr. George

Marcello, who is the founder of the Step by Step Organ Transplant Association. He is joined by his brother Sam Marcello and friends William Adie and Nicolas Severino. They are here to join us for the public hearings on Bill 67 later on this afternoon.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Members, I would like to draw to your attention that today is the last day for this energetic, dedicated, bright group of pages. So let's give them our heartfelt thanks for their service over the past few weeks.

Applause.

VISITORS

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I do beg your indulgence. While we're speaking about pages, I just want to point out to you and welcome the parents of page Alyssa Surani, who are joining us today: her father, Nizor Surani, and her mother, Farah Surani; and her brother, Aly Surani.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Welcome, and thank you to the pages.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. The Legislature heard yesterday about your so-called year-end reinvestment fund which permits you to hand out millions of taxpayers' dollars. The real question with any of these funds when questions are asked here is about accountability. It's our job—all of us here, but the opposition in particular, I think—to ensure that public money is spent with proper controls.

Yesterday you were asked for the application form for this fund so that members generally and members on this side of the House—and the media and the public—could let their constituents know how to apply for funding for this kind of thing, but we haven't yet received it. Are you prepared to table for us in this House this afternoon the application form for the year-end reinvestment fund so that we can all see how that is set up and how people can go about applying?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): During the course of the year, I, along with my staff, am in contact with hundreds of organizations, community organizations right across the province, that are involved in diversity and in multiculturalism. They continually bring forward needs and they try to identify these needs to us. This is an ongoing process that is brought forward to my ministry.

Mr. Tory: This is kind of the point here. The minister has just said that he is in contact with hundreds of groups, and I just counted—because the Premier referred all of us yesterday to the website and we went there—and in fact 31 groups got money. Without calling into question any of those groups or who they are, 31 got money, out of the hundreds that you talked to. What we're really after here is the process pursuant to which you decided how the 31 groups got the money out of the hundreds that you say are in touch with you.

Yesterday in your scrum you were a bit more expansive than you just were here. You basically said:

Step 1: The minister has a meeting with a group that's arranged—in this case, the application that was under discussion yesterday, by a Liberal MP, a former Chrétien cabinet minister.

Step 2, which is quite extraordinary: You get a call from the office of the Minister of Finance to say that they have so much money that they can't possibly spend it all. They've looked after all the kids with autism, all the farmers and all hospital emergency rooms, and they need your help to shovel it out the door.

Step 3: You go to the cheque-printing machine in your office, print off a cheque and hand it out.

If that's the process, then stand up and—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The question has been asked. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: The leader of the official opposition knows that there are many demands, that there are many needs throughout Ontario in our diverse communities. He knows that.

Again, the principles are: We want to encourage Ontario's diversity and inclusivity. We want to encourage integration. We want to foster volunteerism and community building. We want to celebrate our culture, our heritage. Those are the principles that we base our decisions on in trying to help many groups. Obviously, we can't help everybody.

Mr. Tory: There is not a member on any side of this House that disagrees with any of that. What we're trying to find out is simply this. We are here as the safeguards, as the trustees, for the taxpayers' money. People worked hard to earn these millions of dollars that you have the responsibility for handing out.

You yourself said this afternoon—you just said—that you have contact with hundreds of groups. I believe that. People call me as well. The problem is, I don't know how to get involved in this process that resulted in 31 of these groups getting this money at the end of the year in a mad rush.

You said yesterday, to the media and others, that there were criteria that had to be met in order to get this money. That sounds reasonable. That sounds as it should be. But when we called your office to ask for a set of the criteria, a piece of paper saying, "How do you get the taxpayers' money? How do you apply?" we were told that you wouldn't give it to us. What we want to know is about basic accountability. Will you give us the list of the criteria by which you decided these groups should get the

money and not all of the other ones? That's all we're asking.

1410

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, there are many needs in our diverse communities within our wider volunteer community. We try to ensure that their needs are met. We can't meet them all. But, during the course of the year, many of these outstanding needs are identified to us, to members. If they're identified to members across there, I welcome any member to bring forward an identified need. My door has always been open for that.

We try to do the best we can to invest in those hard-working, community-based organizations that have never been funded for the most part. We are trying to invest in their hard work and in what they've been contributing without help in the past. We try to invest in those excellent, community-based organizations.

The Deputy Speaker: New question.

Mr. Tory: Again to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration: The fact is that I think we'd probably all agree that all of these hundreds of groups who approach you are hard-working community organizations that are deserving of some consideration. The question here comes down to just some basic accountability. Those who get the money should probably know on the basis upon which they won. But, probably more importantly, those who didn't get the money should know perhaps why they didn't. More important than all of that, the public should know that you have reasonable procedures and processes in place such that they know how you decided that the 31 got the money and the several hundred others you referred to didn't. It's about basic accountability. Before, it seems, you had seen any form or any paperwork or anything, you have given these people money, by your own admission. It's like they won the lottery before they even bought a ticket.

My question is this: Would you provide this House with a copy of the list of groups who asked for money, the forms that were filled out by those groups and the basis upon which you made your decisions, so everybody can see how people won and how they lost? They're all good groups. We just want—

The Deputy Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: It's unfortunate that you characterize this as some kind of winning by these groups. Many of these organizations, like the Afghan Women's Association, have been working diligently, with hardly any resources, serving battered refugee women who are here, and they have approached governments of all stripes for help. We have given them some help. That's the kind of organization we help. We think they're deserving, they're hard-working and they're serving a very needy community in Ontario. Women who have come from Afghanistan are trying to make a living here.

Mr. Tory: You are missing the point. Everybody in this House, without exception, agrees, I'm sure, that the Afghan women are working hard and are deserving of support. But you're implying by that very answer that all

of the other hundreds of groups—you said today it was hundreds of groups who've asked you for money—obviously aren't as deserving. So all we're saying is, could you help us by showing the taxpayers and showing us—especially in light of the fact that one of the groups that got money has a lot of ties to the Liberal Party—the basis upon which you picked the 31 groups? You're saying there were criteria. Yesterday you implied there were forms that were filled out. There was a process that people went through. We're just asking, on behalf of the taxpayers who have the right to see how their money was spent, that you show us the forms, show us the process and explain to us how you made the decision, because we're talking about millions of taxpayers' dollars and a lot of people who didn't get the money who would like to know why. Would you share that information with us so we can see that it was dealt with fairly, appropriately and responsibly?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, these are organizations that help to meet newcomer needs, that are culturally inclusive. These are organizations that foster community building, volunteerism and cultural integration. These are the principles that we base our assessment on. There are many deserving organizations. They come to all ministers; they come to you. We do our best to try to meet some of these identified needs when we can.

Mr. Tory: The minister says he does his best at picking. Yesterday, when he was talking about what his best was, he said that the reason there is no list, the reason there is no process, the reason they got a cheque, in some cases it seems, before they even asked for one, is because there isn't time to do all that because it's the end of the year and the Minister of Finance has said, "Let's blow as many millions out the door as we can before the end of the year." God forbid that you might actually take some care in how you spend the money.

What we're trying to get at here is that if it isn't the real answer that there isn't time and you just rushed it out the door based on whomever—you picked the names out of a hat or you picked the ones you thought in your own mind were best—just tell us that. All we're trying to get at is, when it involves millions of taxpayers' dollars, the taxpayers have the right to expect better than for you to say that either there isn't time to be careful or you just didn't do anything to be careful. Please tell us what process you followed. Please show us the paperwork so we can see how you decided. It's millions of dollars of taxpayers' money. Will you please tell us how you decided?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, over the months and years, many organizations, many community advocates cry out for help from our government. They have never had resources from any level of government, and they are associated with many of our hard-working newcomer communities that have been ignored. What we try to do is help them, based perhaps on an organization that is identified as being in one of the 13 communities that are high-risk, where there's a lot of concentration of newcomers, where there's a need to invest in those areas in

the GTA or maybe in Windsor, where there are newcomers. Those are the basic principles we work on. They don't come all at once; they've been ongoing demands. Some have never been listened to for months or years. We try to listen to them.

The Deputy Speaker: New question.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question again is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Yesterday, we heard about how you gave a huge sum of cash to a Liberal-friendly organization with no due diligence, no process, no criteria, no way other groups could apply, no transparency and no accountability. Today, we learn that when it comes to this kind of shady Liberal behaviour, the Bangladeshi community is not the only victim.

Minister, can you tell this House why, 13 months ago, you, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, gave \$200,000 to an organization registered as an animal protection agency?

Hon. Mr. Colle: I'm not sure what the member is referring to, but again, we are constantly trying to help all communities if they're in need, if they meet the diversity necessity, if they meet the volunteer component—building in communities. Those are the kinds of needs we try to assess.

Mr. Prue: Minister, let me refresh your memory. On March 26, 2006, the Iranian-Canadian Community Centre received \$200,000 from your Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration to supposedly help new Canadians. We checked with Canada Customs and Revenue Agency today and found out that this group registered as a charity on March 1, 2006, just three weeks before you cut the cheque. What's worse, the group wasn't registered to help new Canadians; it was registered as an animal protection agency. And what's worse is that if you look for an actual community centre, you'll be disappointed, because the address on the registration form is the office of one David Farmani, president, Richmond Hill provincial Liberals. Explain that.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: There are hard-working newcomers to Canada from Iran. A growing number of immigrants are coming from Iran and settling in Ontario. We are trying to do our best to ensure that those Iranians who have come to Ontario are given the support they need to feel welcome and integrated in Ontario—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, I can't hear the response. Minister, is your response finished?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Final supplementary.

1420

Mr. Prue: Iranian-Canadians don't buy this. They are outraged that you denied respected, long-standing, active cultural groups that serve new Canadians the chance to access these funds. Instead, you cut a cheque to an animal protection group that registered as a charity just

three weeks before you cut the cheque. The prime contact of that protection agency is the president of the Richmond Hill Liberal association, and on that board of directors is none other than your Liberal-nominated candidate for the upcoming election in that riding.

Minister, can you tell us what this group did with the \$200,000 you gave them 13 months ago?

Hon. Mr. Colle: As I said, there is a growing number of Iranians coming to Ontario who are looking for help from government so that they can help settle the newcomers and they can give them counselling services. This is an organization that is attempting to do that in order to integrate the Iranian Canadians who are coming here. We are trying to help them to do this.

The Deputy Speaker: New question.

Mr. Prue: Again, back to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration: Mr. Minister, most cultural organizations try, but, by your own admission, don't get support from your ministry. But here is one that did: the Iranian-Canadian Community Centre. It was registered as a charity three weeks before it got the money.

People in the community say they've never heard of it. Its charitable purposes are confined and registered as protecting animals. Its head is the president of the Richmond Hill Liberal association. Your provincial candidate is on the board. No matter: Three weeks later, you cut them a cheque for \$200,000. Meanwhile, non-partisan Iranian-Canadian organizations that have existed for decades get nothing, no funding at all. Why does your government believe that political affinity should be a factor in deciding who receives this money?

Hon. Mr. Colle: In every community, whether it's newcomer or non-newcomer, there are a number of community-based groups. They are all working hard to try and represent their community, and we can all appreciate that. There are always differences of opinion on which group is better or bigger than the other. We tried to help a group that was trying to build a centre to provide services to Canadians who have arrived here recently from Iran.

Mr. Prue: Every year, cultural organizations struggle to find the funds they need to keep their doors open, including the established ones, and to serve the needs of recent immigrants. They get little or nothing from your government. Organizations that are non-Liberal or just non-political are blacklisted or ignored, while Liberal-friendly ones get money without the trouble of an application form, due diligence, due process, transparency or accountability.

If you have nothing to hide, will you table the ministry memos and criteria that were used to grant this and every other application? Will you table them and show us exactly what they applied for and what animals they were going to protect?

Hon. Mr. Colle: You can dismiss one group by saying it's not the major group in a newcomer community and you can assess one against the other. We know there is need in the newcomer communities, like the Iranian community. There is a great need because the number of Iranians coming here is accelerating. It's one of the

fastest-growing immigrant groups. We try to invest and support that need in the newcomer community based on helping them to integrate and achieve inclusion. That's what we tried to do by helping that organization.

Mr. Prue: I consider your actions disgraceful, I have to tell you. But the Auditor General disagrees with what you're doing as well, and I'd like to quote the auditor. He says, "Normal accountability and control provisions were reduced or eliminated to ensure the transfers would qualify for immediate expensing." That's what he's saying about your government. That is exactly what you did.

We have organizations that seem to exist only on paper getting six-figure grants—ones that are just set up so that you will fund them. No one in the community they service has ever heard of them—I gave you one yesterday; I'm giving you another one today—but they all have ties to your party. We know that. One of these groups has the same contact as the Liberal Party association in Richmond Hill.

Minister, we need you to clear the air. Are you going to clear the air, or are you going to continue saying the kind of gobbledygook you're giving us here today?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Our government is very proud of the fact that after 20 years, when no one ever stood up and spoke up for immigrants, we did. For 20 years—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: We have to hear the response. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Colle: For 20 years, if an immigrant came to Ontario they received only \$800 in funding. If an immigrant went to Quebec, they received almost \$4,000. Premier McGuinty and our government stood up and said, "You have to invest in our newcomers and ensure that they get the services they deserve." We fought for that. That money is now flowing into Ontario for the first time in 20 years.

The Deputy Speaker: New question.

Mr. Tory: My question is for the Premier. Let's for the moment leave the Liberal connections out of this but look at what we have here, which is an organization that, according to the legal registrations, is registered on the books as some sort of animal help group. No one seems to have heard of them. There's a big difference between that and some of these very well known organizations that are on this list. But no one has heard of them.

The minister earlier said that there were hundreds of groups who asked him for money. The question we've got here is, this creates a very bad odour with the public who look at a group that is called an animal help group, and yet we're told the money went to help immigrants. No one knows why they applied. No one knows what criteria were applied to giving them the money, and frankly, no one seems to know what happened with the money once they had it.

So all we're asking for is the paperwork—the application form, the process that was gone through to give these people the money—so the taxpayers will know that just a little bit of respect was being shown to their money. Would you help us and ask the minister to table

the documents that relate to this Iranian group, that's registered as an animal help group, getting this taxpayers' money, so we can all see that there's nothing wrong, if there isn't?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): The Minister of Finance can speak to this.

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Yes, I do live in Richmond Hill. Perhaps much more importantly, I'll tell my friend the Leader of the Opposition that like many, many culture groups, I know this group and I know the work that they've been doing for 20 years, particularly assisting new arrivals from Iran, often political refugees settling in this country. My understanding of this group—like so many other small emerging groups with newcomers in Ontario—is their major objective is to assist their fellow nationals in settling in this country. To the extent that this government can help that happen, we should be very proud of that, sir.

Mr. Tory: Even the Minister of Finance, who I would have thought would understand better than his leader, better than his minister, about accountability, doesn't understand. The appearance here—I frankly don't know enough about this group to know if whether what you said is true in terms of the time frame, or in terms of the work they do. I don't know; I'll admit that.

But I do say that when it comes to the taxpayers' money, you of all people, and the Premier sitting next to you, have a responsibility to be able to show the public that this money was well spent, that this group is in fact what everybody says it is. You do surely understand that when the president of the Liberal association has his residence shown as their head office, when the candidate for the Liberal association is on the board and when the registration of the organization shows it has to do with animal help, there may be just a few people out there who will have some questions.

So all we're asking is, show us the documentation that accompanied the decision to give these people hundreds of thousands of dollars of taxpayers' money. It's not Monopoly money; it's the taxpayers' money, and they have the right to know what you did with it.

1430

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: When it comes to newcomers to this province, assistance in settlement, assistance in English as a second language, assistance in job training and assistance in simply adjusting to the realities of a new life in a much different culture sometimes falls upon the shoulders of community leaders who take it upon themselves to form organizations to deliver these services.

I remember when I was a kid my mom worked with the Italian Immigrant Aid Society, and her job was to welcome new arrivals. And you know what? At that time, if the Conservative government had given a few dollars to the Italian Immigrant Aid Society, it would have made the work that my mom did a little bit easier. I'm proud of

the way in which we are helping newcomers drive deep roots into this great Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: New question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, I meet regularly with ethno-cultural groups from my community: Turkish, Pakistani, Iranian, Sudanese, Somali, Afro-Canadian-Caribbean, Bangladeshi and many, many others. All of them are frustrated by the lack of funding help for their organizations from the McGuinty government, but now their frustration will be outrage because you had millions of dollars to give away without notifying anyone of a program or public process for applying for these funds.

Minister, why didn't you make our Hamilton ethno-cultural groups—and I mean all of them—aware that you had millions of dollars available for groups like them?

Hon. Mr. Colle: I'm surprised that the member for Hamilton East doesn't reflect on the fact that after 15 years of hardly any investment in Hamilton immigrant aid societies, we were the first government to invest in the largest, most comprehensive organization, one of the finest organizations in Canada: SISO in Hamilton. We not only gave them a capital grant of \$500,000 so that they can house homeless refugees in Hamilton East, we also ensured that their grants from the federal government have increased by over 40%. That's what we've done in Hamilton.

Ms. Horwath: I certainly do know that SISO got some funding. The problem is, they haven't figured out—they told me that it came from this year's budget, when in fact it's on your list for last year. So you decide which slush fund you took it out of, because nobody really knows at this point. Nonetheless, I recently had the legislative library—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Minister. Member for Hamilton East.

Ms. Horwath: Recently, because I'm meeting with all these groups, I had the opportunity to ask the legislative library to give me a list of sources so I could go to this group and say, "Here's where you go for funding from your government, the government of Ontario." The library's research paper shows that as of March 30, 2007, the program that you say your groups used to access these millions of dollars did not exist. You must have invented the program and put it on your website after we found out about your slushgate scandal. When you doled out exclusive financial largess by the truckloads to your friends, you discriminated against every other cultural group in Ontario by not giving them a fair chance—

The Deputy Speaker: Response?

Hon. Mr. Colle: This is the perfect example where she's objecting to this first-time investment in SISO, which is one of Canada's finest organizations—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Hamilton East.

Hon. Mr. Colle: —that has been desperately looking for an investment to build this refuge for refugees that

come to Hamilton. It's the first time all organizations of Hamilton have had a 30% to 40% increase in funding, and you are saying this doesn't meet your purposes—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Minister. The member for Hamilton East will come to order, or you may not be here for the rest of the afternoon.

Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, it's just shocking that the member from Hamilton East—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Hamilton East, come to order.

Minister.

Hon. Mr. Colle: It's just shocking. One member says this group shouldn't get the money. She says they don't deserve the money, that others should get it. The obvious thing is that there's an organization in Hamilton which is the most prestigious and they have received capital funding that they have never received before from their government or that government. SISO is finally getting the resources they deserve.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge): My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, when we use the term “safe schools,” we're talking about learning environments that are safe for students physically, emotionally and psychologically. We know that bullying can take its toll in all three areas. We understand the best way to handle bullying is to prevent it from happening in the first place.

With that in mind, you and the member from Guelph–Wellington recently announced changes to the Safe Schools Act. The members opposite didn't get it right when they introduced the so-called zero tolerance policy. In fact, their leader and members of their caucus have admitted the programs we're talking about introducing are absolutely necessary. Once again with respect to education, we are fixing something that had gone terribly wrong.

Minister, can you advise us of what are the proposed amendments and how they will help keep our kids from being bullied?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): Thank you, to the member for Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge, and especially to the member for Guelph–Wellington for her work on this file.

Applause.

Hon. Ms. Wynne: Yes. Join in.

Bullying is the number one concern we hear from parents when they talk to us about safety in our schools. That's why, if the legislation is passed, the safe-schools provisions of the Education Act will be amended so that, for the first time, educators can deal with bullying directly. Bullying will be included as an infraction for which suspension must be considered. This has been a serious gap in the safe-schools legislation up until now.

It's also important that we're replacing mandatory suspension—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Response?

Hon. Ms. Wynne: —except in the most serious cases and mandatory expulsions with the requirement that principals and boards consider and respond to all infractions that occur in the most appropriate way for that infraction.

Mr. Arthurs: Thank you, Minister. This issue is certainly important to my constituents and those throughout Ontario. We must reduce bullying-related activity and behaviour within our schools, and it will please them to know that the proposed legislation will help to serve that exact purpose. Our government understands that safe schools are a prerequisite for student achievement. If we want more students succeeding at the provincial standards for reading, writing and math, as well as raising the graduation rate, we must ensure a safe learning environment for them.

In addition to adding bullying as an infraction to the Safe Schools Act, I understand that we have a comprehensive bullying prevention strategy in our schools. Minister, what else is being done to keep our kids safe in a safe learning environment?

Hon. Ms. Wynne: The changes to the legislation that we've brought forward are just part of a much broader strategy, as the member has said. We have invested \$7.83 million into schools for bullying prevention programs. That's \$1,500 per elementary school and \$2,000 per secondary school. We've established a three-year, \$3-million partnership with Kids Help Phone, and some of the work that's been done on that is already coming forward. This will double the 24-hour helpline's capacity to provide counselling to students in Ontario. This will benefit 30,000 more students each year.

We have provided training for 7,450 principals and vice-principals on bullying prevention. Beginning in 2007-08, training on bullying prevention will be delivered in partnership with the Ontario Teachers' Federation, and that means 25,000 teachers will be trained.

This change to the legislation is part of a programmatic approach to making sure that bullying is understood in our schools and that our teachers can prevent it and respond to it appropriately.

1440

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. I hope the Premier will answer this question, because ultimately he is the Premier of Ontario and the person ultimately in charge of stewarding and looking after the taxpayers' money.

Now, the federal government, for example, has a program called the human rights program, and if you go to the website, they have a list of the criteria pursuant to which you can get money or not get money. There are questions on it that you have to answer, like: Are there

similar projects being done by others? Will the project become self-sustaining? Has this group received funding from the human rights program before? Did they demonstrate results from the activities funded?

Surely the Premier will understand that the point everybody is trying to make today is that there's a group here that got a lot of taxpayers' money—\$250,000 is a lot of money. They got the money, but apparently it's the case that they got it without filling out any papers or answering any questions. If you were to say today, "Yes, we will simply produce the paperwork, show the application that was filled out, tell you the process that was followed in giving them the money," then no one would have any questions left, I'm sure. But will you agree that we should see those papers and understand what that process is? Don't you think that's the minimum that should be expected?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I believe that the leader of the official opposition is asking about the group known as COSTI. I want to tell him a little bit about that. COSTI annually serves a total of 42,000 individuals from a very diverse population. They have, among their funders, Prime Minister Harper's government, the United Way, the Toronto Star Fresh Air Fund, the Raptors Foundation, the Maytree Foundation and the CHUM Charitable Foundation. COSTI's staff speak over 60 languages. They have provided supports along the lines of English as a second language; they've provided housing help; they've provided counselling and mental health services; they've provided help with interpretation and advocacy and with finding employment.

The leader of the official opposition may feel that that group in particular is not worthy of continuing its work, but we strongly differ in that regard.

Mr. Tory: I really think it's unfortunate that the Premier would—I suggested no such thing. What I asked you was very—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

The leader of the official opposition.

Mr. Tory: What I asked you was very simple, and it actually has to do with this Iranian-Canadian Community Centre, which has on its board your candidate in Richmond Hill and has as its address the president of your riding association in Richmond Hill. All I said was: Don't you think it is reasonable, when these people receive hundreds of thousands of dollars of taxpayers' money, that the taxpayers—and you, for that matter—should have a reasonable stream of paperwork to back up who they are, what they're going to do with the money, some measurement of what they in fact did with the money, and so on? That's all I asked you. I didn't call into question anybody's bona fides. I just said: Don't you think it's reasonable, when it involves hundreds of thousands of dollars that people work hard to earn and send you in trust, that you should be able to show us how you decided to spend it and what you did with it? Do you think that is a reasonable request?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I want to remind the leader of the official opposition that the single most important thing that Ontarians ought to recall when it comes to their treatment of immigrants in Ontario is that that particular subject matter was found under the crime section of their platform. That's where it was found.

We have a different view of immigrants and immigration in the province of Ontario. We think it's one of the single most important defining characteristics of our province. They reject it, they fear it and they criminalize it. We embrace it, we understand it enriches us socially and economically, and we will continue to support immigration services throughout the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: New question.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is heckling and he's not in his seat: both mistakes.

The member for York South–Weston.

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. My riding is home to Oromo Canadian Community Association, a well-respected organization that assists newcomers and promotes cultural awareness among the greater Toronto area's 7,000-strong Oromo-Canadian community. The association has recently embarked upon an ambitious plan for a cultural and community centre. Minister, can you explain to this House why this organization, which has devoted the better part of two decades to helping new Canadians, cannot get funding, yet a three-week-old organization, the Iranian-Canadian Community Centre, can get that funding?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): It's unfortunate the member puts one newcomer group against the other.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: This is why we try to do the best we can, because they are all deserving. I hope the member will bring forward the request and the need from the organization. I'll be more than glad to do what I can, because I know your riding is one of the areas that needs settlement service support and needs that kind of investment wholeheartedly. That's why we've invested a lot of our resources into that part of the GTA with the Jamaican Canadian Association, the Midaynta association. We are trying to reach that area because there are needs there. I don't deny that.

Mr. Ferreira: Minister, we've asked repeatedly for an application process, for application forms, for some kind of transparency. It seems quite clear to me that a number of these so-called grants are little more than Liberal political pork-barrelling. It's time for your government to get out of the trough, Minister, and give us the whole hog on this. Will you table in this House, will you prove that the Iranian-Canadian cultural centre has done good deeds for the money that you gave to them? Will you table the proof?

Hon. Mr. Colle: As I said to the member, we realize your area is not unlike the western part of my area; it's a high-need area. That's why we invested \$200,000 in the Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples in your riding. That's why we've helped establish another service provider in your area. The St. Clair West Services for Seniors is now in your riding. They've just been established with the help of my ministry. We're trying to do the best we can to provide services that your government and that government ignored for two decades.

ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): My question is to the Minister of Culture. Minister, first of all, thank you for coming to Port Hope a couple of weeks ago to visit the beautiful Capitol Theatre. But this month the Ontario Trillium Foundation announced its latest successful grant application. In this latest round, several community organizations in my riding, including the Northumberland Children's Services Committee and the Northumberland YMCA, received a great deal of support, from which my constituents will benefit greatly. This assistance is always celebrated in my riding, but I know we are not the only community that's so fortunate.

Minister, can you please tell this House a bit more about the Trillium Foundation and how it is improving the lives of Ontarians in every corner of the province?

Hon. Caroline Di Cocco (Minister of Culture): First of all, I want to thank the member for the question, and I'm certainly happy to share with this House some of the great news about the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

I know that this agency of the Ministry of Culture is a favourite of all members in this House. The \$100 million in grants that this organization distributes to over 1,500 local organizations across Ontario has reaped a great deal of benefit for millions of people across this province. These grants, no matter what the size, have huge impacts on many people. Each one of us in this House has seen the amazing results delivered in arts and culture, environment, sports and recreation, and human and social services groups in our communities. I am proud of the work and I thank the hundreds of volunteers that are at the heart—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Supplementary.

Mr. Rinaldi: Thank you, Minister. I am also very proud that our government, through the Trillium Foundation, is able to make a real difference in people's lives. I wholeheartedly agree that even smaller grants can have a great impact in communities. This is why I'm very hopeful that our strong support for the foundation continues well into the future.

Minister, can you please tell us what this government is doing to ensure that the Trillium Foundation has a bright future?

Hon. Ms. Di Cocco: One of the issues that Trillium faced is that there are always many more applications than can be accommodated, and I'm pleased to say that

our 2007-08 budget proposes to increase the organization's annual funding to \$120 million over the next three years. That's a 20% increase, and this would allow the foundation to reach many more grassroots groups and remain a positive force in this province for years to come. I would urge all members to give their full support to the budget moving forward so that we can make this happen.

1450

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): I'd like to ask a question of the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration again.

We've just been hearing a lot about the Trillium Foundation. The Trillium Foundation, which does wonderful work, has a very rigorous application form. In fact, there were people who have told me it takes a long time to make an application, in terms of all the paperwork that has to be filled out.

We have other programs. I mentioned the human rights program earlier. We have Arts Presentation Canada administered by Canadian Heritage. They have a deadline. There's a program overview, there are stated eligibility criteria, there's an assessment process. So anybody knows they can apply, and they all know what questions they have to answer in order to get the money.

What we're really after here is just trying to determine, whether it has to do with the Iranian-Canadian society or the other one that was mentioned yesterday, that there is some reasonable process in place that safeguards the taxpayers' money, that makes it fair for all the people who want to participate, so they all know they're on a level playing field. It means we don't have to really worry about questions of optics involving Liberals or anybody else, because everybody went through the same process, everybody—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The question's been asked. Minister?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: I have help from the table with the clock. When I call "question," it gives you 10 seconds. If you don't finish in that 10 seconds, I move to the next. It's as simple as that. Shorten your questions. It works.

Minister?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): The leader of the official opposition has raised a good point. On our website we have our most comprehensive program, which gives out aid to over 80 newcomer settlement agencies across the province. On there, we have our introduction, application eligibility criteria, organizational assessment criteria, activities funded, eligible expenditures. This is a starting point for a lot of newcomer organizations.

During the course of the months that we're being contacted by many newcomer organizations or many diversity institutes, they are also asking us for investments in

their cultural museum, perhaps a piece, or there are other organizations asking to build a new centre. We get those identified and we also try to see if we can—

The Deputy Speaker: The response has been given. Thank you.

Mr. Tory: What we're asking for here, when you talk about that, is simply to see what those criteria were. Yesterday, the Premier referred us to the website, and there is what you print off: You print off simply a list of those who received the money.

We're simply asking, what were the criteria pursuant to which these 31 groups got the taxpayers' money—lots of it—and how did you decide on those 31, versus the hundreds that you said were in the category that they were? And they go to your website and they start, as you said. We're simply trying to figure out how you decide between the 31 groups and all of the other groups so that we will know—and more importantly so that the taxpayers will know—that it was done fairly, that everybody had a fair chance and that the taxpayers' money was spent wisely.

Why don't you just table whatever correspondence you had with the two groups that have been discussed yesterday and today? Agree to table it, and we'll all have a look at it. If it's all there and we know what the questions were, terrific. Please just table it so we can all see that it's transparent and that everything was above board.

Hon. Mr. Colle: As I said, the basic principles that we used are for organizations that are going to help in including the newcomer communities, enhancing diversity, promoting volunteer engagement, espousing heritage preservation; these are the principles we base that on. These organizations, again, are constantly asking for help, because there are many needs out there. We try to see, if possible, if there's a point in time when we can.

The Deputy Speaker: New question.

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, as you are well aware, I have a broad range of ethnic groups in my riding: Pakistani, Gujarati, Chinese—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: The Minister of Economic Development.

Mr. Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker.

Minister, obviously you've been able to distribute several million dollars to a variety of worthy groups. I'd like to know what method you used to inform the ethnocultural groups in my riding that they could apply for these funds. How did you let them know that the opportunity was there?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, we already have organizations in many parts of Ontario that are applying for funding under our newcomer settlement program. They know that we fund these programs. We've also made them all aware of the fact that now there are enhanced grants available through the ISAP program, through the host program, through the community workers in schools

program, through our federal agreement. We made them all aware of that.

We also are in contact with many groups as they are in contact with my office, with the ministry, where they advocate for greater capital expenditures or a major project. We also try to see if we can help them with those.

Mr. Tabuns: I find it interesting. Here's the Ontario Arts Council list of deadlines and categories. I have to tell you, Minister, that in my riding groups have been asking about potential for funding and, like my colleague from Hamilton East, I've been curious about what's available and what's not. Would you table any documents, letters, web pages or advertisements that your ministry used to inform ethnic groups in my riding that they could apply for funds that you've so recently disbursed?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Just to remind the member, one example in your own riding is the Hellenic Greek Centre, which was based originally in your riding and for 20 years has tried to get resources to build a new centre. Over the years, they've applied to many governments. They've all refused to help them. We have given the Hellenic centre \$1 million so they can build their centre, which many of the Greeks in your riding will benefit from.

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): My question is for the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship. Small and medium-sized businesses make up about 99% of the businesses in Ontario and they account for more than 50% of Ontario's jobs. In May 2006, our Premier, Dalton McGuinty, created the first-ever ministry dedicated to small business and entrepreneurs in this province.

Across the province, including in my riding of Stoney Creek, there are many hard-working small business owners who contribute so much to our local communities. I had the opportunity to have a round table with those who are in my riding. I was talking to them about the things that we could do as a government to help make their lives better and give them the opportunity to access government services more readily, because essentially, through their creative thinking and their hard work, they are contributing to innovation, investment and job creation. I shared some of those with the minister, and I just want him to describe for us some of the things that his ministry is now doing.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship): First of all, I want to thank the member from Stoney Creek for asking this question. Let me tell you what we are doing for small business. We have about 44 enterprise centres. We have nine satellite centres. In addition to that, the ministry provides very useful service to whosoever wants to open or start a business or promote a business.

In addition, we are moving very aggressively to reduce the paperwork burden for small businesses and we are also helping them to facilitate how to sell it to governments. In addition, we are also bundling the rules and regulations by sector so that small businesses can move ahead and do their business in a more effective manner. We are creating the right environment for small businesses to succeed.

1500

Ms. Mossop: During the conversations I was having with the members of my community—there was a wide range of them there; we had quite small ones with actually only one person and then larger businesses with dozens of people working for them—one of the things that came through is that more and more businesses are changing and people are doing things very differently. They're having to be very creative and they're trying to make the best of all resources. Some people just work strictly from their homes now. Many people are doing that more and more, in part or in whole, conducting their business from their homes, and they really rely on their computers, on the Internet and websites, for information. They find it more time-effective if they can do that than getting on the phone and trying to navigate their way. So what is it that you're doing in that area to make it easier for our businesses to access government services in a timely way through the World Wide Web?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: Let me thank the member for Stoney Creek again for asking this question. What we have done: I went around and did consultations with small businesses. We found out that we needed to provide them with information in a one-stop fashion. So what we have done is we have developed a website that provides very comprehensive information about how to start a business, how to promote your business, what kinds of resources you have available to you and where you can go and get the financing. In addition to that, what was important was that people wanted to know what are some of the government programs that are available to small businesses. So what we have done is that we have put a complete, comprehensive directory of all businesses from various ministries on one website so that people can access it. I would like to take this opportunity to tell the audience that the website address is www.sbe.gov.on.ca.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. With respect to the grant that was under discussion yesterday, the \$250,000 grant, you were questioned about this. We've had a lot of talk today about the process and about the criteria and about application forms and so on. Yesterday you had a discussion with the media, and they were asking you a number of questions and you said, "It was a general conversation at first, and later on we asked them to put something together to see if it would meet our needs for my ministry's proposal." Then they asked

you a question, "What is the criteria?" and there was a second question, "Is it written down?" and your answer was, "Yeah, I've got it."

So all we're after today is, if you've got it, then we're saying, could you please share with us what the proposal was in writing. We'll see from that, I guess, what your requirements were in terms of what they had to submit to you to get \$250,000 of the taxpayers' money. If they're doing a lot of good work, and if you exercised a lot of diligence in deciding to give it to them, then just give us the documentation and we can see.

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Again, this comes back to the involvement of COSTI. COSTI has been in operation to help newcomers for 54 years. They have partnered with the Bengali cultural association to ensure that this group gets support from an established organization like COSTI and is meeting the needs of establishing a newcomer outreach settlement program in this high-needs area of the city of Toronto that has been identified by the United Way. That's what we based our principles on. It's a high-needs area, many immigrants, there's a dearth of services, and you've got a formidable established organization like COSTI partnering to ensure that these services get delivered.

Mr. Tory: We've got the 31 groups here that the Premier referred us to yesterday. He said that all the information was on the web site. Indeed the information is here, but who got the money? Of these 31 who are listed here, can you tell us—it's a fairly straightforward answer—is there material on the file where each of these people made an application pursuant to some process? If so, can you tell us what the process was and how everybody in the world knew about it except these 31 groups—the hundreds that you talked about? Was there a judging panel or some other kind of evaluation process?

I think these are reasonable questions to be asked when we are dealing with \$20,295,000 of the taxpayers' money. That's all we're after. How did you decide these 31 people got the money? If there are written proposals, would you be kind enough to table them in this Legislature so the public, the media and ourselves can all see how you decided to give the money out? It's a very fair question. That's what we're here to do: to oversee how the taxpayers' money is spent and make sure you have proper accountability. Will you table the documents? Do they exist?

Hon. Mr. Colle: The member is free, under freedom of information, to ask for those requests. We'll waive the fee—we have to go through protocol to make sure it's done properly. But the main thing is that these organizations are hard-working, grassroots, for the most part, well-established in many communities. Again, many of them are small, some of them are well-established, but they are all trying to meet the needs of newcomers. That's what they're trying to do. They're trying to ensure there's inclusion—

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Colle: He's not listening anyway.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): New question. The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question again is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. By refusing to act and be forthright here in this place, people are going to get the wrong idea. They're going to start referring to you and this whole process as Colle-gate. Is that what you want? You, as the minister, and your government—every single one of those ministers—have a responsibility. You all took an oath when you took office that each of you would act in the best interests of the people of this province. You took that oath. Can you tell me now, having taken that oath, how you are acting in the best interests of the people of this province by denying access to the information and the criteria, by denying access to the program, by denying access to the applications and by denying access to the results you received? How are you acting in the best interests of the people of this province?

Hon. Mr. Colle: We have made it very clear that we, as a government, are committed to ensuring that the inclusion of all Ontarians is a priority. We have gone forward trying to ensure that these hard-working organizations all across the province that have been working with no help—

Interjection: Neglected.

Hon. Mr. Colle: —and neglected for 20 years, get a lifeline so that they can help newcomers and contribute to Ontario's future. That's what we are committed to, clearly, and we're doing that right across Ontario. Where for 20 years your government ignored them, and so did the Conservative government, we are investing in our newcomers so we can invest in a better Ontario.

VISITORS

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: I would like to bring to the attention of the House that in the west members' gallery I have a delegation from the University of Calabria in Italy, and we have Dr. Marchese with the group.

PETITIONS

LABORATORY SERVICES

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a petition regarding lab services at the Muskoka Algonquin hospital, and it reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare (MAHC) has indicated its support for moving significant parts of its laboratory operations to the Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie; and

“Whereas MAHC has indicated that it intends to cease doing community-based lab work if it does not receive

\$150,000 more in funding from the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas the impact of such decisions would negatively affect timely health care delivery to residents of Muskoka, while increasing the overall cost to taxpayers;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to work with Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare to maintain hospital and community-based lab services at the existing facilities in Bracebridge and Huntsville, including restoration of lab services that have recently been contracted out to hospitals in Sudbury and Barrie.”

I support this petition.

1510

CANCER TREATMENT

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that is signed by 81 residents of northwestern Ontario, Dryden in particular, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas Ontario has an inconsistent policy for access to new cancer treatments while these drugs are under review for funding; and

“Whereas cancer patients taking oral chemotherapy may apply for a section 8 exception under the Ontario drug benefit plan, with no such exception policy in place for intravenous cancer drugs administered in hospital; and

“Whereas this is an inequitable, inconsistent and unfair policy, creating two classes of cancer patients with further inequities on the basis of personal wealth and the willingness of hospitals to risk budgetary deficits to provide new intravenous chemotherapy treatments; and

“Whereas cancer patients have the right to the most effective care recommended by their doctors;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to provide immediate access to Velcade and other intravenous chemotherapy while these new cancer drugs are under review and provide a consistent policy for access to new cancer treatments that enables oncologists to apply for exceptions to meet the needs of patients.”

I agree with these petitioners. I've affixed my signature to this.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): Recently, I've had the pleasure to meet with the staff and members of the families in Community Nursing Home, Port Perry, and I'd mention their names: Heather Cooper; Karen Sansom, the activity director; John Dodds, the president of the residents council; Liz Hobson, chair of the family council; Eric Timms; Mrs. Murdock; Mary Malloy; and Perry Grandel. They presented me with the following petition, which reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario will not meet the needs of its aging population and ensure access to hospital services unless long-term-care homes can provide the care and services that residents need; and

“Whereas staff are now run off their feet trying to keep up and homes are unable to provide the full range of care and programs that residents need or the menu choices that meet their expectations; and

“Whereas dietary, housekeeping and other services that residents and their families value are being put at risk by increasing operating costs; and

“Whereas some 35,000 residents still live in older homes, many with three- and four-bed ward rooms and wheelchair-inaccessible washrooms; and

“Whereas, on November 23, 2006, this Legislature unanimously passed a private member’s motion asking the government to introduce a capital renewal program for B and C homes; and

“Whereas such a program is required to support the limited-term licensing provisions in the proposed new Long-Term Care Homes Act;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$390 million in 2007 and \$214 million in 2008 to provide an additional 30 minutes of resident care, enhance programs and meal menus and address other operating cost pressures, and introduce a capital renewal and retrofit program for all B and C homes, beginning with committing to provide \$9.5 million this year to renew the first 2,500 beds.”

I’m pleased to present this to Sarah and sign it on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham.

COURT SUPPORT STAFF

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I have a petition that was given to me by Lynn Thompson, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas 1,400 members of the Attorney General’s court support staff who are working under the flexible, part-time FPT model, otherwise referred to as appendix 32 under a collective agreement between Management Board of Cabinet, the Ministry of the Attorney General and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union negotiated in the spring of 2005, are working hundreds of hours per week in the service of the Attorney General for which they are not getting paid; and

“Whereas under the FPT agreement many court support staff are working as many as 20 hours or more per week for which payment is being withheld and will not be paid until months later; and

“Whereas when the makeup pay does eventually get paid, up to 50% may be lost to taxes because of the taxation year into which the payment may fall; and

“Whereas many of the Attorney General’s court support staff who are being forced to work under these conditions are single mothers with fixed living expenses, who incur employment-related expenses such as child care and travel costs for those hours that they are

required to work but for which they are not getting paid; and

“Whereas in many cases these expenses are impossible to pay without the offsetting income which is being withheld by the Attorney General under the FPT agreement; and

“Whereas many of the Attorney General’s court support staff have been left no other choice but to resign from these impossible working conditions and, in many cases, are being forced onto the welfare rolls by the very government for which they are providing hundreds of hours of work for which they are not being paid in a timely manner; and

“Whereas the FPT agreement which is causing such hardship for employees of the Attorney General was negotiated by and entered into between the Ministry of the Attorney General, Management Board of Cabinet and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union; and

“Whereas the employees to whom this agreement applies insist that the terms of the agreement and their practical implications were not fully disclosed to them at the time the agreement was proposed for ratification; and

“Whereas these employees affected by this agreement have repeatedly appealed to OPSEU, the Attorney General and the Premier to point out the unfairness of being forced to work hundreds of hours without being paid for that work and the hardship this practice is causing in the lives of many employees; and

“Whereas repeated appeals to the Attorney General and to the Premier that they step in to ensure fair treatment of Attorney General employees are being ignored;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call upon the Premier, the Attorney General and the chair of the management of cabinet to take whatever steps are necessary to change the offensive provisions of the FPT agreement as set out in appendix 32 and ensure that the Attorney General’s court support staff receive fair treatment as employees of the government and that among other unfair provisions of the agreement, the practice of withholding pay for hours worked cease immediately.”

I send this to the table by way of page Jenalle.

YORK SUBWAY EXTENSION

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

“Whereas York region and the city of Toronto have witnessed a substantial increase in traffic gridlock over the last several years; and

“Whereas these two regions continue to face traffic gridlock, which is an overwhelming economic and environmental problem; and

“Whereas we are significantly disappointed with the position of the leader of the NDP who wants to cancel the Spadina-York subway extension;

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

“That all York region and Toronto MPPs do their utmost to have the Spadina-York subway extension construction start during the year 2007.”

I support this petition, and I affix my signature to it and ask Katrina to deliver it.

STEVENSON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): This pertains to my motion that was defeated this morning—lots of money for slush funds, but no money for babies and mothers in Alliston.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital needs \$1.4 million in new funding over the next three years to get its birthing unit reopened and to ensure that they can recruit enough obstetricians and health care providers to supply a stable and ongoing service for expectant mothers in our area; and

“Whereas forcing expectant mothers to drive to Newmarket, Barrie or Orangeville to give birth is not only unacceptable, it is a potential safety hazard; and

“Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital cannot reopen the unit under its current budget and the McGuinty government has been unresponsive to repeated requests for new funding;

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

“That the McGuinty Liberal government immediately provide the required \$1.4 million in new funding to Stevenson Memorial Hospital so that the local birthing unit can reopen and so that mothers can give birth in Alliston.”

I agree with that petition and I have signed it.

CHILDREN’S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that’s been sent to me by Richard Harman of Ottawa. It’s regarding funding for children and youth who need mental health services, specifically referencing the need for core services to receive secure funding and an implementation plan to be developed and funded and that the Ontario ministries of education and health join with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services to support this framework and its implementation. They say:

“We, the undersigned, urge each of the political parties in Ontario to commit their support for the aforementioned three steps in order to begin implementing A Shared Responsibility: Ontario’s Policy Framework for Child and Youth Mental Health, for the benefit of all children and youth in Ontario.”

I have affixed my signature to it.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition today to regulate zoos to protect the animals and communities.

“Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

“Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

“Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

“Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

“Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer’s bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act.”

I agree with this petition and I will affix my signature to it and give it to page Jacob.

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I present this petition to the Parliament of Ontario, reading as follows:

“Whereas the legacy of Pope John Paul II reflects his lifelong commitment to international understanding, peace and the defence of equality and human rights;

“Whereas his legacy has an all-embracing meaning that is particularly relevant to Canada’s multi-faith and multicultural traditions;

“Whereas as one of the great spiritual leaders of contemporary times, Pope John Paul II visited Ontario during his pontificate of more than 25 years and, on his visits, was enthusiastically greeted by Ontario’s diverse religious and cultural communities;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the private member’s bill by Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees entitled An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day.”

I am pleased to affix my signature, as I am the honoured sponsor of that bill.

1520

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition signed by people from Toronto and it reads as follows:

“Whereas more than 1.2 million Ontarians work at jobs that pay them less than \$10 an hour;

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government has failed to ensure a living wage for working families;

“Whereas people who work hard and play by the rules should be rewarded with the opportunity to earn a decent living and the chance to get ahead;

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberals were able to increase their own pay by 31%;

“Whereas an increase in the minimum wage to \$10 an hour would help Ontario’s working families earn a living wage;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Ontario government to pass Bill 150, the NDP's living wage bill, which would immediately increase the Ontario minimum wage to \$10 an hour."

I agree with the petitioners. I have affixed my signature to this, and I'm going to ask my daughter, page Sarah Hampton, to bring it to the table.

LAKERIDGE HEALTH

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I present a petition on behalf of the health community in the Durham region—it's very important—on behalf of Jerry Ouellette, the member from Oshawa, and Christine Elliott, the member from Whitby–Ajax. We worked hard on this campaign. It's a petition re cuts to Lakeridge Health. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care"—Minister George Smitherman—"has directed Lakeridge Health to cut mental health and addiction services and children's mental health services in order to balance the Lakeridge Health budget; and

"Whereas the ministry has directed these cuts, bypassing the Central East Local Health Integration Network, whose director has stated 'there will be no reduction in mental health and addiction services within the Central East LHIN'; and

"Whereas these cuts will likely transfer costs rather than save them, putting additional pressure on Lakeridge's emergency department, Durham police, Whitby Mental Health," and social services provided within the community; and

"Whereas the Central East already receives amongst the lowest per capita hospital funding" in the entire province of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, request the Ontario Legislative Assembly to revisit this" poor "decision and ensure Durham residents receive appropriate support for adults and children who need treatment for mental health" and other addiction services.

On behalf of the residents of Durham, I am pleased to present this petition to Alanna and sign this for the House.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): It's always my favourite time, to rise pursuant to standing order 55, because I want to give the business of the House for next week.

On Monday, April 23, in the afternoon, we have second reading of Bill 203, the Safer Roads for a Safer Ontario Act; in the evening, second reading of Bill 184, the Endangered Species Act.

I understand that there is discussion amongst the House leaders and the rest of the week is to be determined.

I would ask page Craig to come over and give this to the table, as brief as it was.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SAFER ROADS FOR A SAFER ONTARIO ACT, 2007 LOI DE 2007 VISANT À CRÉER DES ROUTES PLUS SÉCURITAIRES POUR UN ONTARIO PLUS SÛR

Mrs. Cansfield moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 203, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and the Remedies for Organized Crime and Other Unlawful Activities Act, 2001 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 203, Loi modifiant le Code de la route et la Loi de 2001 sur les recours pour crime organisé et autres activités illégales et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): The Chair recognizes the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation): I will be sharing my time with the member from Ottawa–Orléans, my parliamentary assistant.

I rise in the House today to begin debate on a piece of legislation that, if passed, would save lives in Ontario and on Ontario's roads.

Since our government took office nearly four years ago, the McGuinty government has worked tirelessly with our road safety partners to improve safety on Ontario's roads. Ontario enjoys a reputation as a leader in road safety across North America, a fact that everyone here can be proud of. Despite this achievement, however, more remains to be done. It's sobering to consider that more than two people are killed and 10 seriously injured every day on our roads.

With our government's bill, we are raising the bar and we are setting an even higher standard for road safety in Ontario. We are targeting aggressive and dangerous driving behaviours such as drinking and driving and street racing.

Approximately one quarter of all fatalities on Ontario's roads involve drinking drivers. Each year, about 16,000 people are convicted of drinking and driving in Ontario, or approximately two people each hour, each and every day.

People who drink and drive put all of our lives at risk. In 2004 alone, drinking and driving collisions claimed 192 lives in Ontario. We cannot allow this to continue.

As Premier McGuinty said last week, "[T]here can be no tolerance in Ontario for people who put other people's lives at risk on our roads.... if you drink and drive or if you street race, you'll pay and the penalty will be tough," and we all agree on that.

Ontario's prevention strategies need to be strengthened to target high-risk drivers and first-time and repeat

offenders. This proposed approach includes civil and criminal measures that could mean repeat drinking and driving offenders would forfeit their vehicles under the Attorney General's innovative Civil Remedies Act. Anyone caught driving with a blood alcohol concentration of between .05 and .08 would face tough sanctions that will get even stiffer for repeat incidents. Roadside driver's licence suspensions would range from three days for a first reading of between .05 and .08 blood alcohol content to seven days for a second infraction, and 30 days for a third or subsequent incident.

The second time someone is caught, they'll have to complete an education program. If they're caught again, they'll have to install an ignition interlock device in their vehicle for six months, in addition to the mandatory education.

Make no mistake: We're getting even tougher on people who drink and drive. And that's not all.

Since 1999, 35 people have lost their lives to street racing in Ontario, with innocent people often the victims of these pointless races. This legislation would also crack down on street racers who choose to race on Ontario's roads, and everyone who's standing in this House should applaud this new initiative.

This legislation would give law enforcement people the power to suspend the driver's licences and impound the vehicles of drivers involved in street racing and stunt driving. Police would have the power to issue an immediate roadside seven-day driver's licence suspension and a seven-day vehicle impoundment for street racing or participating in a driving contest or stunt driving.

It would also increase the minimum fine from \$200 to \$2,000 and increase the maximum fine from \$1,000 to \$10,000. Our street racing fines would be the highest in Canada and worth every penny if they saved more lives.

Police officers will have the tools they need to stop these behaviours, and it will offer further protection to them personally in the line of duty. It's sobering to consider the fact that more police officers are killed at roadside than during any other activity.

1530

That's why we're proposing to allow police vehicles to display flashing blue lights in addition to the red lights they already use. This change would improve a police vehicle's visibility, which is critical to the officers' safety, especially at night. This would help to protect the police while they're doing their job protecting us.

I also want to emphasize that injury prevention is a driving force behind this legislation. The senseless acts of street racing and impaired driving exact a terrible toll on people in this province, and we as a government need to do all we can to prevent these tragedies from occurring.

I'm proud of what our government has accomplished so far. This legislation, if passed, would build upon the road safety improvements made under the Transportation Statute Law Amendment Act of 2005. That fine piece of legislation resulted in tougher sanctions for driving offences at school crossings, as well as for motorists who

don't yield for pedestrians at crosswalks and traffic signals. It also toughened the sanctions for those who drive at excessive speeds with no serious regard for human life.

Bill 203 will build on what we've already achieved, advancing this government's commitment to improve road safety. I'm pleased to report that many from across Ontario are very supportive of our proposed legislation. From OPP Commissioner Julian Fantino: "I'm pleased to see the government is strengthening the laws and increasing fines and suspensions for those convicted of driving offences."

Chatham-Kent police officer Carl Herder says, "I welcome any legislation that will provide police with new tools that will make our streets safer."

The Hamilton Spectator wrote, "Legislation to toughen the penalties for those who risk the lives of others through their lethal driving is a good thing."

Lastly, Brian Patterson, president of the Ontario Safety League, has told us, "These are good recommendations. They're solid and they're going to save lives."

When we introduced this legislation, even the official opposition understood that it was the right thing to do. The member for Oak Ridges said, "I appreciate your initiative in bringing this forward. I trust that we'll see speedy passage of this bill."

Everyone agrees. With this bill, the McGuinty government is setting the stage to ensure that Ontario remains a leader in road safety. That is why I urge all members to give this legislation their enthusiastic support. I thank them, and I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): This worthwhile package of legislative measures proposed by the Minister of Transportation will, if enacted, save lives. As the minister said, despite Ontario's role as a leader in road safety, we must do more. If passed, the bill would improve safety by keeping drinking drivers and those who street race off Ontario roads.

Almost half of the fatal collisions on our roads are tied to speeding or loss of control. These senseless crashes are preventable, especially in the case of street racers. We want to get street racers off our streets as quickly as possible by giving police the power to issue an immediate roadside driver's licence suspension and seven-day vehicle impoundment if you are caught street-racing, participating in a driving contest or stunt driving.

We cannot bring back the 35 people whose lives have been lost to street racing since 1999, but this bill would take action to deter and hopefully prevent these kinds of tragedies from happening again. That is why this bill is so important. We need to make our roads safer for everyone—for the people who use them, and especially for the women and men who risk their lives to patrol them, our police.

Our government asked them what they thought would help to keep them safe. They told us that the ability to use a combination of flashing blue and red lights would increase their visibility, especially at night, reducing the

chances that they could be involved in a roadside fatality and help protect them while they are protecting us.

One of the things our police forces do across Ontario is help to catch and stop impaired drivers. As the minister noted, one quarter of all fatalities on Ontario's roads involve drinking drivers. That is simply unacceptable.

We want to protect Ontarians from drinking drivers. Drivers who repeatedly blow in the 0.05 to 0.08 BAC range would face increasingly severe treatment. If someone's caught drinking and driving and doesn't learn their lesson the first time, our proposals teach impaired drivers the severity of their actions while protecting innocent, law-abiding people. For those who are repeatedly convicted of a Criminal Code impaired driving offence, they would face the possibility of having their car ordered forfeited by the courts under the provisions of the proposed legislation.

The fact is, motor vehicle collisions exact a huge toll on Ontario, both in terms of lives lost and the massive economic costs. Indeed, motor vehicle collisions cost Ontarians \$9.1 billion annually in social and health care costs.

I know that the members of the official opposition and the third party are very supportive of any measures that would further protect the lives of Ontario's citizens. This bill is exactly that kind of measure. With everyone's help, we can ensure the fast passage of this legislation. We can give the police the tools they need to stop street racers. We can prevent injury through reduced collisions and better visibility for police officers, and we can send repeat drunk drivers a strong message: If you can't stop drinking and driving, you can have your car ordered forfeited by the courts.

I call on my colleagues in this House to support this legislation and urge its speedy passage. Let's work together to make safer roads for a safer Ontario a reality.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I want to put people on notice that I will be responding to the minister as critic. I appreciate that the remarks she's made pretty much recognize that this bill was a long time coming and it is probably the right thing to do.

I will make a few remarks on behalf of John Tory, the Leader of the Opposition, because he always wants to do the right thing. I suspect that that's the kind of tone we're looking for in this House: most importantly, to make our roads safer.

I see the former Minister of Transportation here as well, which is reassuring. I'm sure that he as well would like to be remembered as doing the right thing.

I'm surprised, as I'll say in my remarks, that it wasn't done sooner, but hopefully there would be hearings on this bill as well to make improvements and to seek further consultation with stakeholders, whether it's on the enforcement side or the after-market side of parts in this issue of street racing specifically.

Again, with that being said, I would suspect that our position would be realizing that there are always improvements that could be made in any legislation. But

in the interests of safety and the protection of the people of Ontario, I'd like to put a few things on the record in my time that will be next, I hope. I'll have an hour to speak about this and many other things.

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto-Danforth): I appreciate that there are elements of this bill that I think will be useful. I don't think there's anyone in this Legislature or anyone in this society who thinks we should deal with drunk driving in any way other than fairly sternly.

There's no question that the deaths that result from drunk driving and the deaths that result from street racing are unnecessary, tragic deaths and ones that we should be taking every opportunity to avoid, to ensure conditions are there that people don't find themselves or their families subjected to these tragedies.

That being said, in the course of reading preparing for this debate, it became clear to me that the law, although useful, is useful only in the larger context of action being taken on social problems and addiction problems that I hope the minister will address as we go through this process, because there's no question that it makes sense to take someone who's drunk off the road. Certainly, when I had a chance to go through the literature, one of the things that turned up in research is that the development of Alcoholics Anonymous in a number of American jurisdictions is correlated with a reduction in drunk driving. So in fact taking action in not so much the Ministry of Transportation jurisdiction but possibly that of the Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Education, taking action to stop addiction in our society, is as valuable as, and possibly more valuable than, punitive laws. I'm not saying they're not necessary; I'm just saying there are other techniques and approaches that may be more useful and may get us to the conclusion we want more expeditiously.

Certainly there are some changes in here related to emergency lighting that frankly don't need to be debated. They're straightforward and commonsensical. Let's get on with those.

1540

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I just want to commend the Minister of Transportation and the parliamentary assistant, the member from Orléans, who have been very strong advocates over the last number of years, promoting road safety in Ontario and making our roads safer for all of us who use them.

I'm reminded: You hear the radio commercial for RADD, Recording Artists Against Drinking and Driving, saying that not only are you loaded but you're a loaded weapon. I think this legislation that would introduce new measures to seize and forfeit the vehicles of repeat drunk drivers is an excellent step. You can't get into your vehicle and drive drunk. It has, potentially, very serious consequences of an individual being seriously hurt or, in fact, death. I think this legislation, which clamps down on drinking drivers, is the appropriate way to go.

It also provides additional protection for our police officers who are out there, particularly in bad weather when they're doing the RIDE program, using blue and

red flashing lights on their vehicles, a colour combination that will enhance the visibility of these police vehicles. We can't do enough for the brave souls in Ontario who wear a uniform, whether it's a police officer, a firefighter or a paramedic. We have to do everything we can to enhance their safety as they're out there doing good things on our behalf, in particular the OPP or our local police forces who are protecting our safety. As I said, I commend the minister and the parliamentary assistant for being such strong advocates for road safety in Ontario. This legislation is timely, and I hope members of the opposition will see fit to support it as quickly as possible.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions and comments?

Seeing none, the Chair recognizes the Minister of Transportation in response.

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I'm very grateful to the members from Durham, from Toronto–Danforth and from Peterborough for their comments.

One of the reasons we took the time that was required to bring forth this piece of legislation was that we wanted to ensure we had the opportunity to talk to the people who are involved. Whether they were the families of the victims, which we did in Sudbury—we also put together a round table where we brought all the impacted and affected people together on how we could move forward. I did, in fact, invite the member from Oak Ridges to participate in that forum. What we want to be able to do is ensure that what we've done is the right thing.

I couldn't agree more with the member from Toronto–Danforth. The issue of behaviour is fundamental, and that's why you heard in my remarks that education is pivotal to how we move forward—changing behaviour. That's why we move down to .05 to .08—in the warm range, and we're saying these are repeat offenders. We need to get to them. We need to get to their behaviour.

We know that if you drink and drive and we take your car, you can't drink and drive because you have no car. It's really quite simple. But having said that, we need to get to the root cause of why it's happening in the first place, and that's the behaviour. So the education component is mandatory. They must participate on the second and third offences. We're saying, "We'll work with you." Interlock in the third offence, but education is definitely mandatory in the second and third.

But overall, we have a broader issue around injury prevention that we need to deal with in all of these—I don't call them accidents; there's no such thing. It's a collision, it's a crash, and 99% of the time it's preventable. Again, how do we put in place the punitive measures we need to because we can't get to those who, for some reason or another, are not prepared to listen? Get them off the roads. But we can, in fact, educate others to ensure that they drive safely.

I look forward to the debate in the House, and I'm very grateful for the support we've received already from all members for this piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. O'Toole: I was hoping there would be someone here to share my time with, but it seems they'll be watching this and getting copies of Hansard, as well as watching it on TV, I'm sure, in their office.

It's always important to recognize at the outset that all of us in this House, I can safely assume, would be in support of measures to make our streets safer for pedestrians and for citizens at large, wherever they may be.

I think this bill does do some things. In fact, the title of the bill is—the troubling part here is a couple of things. Our job as critic is to be pointing out the shortfalls, potentially, the expedited route that they're looking for. I'm just going to put a little setting around this.

I see Mr. Rinaldi is now in the chair. It's a good place to keep order in the House here.

I would say this was introduced on April 12, as the minister has said. Here it is April 19, and I'm in hopes that the House will take time to fully examine the six different sections of the bill. I want to say at the outset that we should consult with the public on some of them, with the stakeholders, whether it's Brian Patterson from the Ontario Safety League, or indeed the CAA, obviously, the OPP and the road builders themselves. In fact, I would say consultations would probably be important for no other reason than educating the public and bringing them into this change.

There are some significant features in this bill which probably will end up being challenged in the courts. That's not to say we don't support the bill; we just want to make sure there is a clear understanding as you build consensus moving forward.

Again, it's always important as well to put a little history around the genesis of legislation. It's my experience, in the 12 or so years that I've been here, and in the previous 10 years municipally and on a school board, that from concept to legislation and regulation—and you would know, Mr. Speaker, as a former mayor of Brighton—is probably 10 years. It is a tragedy, how long it takes. There are always issues. We heard recently here—not new—the tragic incident of the school bus safety issue, with the seat belts. I'm hearing from not just the School Bus Operators' Association of Ontario, but the bus drivers themselves called my riding with liability issues. They are doing those important tasks of transporting students. Our most valuable resource or asset in this world is our children, yet there is no clear answer. It's kind of thrown over the fence to the federal government, which sets the standards for school bus design and construction.

That's not being critical. That question has been raised by the senior citizens of Ontario. They are worried about the motor coach industry and whether or not there should be seat belts there. There was an incident I think near Mississauga about a year and a half ago. The alliance of senior citizens of Ontario has a campaign now. I've visited with them and I've heard various concerns on that.

Going back further in the history to get to the genesis of this thing, a bill, almost completely replicated in Bill

2003, was really brought about by a tragic incident, and this is a sad reality. You would have to say, if you look at the history, that 38 people have been killed in street racing incidents in the greater Toronto area since 1999, so it's important that action be taken. It's 2007. You can do the math. It's pretty near a decade from the observation to the implementation. We're at this point, at this late date in the mandate, and the McGuinty government, which is now under pressure for lotteries, for the potential misuse of over \$20 million of hard-earned taxpayer money by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, may get deflected from completing this agenda.

But in fairness, even there, I'll tell you that in 2003 the Minister of Transportation, Frank Klees, introduced a bill that died on the order paper, almost the same bill, really. The bill was then reintroduced—I think it was Bill 122—on June 7, 2006.

1550

Frank Klees, who was the former Minister of Transportation, I might add, introduced the same bill because he's passionate about this. He introduced the bill; in fact, I believe the minister recognized that in both the day she introduced the legislation and some media event, some photo-op thing. I respect her for doing that because Mr. Klees, as the former minister, has done a lot of work, and she's now charged with carrying that forward.

But you know, you look back to these motives. People would like to remember Andrea Seggie, whose 21-year-old son, Matthew Power, was tragically struck and killed on November 6 of that year. She led a 470-kilometres march to Parliament Hill from Brantford to raise public awareness on the need for tougher laws.

The minister is trying to complete what started in 2003 and 2006, and 2007 now, to send a strong message that street racing will not be tolerated. I can honestly say in a non-partisan way I'm sure almost every member in the House here, if any exceptions, would be supportive of that initiative. It is hard to use the time to be super critical in any way directly on this particular legislation.

Speaker, I know you operate a speedway, a raceway. Is that not right? I'm sure you'd be familiar with, if there is the appropriate equipment, training and rules of the activity, there might be some need for young people who want to be competitive and want the skill of driving—there needs to be the proper environment. But certainly all of us agree it is not in the streets. You do see it. You see it performed—I commute from Durham every day, and it is almost two hours each way, Mr. Speaker. It's tragic. I know you come from down that area. It's a long drive each day both ways. I might spend three to four hours a day in my car, and how this affects me is, I watch people multi-tasking all the time.

You probably know—many people still call me. I've had a couple of bills on road safety myself. The one that probably gets the most attention is the use of cell phones. I used to see people chatting and kind of not really paying attention. I spoke to Gwen Boniface, who I think was the chief of the OPP at the time. Fantino was in fact the can the chief of police of the city of Toronto. I have a

letter from him supporting my initiative prior to introducing that bill the first time.

It has been in here three times. I know Kevin Flynn from the Liberal Party, the member from Oakville, has introduced a bill which is part of my bill. It is not the whole bill, it is part of it. It's one piece. In fact, I supported that bill. I just had an e-mail the other day thanking me for working collaboratively with the government member, which is really the right thing. Most people find, as we are in this, that it's important to keep track of doing the right thing, not the right political thing, and that's really the point that's being made here.

But I think in memory of her son, we, as legislators, are slow to pick up the challenge. But Frank Klees, the member from Oak Ridges, is very commenting and collaborative with the minister. I have his press release here, issued that same day. It says, "Frank Klees, member from Oak Ridges, welcomes the McGuinty government's announcement that it would be introducing legislation to get tough on street racing. Klees has called for legislation to empower frontline police officers to issue on-the-spot licence suspensions and vehicle impoundment ever since constituents Rob and Lisa Manchester were killed as the result of a street racing incident in ... 2006."

This affects families. I could probably even stop now and if the minister had thoroughly researched Frank Klees's bill, the member from Oak Ridges, we could probably pass this thing. This is one thing that we should learn how to do here, because it's giving the police the right tools, it's giving the right signal to the citizenry at large using our public roadways that driving is a right, an endowment of having a proper licence, training and licence registration on the vehicle. It's a privilege, quite frankly; not a right, at the pleasure of the Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Klees goes on to say, "In making the announcement, Premier McGuinty acknowledged the efforts by Klees on the street racing issue and his influence in shaping the government's legislation." It's a very commendable thing for the Premier to say. "I want to thank Frank and ... acknowledge the leadership role he has assumed. He has taken a keen and active interest in this, he has put forward some very positive proposals," said Premier McGuinty. "I want you to know, Frank, that you have had an influence for good on the policy that we are announcing today and I thank you for that."

It's good to hear there is positive collaboration by all parties on issues like this that clearly can prevent deaths—as I said, I think 38 deaths since 1999.

Also, if you quickly scan the media on that—it's important to put this stuff on the record—Murray Campbell, a respected writer with the Globe and Mail, says, "The Ontario government will unveil today tougher new measures to curb street racing that will allow police to impound the cars and suspend the drivers' licences of anyone caught participating in the activity."

"Premier Dalton McGuinty will join Transportation Minister Donna Cansfield this morning at a safety education centre in Stouffville to announce the crackdown."

I remember seeing the photo op on TV. It was a very cold, miserable day, actually, so better her than me—I mean, the weather.

“Government sources say that, under the proposed amendments to the Highway Traffic Act, drivers caught racing on public streets by police would have their licences and vehicles taken away on the spot for seven days.”

I could go on. If you actually look at the legislation itself, the legislation is quite specific and quite progressive. There is provision in the first schedule on impaired driving, but I want to go to section 172, the prohibition on street racing: “The current penalty for street racing is a \$200 minimum and \$1,000 maximum fine or six months imprisonment, or both a fine and imprisonment, and a maximum driver’s licence suspension of two years.”

So let’s not think for a moment that the police don’t have some tools. I’ve just explained to you that that’s currently section 172. What changes here is: “The fine is increased to a \$2,000 minimum,” where it was \$200, with a maximum fine of \$10,000.

If you take a young person whose car is their pride and joy and all that stuff—if they have good parents and good community-responsible awareness, they’d need to go to Mr. Rinaldi’s track or something to race. They shouldn’t be doing it on the street, for sure. You’ll see a lot of them modifying their vehicle, putting a fancy tailpipe on it or other such things. I guess they’ve got to know there’s a limit to having their car looking smart and then trying to do unsafe things that endanger others. If the car gets impounded—it may be their only possession, and they probably owe a great deal on the financing of the vehicle, and then \$10,000; they might be 20-something years old. I don’t know. I think there may be discussion around the issue of a deterrent that doesn’t put them into bankruptcy before they even get their first job. Do you understand?

I agree with the suspension because, as I said, it’s a privilege to drive, not a right, and that privilege could be removed by society. I would support tough enforcement. There is a due process to lay a charge and then have that conviction upheld in a court or some kind of traffic act panel that could review that. That’s one thing we would probably hear. The discretion of the court to levy a significant fine of \$10,000—I don’t know. This could sound a bit partisan here, but every time I think of Liberal government, they sort of like to tax you to death and then spend you to death. That’s the general, overall conclusion, if you look at the budget. Spending is increased to \$90 billion in the Ontario budget, up \$22 billion. I ask my constituents when they call—you get the same calls, I’m sure, and not in any partisan way: “I can’t find a doctor,” or “I waited six hours in emergency,” or “The streets are plugged; there’s gridlock,” or “My son just got laid off from Dura Automotive.”

They’ve spent \$22 billion, and we still have gridlock. We have insufficient transit. The Greater Toronto Transportation Authority still isn’t up and running. They’ve spent millions of dollars—billions of dollars. I ask con-

stituents and I ask you: Is it any better? Do you feel that any of the priority services that you want in your community are any better?

1600

In fact, it’s quite sad today. We had two bills, one from the member from Burlington. The member from Burlington had a private member’s bill. The private member’s bill this morning, or ballot item number 79, was Ms. Savoline’s, “that, in the opinion of this House, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care should immediately identify Burlington’s Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital for inclusion on the ministry’s capital projects priorities list...” The people have raised \$40 million in Burlington, and they need this hospital renewal project. That was one of the items debated in private members’ business this morning.

The other one was ballot item number 1, a private member’s notice of motion by Mr. Jim Wilson from Simcoe–Grey. Here’s his notice of motion: “that, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Liberal government should provide Stevenson Memorial Hospital with the required \$1.4 million”—that’s like one hour of interest on the provincial debt—“in new funding over the next three years so that it can reopen its birthing unit and ensure that enough obstetricians and health care providers can be recruited to supply a stable and ongoing service for expectant mothers in New Tecumseth ... and Essa” in the region of his riding of Simcoe–Grey. Not very much money. It is surprising. It was a very close vote. I think it was 18 to 17. The Minister of Health, Mr. Smitherman, came in, and he was the deciding vote. They defeated both motions—small requests for communities. What kind of signal does that send to young people when we can’t agree on the number one priority—in the context of street racing and the Highway Traffic Act, that this House can’t operate co-operatively?

I’m trying to make a point here. Quite frankly, I’m saying here on behalf of John Tory and the Conservative Party of Ontario that I would support it. I would like to think that we could look at such things as the fine. We could hear from the professionals, the police. I see that there’s a section here dealing with conducting reviews.

“Section 62,” which was mentioned by the minister in her remarks this afternoon, “restricts the use of different coloured lights to various classes of vehicles. Currently, flashing red lights are permitted to a number of classes of vehicles (eg. police department vehicles, ambulances) listed in subsection 62(15) and green flashing lights are permitted to firefighters only. The section is amended as follows: to allow that further classes of vehicles, to be prescribed by the regulations, may use red flashing lights; to give police department vehicles the exclusive right to use red and blue flashing lights; and to allow volunteer medical responders, to be prescribed by the regulations, to use green flashing lights.”

This was quite a subtle amendment. When you have volunteer fire departments in communities like my riding of Durham—for instance, Scugog and Port Perry have, for the most part, volunteer firefighters. They’re re-

sponding as volunteers, driving their own vehicles to the station so they can be dispatched to the site of that home or business that could be in peril. So it's making sure that the public is aware of what those lights are that are flashing behind you, whether it's a snowplow, an ambulance, a police car and such. I think this section is mechanical. I suppose the associations of firefighters and police and the chiefs of police have worked this out with the ministry, and the ministry is just fixing up the regulations.

There are other sections of this bill that are quite interesting. I went through primarily the preamble, the explanatory sections. It's not a huge bill. The Highway Traffic Act itself is quite, quite large. This just amends some sections. This is actually 13 or 14 pages, two languages, probably seven pages in length in small print. These are under the themes of "expanded application of the act" and "miscellaneous matters."

A new section, subsection 1(8), "is enacted to clarify that suspensions and impoundments for a period of days are counted by including" each 24-hour period.

"Section 4.1 is added to permit the ministry to do things electronically and in electronic format and to permit persons dealing with the ministry to do things electronically," which is fine. It's just more expeditious for either the lawyer or the licensing office to file certain papers.

"Section 5 currently provides for regulations prescribing miscellaneous fees."

Now, here we get into it. There's an inordinate amount of fees, if you get into this bill in any detail. I'm just trying to lead you through.

The fines have moved from \$200 to \$2,000 and from \$1,000 to \$10,000.

Now we get into the fees section.

It says, "Clause 5(1)(d) is for administrative fees for the reinstatement of licences."

So, if a young person has lost their licence, there's probably a retraining period required, which is additional.

"This is amended to allow for conditions and circumstances to attach to any exemption from the payment of these fees. New clause 5(1)(i) is added to permit regulations that impose consequences in regard to licences, permits and number plates for failure to pay a fee or penalty or for a dishonoured payment"—in other words, failure to pay or an NSF cheque.

There are a number of other sections. I was quite surprised, actually. It's plain that the ministry people and the legal staff have done a pretty good job.

A new section of part III is added to the act:

"This part provides for the Superior Court of Justice, in a proceeding commenced by the Attorney General, to make an order forfeiting a vehicle (which is defined to include a motorized snow vehicle)"—so if you read the act, you'd think it's the Highway Traffic Act, but in fact it involves almost every vehicle, as described in the regulations—"to the crown in right of Ontario if the court finds that the vehicle was or is likely to be used to engage in certain unlawful activity and is owned or is in the care, control or possession of a person whose driver's licence

has been suspended under the Highway Traffic Act for certain unlawful activity two or more times in the preceding 10 years. The unlawful activity (defined in this part as 'vehicular unlawful activity') is an impaired driving offence or other prescribed offence under the Criminal Code (Canada) or an offence of driving with a suspended driver's licence or other prescribed offences under the Highway Traffic Act."

It goes on to say that there are indeed parts here where they can actually sell the vehicle, and they can actually use the money to compensate a victim of some act.

It's those kinds of details that I think make it worthy. It's a very important and necessary change, but let's get it right so we don't have to be back here in our term of government. On October 10, 2007, there will be a provincial election, and if we're in government, we'll probably look closer at this than they've allowed time for.

Even today you see that sometimes they're trying to rush some money out just prior to the election day.

One of the main questions was for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Mr. Colle. There were some questions raised about the process by which some \$20 million was released.

It just demonstrates that haste makes waste. That's an old saying. I think here's a case where they have a bit of a slush fund here, they threw the ball over to the minister, and it seems that there's no process to access the funds. At least, these are the questions that have been raised, and they have been questioned, but there are no answers. It's sort of like the Lottogate thing: Minister Caplan and his experience with 140-plus questions and zero answers. That isn't a good climate for the people of Ontario whom each of us is elected to serve.

So I'd just like to think that in this matter, under the important Highway Traffic Act provisions, there are changes made.

If I go on and talk at any length—and there's very little time to respond here today to this bill—the work that has gone on, as I said before, was introduced in 2003.

I've mentioned the seatbelt issue on buses. I've got some input here on that particular issue for the minister—because the ministers, current and past, are still here, which is a good sign on a Thursday afternoon.

This is from Rob Ferguson of the Toronto Star. It goes on to talk about the incident: "The Canada Safety Council said no changes are needed because school buses are designed with 37 built-in safety systems, including small windows to keep children inside and padded seatbacks to cushion impact during crashes."

1610

I think what's happened here is that many years ago, when these regulations came into force, perhaps there weren't as many vehicles or school buses or as many children, and certainly not as many school trips. Going on 400-series highways, we now see the speeds on those highways, Mr. Speaker, which is certainly an issue of the day. You and I are familiar that if you're going 110 you get run over. So enforcement—Chief Fantino's talking

about that a lot—but the speed basically is 110 to 120 on the 400 and 401 highways. Whether that's right or wrong, that's the reality. With school buses maybe those kinds of impacts in the little lab that you see—you know, running up against a bumper there—I'm not sure these replicate the kind of situations we see here.

On the other side, one of the issues I found interesting was the tragic loss of a life just has to be avoided at any expense. I guess there's some conversations about the seat belt and some kind of fire or other incident in the vehicle where if they had to get out hurriedly, if someone couldn't release the seat belt, a small child, perhaps junior kindergarten age or whatever, could be trapped.

So there are balances to all the discussions here on road safety and on the seat belt issue. Even if I look around, in that ministry there are a number of very important files. The member from Kawartha-Haliburton, Ms. Scott, has a bill on the 105 kilometres per hour for transports on our provincial highways—another controversial issue.

I ask myself, and yeah, I think it would be important to have the speed limiters. I've talked to Mr. Bradley from the Ontario Trucking Association and others—some independents and some who work for larger companies—who are in a just-in-time environment, where truck shipping and gridlock and all these things are important. It's all part of the cost of inventory, whether it's on the road or in the plant.

What's important here is for the minister to set a tone on that bill and relate it to the economic arguments as well as the public safety arguments around it. I think there could be work done on that file and I don't see a lot going on. There's been talk about it several times, but nothing introduced just yet. I think that Ms. Scott has done a fair amount of work on that, and the trucking association. That's an important bill.

The irony of it is—it's funny, the speed that I see on the highways is 100. It's 100 kilometres. How are they going to make a bill that says it's okay to go 105? It's not consistent with the posted speed. Where's the consistency? This is what the problem is. It's not being well managed, not to cast aspersions or criticisms. It is either posted or it isn't. If there's this discretionary Never-Never Land between 100 and 120—Mr. Speaker, you would recall; no you wouldn't, you weren't here. We tried and had discussions. Mr. McNeely, you would know, as an engineer and probably involved in these kinds of things. Experts told us—the engineers, probably civil and mechanical engineers, I suppose—the designed structure was supposed to be, I think, 110 kilometres. That all got screwed up when they went from the old speed system of 100 miles an hour to 100 kilometres, and of course it's 60 to 100. With that conversion, the actual posted speed I think got reduced. At that time, the argument for reducing speed in the States and other jurisdictions was to actually save gas, to be better for the environment.

That discussion needs to be held. Before we go about willy-nilly changing the speed for school buses, changing

and restricting the transportation industry, or designing these new HOV lanes—how are they policed, what's the speed? I should say here that I have two suggestions on the HOV—high-occupancy vehicle—lanes. First, they were designed by the Ministry of Transportation people looking at other jurisdictions. Frank Klees allotted the capital for them when he was Minister of Transportation. Minister Takhar, when he was minister—he's here and he's shaking his head—completed it. That's fine, he was there. That's good, because it shows that governments can work together. It's unfortunate we're not still on that side, but that's a whole different debate.

If you look at that again, on the HOV lanes, I have a suggestion, if the minister's listening. I'm offering it up free. It's just the right thing to do. I would allow any vehicle that's using renewable fuels or forms other than the traditional combustion engine to use the HOV lane. It won't cost you a cent. It will give them an incentive to use an alternative-fuel vehicle. It makes sense to me. As a matter of fact, it makes sense in California, where they're already doing it. These are the kinds of debates that we should have here, and we should move on with them and forget the political football stuff. I think there are good members on all sides and there are good ideas on all sides.

I guess on that transportation file—hey, there are a lot more issues. When you talk about seat belts on school buses, how about motor coaches? You know what I mean? What's good for one is good for all, I suppose. Those are debates that should be held. Being government is about making tough decisions. I look at that file, Mr. Speaker—it's good to see the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford back in the chair—and you could spend a lot of money on that transportation file. Let me assure you, there is very little money provincially unless you raise the tax or cut services. Health is going to suck up 50 cents on every dollar now, or more. So if you want to spend in transportation, you're going to find two things challenging you on that file.

If you look at the Places to Grow document, the whole deal there is intensification. That's more people living in condos—that's the quick interpretation on that—and everybody taking the TTC. That's basically what that is. It's Smart Growth or everybody living on top of each other. That's it. That's how it's going. I think there are probably some options there, but they're going to be expensive options.

Here's the point I'm making: Transit works with density. It's like motherhood; I can't say anything against transit. I take GO Transit. Not every day—this morning I spoke in Scarborough so I had to drive to Scarborough. Because if I wanted to get to Scarborough, I'd have taken the GO train and then figured out what bus to take from the Greenwood station. It's not convenient for people who aren't on a regular route. When I come to Toronto by the GO train and the TTC or walk up from Union Station, that's kind of routine, and in the morning people like things to be predictable. The last thing we need is unreliable transit service.

At the same time, I was speaking to people today at the interfaith community group at noon—they were from Uxbridge—and they were saying, “We don’t have any transit up there.” And I said, “Well, there’s nobody living there—very many people, anyway.” Transit functions when you have density. In my riding of Durham, there’s Durham transit, the integrated transit system in Durham—

Interjection.

Mr. O’Toole: Yes, they’re working hard. They just got 25 new buses, and that’s good. Here’s the deal: That money actually came from our government.

Interjection.

Mr. O’Toole: No, it’s a fact. I wouldn’t say it, Mr. Rinaldi. That money came from a budget; I can show you the number and the capital allocation in the estimates. It’s important. When you’ve been here 12 years, you learn how to follow the numbers through for your own riding. You’ll learn after your second term.

But my point is this, quite frankly—it’s not to be smug or arrogant; sometimes you hear that. The issue that I wanted to point out is the appropriate time and the appropriate resources are what are missing. A bit of common sense: For instance, I live in an area just outside of town. It’s sort of in the country a bit. Now, the funny thing is, there’s a concession road just before I get off the paved part of road, and this municipal bus, I’ve taken it four times—drives down a country road. The only thing it’s going by is sheep. It goes by a sheep farm. There’s nobody on that bus. It makes a big loop. Not to be humorous, Mr. Speaker, because I know you’re paying attention, but the thing is, I think the sheep’s wool is turning a bit yellowish from the diesel fuel that’s spewing out the smokestack. I didn’t say I was opposed to transit; in fact, I would say I’m in favour of transit. But look, you can’t drive a \$250,000 bus—if you’re going to operate it seven days a week, 24 hours a day, that’s five people driving a \$250,000 bus, plus the fuel, and nobody on it. I say to the people of Ontario, watch, and call your MPP, or whomever, regardless of what party. They need to know that, and they need to know your view. At the same time, we need to make sure there is transit that is reliable, predictable and regular enough to address the capacity issues in the urban areas. Carpooling to those areas where transit is developed is the way to go.

1620

Further advice on the transit file—I say this because the two ministers are here—I think there was an effort to move the GO train east. We need it, because there are over 500,000 people. The minister was there one time, when the low-floor buses were introduced in Oshawa, and I appreciate the time that I was there with him.

Here’s the deal: The plan was to bring the GO train to the north side of the 401, around Oshawa—very expensive. It didn’t happen at the Stevenson Road interchange—too much money involved. The next one is going to be maybe down at the GM headquarters building just a little further east, because they’re going to do the south Courtice development there and there will be an

interchange there someday—probably part of the 407, kind of deal. I’d leave it on the south side of the 401. With your Greenbelt plan and the Places to Grow plan, you should run the linear GO system all the way potentially to Belleville or Kingston, connecting those nodal communities along its way, east-west. North-south should be handled by an independent north-south connection. It could be bus, depending on the volume and density of traffic from Peterborough, the city of Kawartha Lakes, Port Perry, Uxbridge—wherever. They could be connected linear north-south in a more flexible mode, working with both GO rolling stock like buses or local transit coordination. If that applies to my riding in Durham, it certainly applies to other parts heading west out toward Halton and other areas.

I know that transit is a huge amount of money, and I certainly support the initiatives on light rail. But when I look at the reports on light rail, we’re not talking millions, we’re talking billions. This is huge, and then the issue has to be where the Places to Grow document is so important about the future planning direction about where’s the growth? What’s missing is the democracy of it all. People are leapfrogging now. The real growth has moved over—Cobourg is growing, and Port Hope; people make choices.

We can’t have everything, when you look at the priorities: health care, child poverty that was discussed today, and other priorities. Municipalities benefit from transit, and it might be argued that we all benefit from the environmental improvements that occur, but they’ve got to find a method. I think the province should be involved on the capital side. If there’s no fare box money, maybe they’d support the fare box part of the revenue rather than fix potholes. The GO Transit part today—about 12% of the fare box revenue is from the province; I think it’s something like that.

I would say that there’s a lot more to be done on that file, and I don’t see much being said about it—a lot of photo ops pushing electric lawn mowers around or something.

Another issue that’s pressing us, and it has a lot to do with this issue under the Highway Traffic Act amendments, Bill 203—which again we’re supporting, Mr. Speaker, just to keep you included here—is gridlock. It’s not just overt street racing—many times it’s young people with fancy cars, but not all the time. I see it manifested in road rage. These are people who have cars capable of fairly aggressive speeds. For instance, if a driver is coming down from Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford and they’re late for a meeting—there is a speed limit, and no one should be exempt from speed limits; that’s for sure.

I know the member—what’s Mr. Yakabuski’s riding?—drives a lot too.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. O’Toole: Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, that’s it.

The point is, we shouldn’t characterize it as all young people. I see it daily: people leapfrogging and jiggling in

and out. I think that my idea, suggested here—and this, quite frankly, is coming, whether I say it or not. I just read Transport 2000 and some of the literature on the file. Quite interesting. The former minister knows because he is a technical person. It's called ITS. Now, write that down because it's going to be here shortly. It is here now, actually.

It's intelligent transportation systems. This is a way of managing volume traffic. It could easily be explained by—Mr. Speaker, you may use the 407 at times. I don't; it's too expensive. But I didn't promise to roll back the tolls either. I just use the alternate route. But the 407, if you have a transponder—guess what?—it's wireless communication. That transponder can be used to regulate the speed of a vehicle. There are all kinds of applications. It could also read traffic signals ahead. It could close merge and exit lanes to keep the steady flow of traffic capacity, using the current design capacity of a stretch by closing ramps electronically.

I don't see much imagination on this file. They've done a lot of things. Actually, Frank Klees did a lot of things; they're just finishing the work. I think it's important that Frank get back as Minister of Transportation and that we get on with making the intelligent, informed, consulted suggestions that I have made today. In fact, I'm putting them out on the table so that everybody can know that all members can make a contribution here. The point is, is anybody listening?

Now, as I go further west, I see the GTA and I see the work that's being done by the Greater Toronto Transit Authority. This was initiated by Minister Cansfield as well, the current Minister of Transportation. I was there at the opening. We said during the bill—Mr. Speaker, you probably know this. I think it was Bill 104. What they did with the bill was probably right, but there were two things wrong with it. I am still going to say the same thing on that bill. It's related to this to the extent it's under that minister's jurisdiction.

Here's the deal: The governance model was dysfunctional and there was no money. It's designed to fail. In fact, they'll spend from now until just after the election to do anything. No discredit to the people, the terms of reference, the governance model. There's no money, and they haven't done anything, except if you look in the \$100,000 disclosures, they will all be there. I'm not sure what they're doing actually. It's another level of government that's not really providing much service directly to people.

I think of autistic children who are being neglected by these large salaries for additional bureaucrats who aren't doing anything. No discredit to Rob MacIsaac and the rest of the good people, but the terms of reference are wrong, and we know it. They won't get David Miller to agree. I'll tell you what I mean by that. If you look at the model of the board—I'm going by memory here—I think there's Durham, York, Peel, Halton and Hamilton. So there are five areas that have a representative, the mayor or something like that. Peel wanted a couple more members. That was a problem, too. The city of Toronto

has four members and the province has two. Basically, they're the representatives of the minister, so they control the whole process. If it's a request for money, the two members who are appointed by Dalton McGuinty will vote against it because they'll be told to. That's how it will work, and it's unfortunate. In fact, if you look in the budget, there's no money. It's a sad state.

I'm going down the highway further. It's going to affect people all the way to Halton, basically. Now, there is some additional lane capacity being built on the west-bound 401 going through to Windsor. However, when you get to the Windsor border, there's a whole new ball game. Everything comes to a stop in both directions to get through Windsor and Huron Church, in that area. The federal government allowed in their last budget, I believe, \$540 million; Minister Flaherty and Minister Cannon, the federal Minister of Transportation. I spoke to those people, making sure I understood what I was saying. Quite frankly, they have said—whether it's a tunnel or it's an above-grade solution, it's the province's jurisdiction; it's a provincial issue. They are willing partners in this. It's not like they're throwing it over the fence and letting the province pay for it, because let's face it, there's only one taxpayer, whether it's the federal pocket, the provincial pocket or the municipal pocket.

1630

I think having safety in the environment, the emissions and a tunnel versus above grade are issues that experts can give us some advice on, and there should be discussions on that issue. That issue is costing the economy of Ontario jobs, and we see it in the manufacturing sector. There are 150,000 individuals—and their families—who haven't had a job in the last couple of years, with the inaction from Minister Papatello's economic involvement and Minister Dwight Duncan, the Minister of Energy. They're bobbing and weaving and they're not to be seen. They're ambivalent on the topic. I think the mayor of Windsor is disappointed too. A recent meeting on that tunnel project—it's a process.

So when I look at the ministry and I look at this bill, I come to this conclusion. It's important to summarize; I've been wandering around a bit. The summary is this: I'm concerned about this being introduced on the 12th and they want it passed within a month. It does affect young people. I think there should be a process where they get retrained or retuned in on some of the responsibility for the street racing component of it. There are provisions today for the fines. From \$200, they've moved that up almost 1000%. Now it's a \$10,000 fine. I'm interested in hearing from the OPP, the enforcement people, and what kinds of programs are going to be in place where we're driving this kind of activity off the street.

Young people today need to have outlets. We've spent an inordinate amount of time—I was in municipal government myself—building skateboard parks and that. They need to have some outlet here, and I think that might be part of the solution as well, having programs they can take. Maybe at Mosport in my riding they could

have trained professionals to give them advice and teach them responsible driving, so they then realize the privilege can be removed if you don't follow the rules, as opposed to whacking them with a \$10,000 fine and taking their car. Wait a minute here. I know it's wrong, and I am completely opposed to street racing of any form at any age, but when we're dealing with this, I think we should consult with some of the people who are professionals in this area to make sure we're providing options as opposed to their getting their backs up and probably acting out in other ways, once you've taken away all their liberty or something.

I just think it's sort of like that staying-in-school-to-18 bill, Bill 52. That's another one. The response was punitive. I think there are better ways; this is what worries me. Quite frankly, on this particular bill—I think they may have changed that bill under pressure from the union, and that's good.

It's important, as well, to recognize the work that's being done in Durham region. This is a publication they've put out, and I've made copies available to the Premier, to the Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

I want to conclude, and it's still related to the transportation ministry. Do you know what they said in the second-last budget? Roger Anderson, the chair of Durham region, as well as the mayors, even in this last budget were unanimously disappointed. There was nothing there for them. Even with the amount of money recently given out in the budget, if you looked at Toronto, Peel, Mississauga and York region and the Brampton AcceleRide program, Durham got nothing.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship): They have no plan.

Mr. O'Toole: I'm going to repeat what the former minister said: "They have no plan." Well, they have a plan. Perhaps he's a little behind in his reading—not to be smart, but they have a plan. I'm assured they have a plan, and there are a couple of articles here: "Durham Region Council Includes Leaders for the New Era," and I'm just going to recognize them because there are some changes. Some of you probably know some of them. On the cover here—I'm going to read out who is on there. If you want to look this up on the Durham website, you can, and there's a lot of good information on economic updates, technology, workplace wellness, road tests—that's the big one—management and deal makers. It's going to be the energy capital of not just Ontario; it's going to be the energy capital of Canada. Ontario should be the leader in Canada. It's right now just barely above Prince Edward Island.

Here's what's happening: On the cover, the mayor of Ajax, an interesting fellow. I served with him on regional council, Steve Parish. His father was the mayor for many years, a nice guy. He's okay. Larry O'Connor from Brock. He was actually a member here. Larry O'Connor, now the mayor of Brock township, was a member for the NDP when they were government. Jim Abernethy is the brand new mayor of Clarington. He's never been elected

before and he's experiencing the experience he missed; let's put it that way. Marilyn Pearce is the mayor of Scugog, a nice person. I worked with her on a number of issues. Scugog, Port Perry—it's a destination community; it really is: Palmer park, named for the founder of chiropractic. It's got a lot of things going for it, a lot of great people. The hospital, if I might just put this in, Lakeridge Health in Durham, is another area that's been ignored by the McGuinty government. I've talked to Wayne Arthurs—he's not here today, but he's usually here—and Wayne is not exactly working with Christine Elliott, Jerry Ouellette and myself on this Lakeridge Health funding. Do you realize that every citizen living in Durham receives \$283 less than the provincial average in health care? Can you imagine what that means times 500,000 people? Over the last while, that \$30 million would have made the difference. We wouldn't have a deficit and they wouldn't be ordered by George Smitherman to cut children's mental health services.

In fact, Marilyn Pearce, the mayor of Scugog—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): I know her.

Mr. O'Toole: I know her. She's a very nice, hard-working person, and that's great. I'm with her at a meeting in early May, and the theme is—I'm surprised, because she's a personal friend of George. I'm not trying to be clever here by half, but she's connected, probably more than I am, actually, which is fine. But she should talk to George. And Marilyn Emery from the central east LHIN—I'm in hopes that it works, because they've bought all the furniture and rented all of the offices. I'm not exactly sure what they're doing, but they're—

Mr. Rinaldi: They're doing a good job.

Mr. O'Toole: They aren't doing anything, member from Northumberland. Name one thing they're doing except buying furniture and picking out the signs. They haven't done anything yet. They took over April 1. We'll see what they do.

And then there is a brand new mayor, Pat Perkins, from Whitby. She was a councillor for some time. I served with her—excellent. And Bob Shepherd is the brand new mayor of Uxbridge.

So there's a mixture of deep, rich experience and new, invigorated enthusiasm. I think they have a great opportunity to lead Durham into the future as the energy capital of Canada.

I want to commend the work done by the Durham Strategic Energy Alliance, because this group—there's an energy park discussion going on right now in my riding of Clarington. We have the Darlington nuclear plant. John Tory last night made a very firm commitment that we're not going to run out of energy under a Conservative government, unlike the current quagmire that's occurring under the Minister of Energy, Dwight Duncan. In fact, the file is beyond him, I think. For a bit of time, they moved him over to finance when Greg, the Minister of Finance, had to step down because of outside issues. But when he moved in, here's what actually happened: I think he lost part of the file, because he promised one time to close the coal plants in 2007, and then he came

back and changed it to 2009. I think the date now is to be determined. They haven't really got a plan.

So in transportation they have no plan, and when I look at Durham region—why am I mentioning this? What is the infrastructure for the economy? Transit. Get with the game. And all we want is our fair share—no more. That's what I'm here for, to make sure that under these provisions in Bill 203, which are somewhat related—it's the same ministry—we have our fair share.

I would say, with the very limited time I've had, that I have a few other things. I think it's important, because I'm very proud to represent Durham, having served on their regional council and locally. I lived there, and when leave here, I'll still be living there. Mr. Speaker, you probably want to know as well. People ask me, and I'm sure all members get asked, "What's the most important thing in your riding?" Mr. Ramal, from London: Is it the dump, Green Lane?

Interjection.

Mr. O'Toole: No. Whatever. What is the most important issue?

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe): We fixed most of them.

Mr. O'Toole: You fixed most of them. That's what the member from London–Fanshawe is saying, and in fact he just got a dump in his riding. So I'm not sure what you mean by fixing it. But here's the deal: In Durham—all the members in London are in serious trouble. They're running now. They're announcing money here and there. It's this "Haste makes waste" thing, the reference I made earlier.

1640

Here's the deal: I know, because I live there and I listen to the people, that the number one issue in the economy is the auto sector and the 407. These are the families. The 407 right now—the Minister of Education is here and she should know. She's a very clever lady and I appreciate and admire that, but half as smart as John Tory. But anyway, that's a whole deal.

Hon. Ms. Wynne: October 10, we'll see.

Mr. O'Toole: No, I'm only kidding. What I really meant to say there is that she would know that there was not a nickel in the budget for the 407. It's the highest priority of 500,000 people who are asking. It's the number one priority. In fact, I say it here and I'm going to repeat it because the former minister is here, and I know he has listened because he is involved with the economy and small business. That's his responsibility as minister in that area. It's important. It is the arteries of the economy.

Also, enhanced and extended service in public transit in urban areas: Recognize the Durham region integrated plan like you have York and Brampton in AcceleRide and the other programs. In Kitchener-Waterloo there's a very sophisticated plan as well. I think that Durham's turn has come. It may sound trite or trivial or just like a cute expression, but there's a growing population. There's a university there. There is soon to be the home of an energy centre for Canada which probably will

include a new nuclear reactor within the next number of years. That progress and that work are being done, and we need the infrastructure to make it work. People can work on the smart plan that you took credit for the other day. Your Minister of Municipal Affairs and your Minister of Infrastructure Renewal took great pride in announcing the award for that plan. By the way, he was courteous enough to recognize the former Minister of Municipal Affairs on this side for the work that was done by the ministry and the deputy. The civil service had done a tremendous job in recognizing how we manage growth in the future. Good stuff; I don't have any problem with it.

Here's my deal. If that's going to work, you've got to have a transit plan that works, and I don't see one. I even heard ministers saying that there was no plan. I can assure you that it's a sophisticated region of over 500,000 people. It's bigger than most provinces: Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. It's an important economic capital, with the largest auto complex in the world, and the largest nuclear facility active and running in the world, a successful operation, I might say. I just ask if one thing be remembered by the Minister of Transportation: the 407, the number one infrastructure piece in the riding, and alongside that continuing to work on transit.

I would say that our fair share in the transit funding dollars and the gas tax dollars needs to recognize the rural parts that aren't necessarily serviced by transit. Roads and bridges: There needs to be allocation of funding for that infrastructure to service the agricultural community. It's critical.

The other part of this is finishing the job on health care. What I mean by that: The history there is that the Health Services Restructuring Commission recognized the growth, and there's a cancer centre about to be opened shortly. It's about time. But the operating funding is a huge issue and affects the vulnerable members of our society: children with mental health issues and families that are struggling because of these issues. I would ask them to consider that in the acquiescent way that I've said I'm supporting, on behalf of John Tory and the opposition, Bill 203. Let's get on and do some of the work that needs to be done, some of which I spoke of today.

The Acting Speaker: Time for questions and comments.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I want to begin by commending the member from Durham, who at the outset said he was hoping he would have a colleague to come and share the time with him. No one did show up to help him, so I want to congratulate him for ragging the puck for the last hour. It's a long time—been there and done that—so good for you, especially on a Thursday afternoon.

There are two things that I just want to reinforce in terms of issues that people want to think about more than I, especially those who are going to be dealing with this bill when I won't. I know my colleague from Toronto–Danforth is going to speak at length next and will probably raise some of these as well.

I want to deal first with the matter of the increased authority to govern and impose fees for administration, impaired driving and road racing. There is authority in the bill to impose consequences when fees or penalties are not paid. I don't think those consequences are outlined, so I don't know how harsh or less harsh they are to be or what the government has in mind in that regard. I'm hoping that someone is going to spell that out for us.

Even though there are consequences that can be imposed, and they remain undefined, it also says in the bill that there are exemptions from the payment of fees or penalties under certain conditions and under certain circumstances. Again, those certain circumstances, those certain conditions involving exemptions are not outlined in the bill. I suspect they are going to be dealt with in regulation, but it would be interesting to hear from the government about what they have in mind in terms of exemptions in this regard.

Secondly, there are also issues around previous suspensions and how, five years or more after they've occurred, they won't be taken into account. I ask the question about how many repeat offences are necessary before you might have harsher consequences. That's not defined too.

Mr. McNeely: I'd just like to respond to what the member from Durham has said. He took us all the way from sheep to buses to nuclear facilities to Windsor. We had a trip across Toronto, including the 407. So over an hour, we've gone to Windsor and back. I'm pleased to say, though, that the member from Durham supports this legislation. He said that at the end of his hour and he said that at the beginning of the hour. I think that's very important.

He was part of the participation when we got together with many people on street racing. We had that consultation with the police forces, with citizens, with insurance companies. That process, which was led by our minister, Minister Cansfield, was very productive and I think we've got good legislation coming out of that.

I'd like to say, though, that when you get into some issues—Durham is very important, I agree with the member. To show that importance, \$241 million has been committed there since we took over government in 2003. So Durham has been getting its good share. I think GO Transit has had \$1.6 billion in investments. You talked about the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority and that whole area from Oshawa to Hamilton. There's recognition that those dollars have to be spent and that public transit has to be improved in our province.

I'd just like to remind the member that when you were in government, all government support for public transit was cancelled. In 1999-2000 there was zero. As a consulting engineer in eastern Ontario, we could see that it dropped from 75% to zero. That's your legacy. We're trying to rebuild that.

The Acting Speaker: It's not time for—

Mr. O'Toole: I'd be part of the round, wouldn't I?

The Acting Speaker: No. Unfortunately, you've been around.

The Chair recognizes the member for Toronto—Danforth.

Mr. Tabuns: Like my colleague from Nickel Belt, I have to say that the member from Durham did very well, speaking for an hour in a situation where he expected to be relieved partway through. My congratulations for that.

I have to take out a particular piece that he addressed in the course of his speech, and that's the whole question of intensification and actually reducing the need for driving in the first place. We can deal with a variety of issues in discussion of this bill, but there's no question that right at the heart is this whole question of having a density level in the area of the GTA, the greater Golden Horseshoe, that will be enough to support very rapid, very convenient, low-cost transit. To the extent that the larger framework of government planning doesn't support that initiative to the extent that the larger framework of government planning allows for sprawl to leapfrog over the greenbelt and frankly allows for continued irrational development of the suburban or exurban area of the GTA, we will continue to have to deal with traffic problems, injuries and fatalities.

1650

In this bill, we're dealing with a more limited subset of the problem. We're dealing with irresponsible driving, provoked through either alcohol intoxication or street racing, and to that limited extent, the bill has some useful elements in it. Those questions, however, have to be understood in that larger context raised by the member from Durham, that we have, as a necessity, the need to actually look at the density, look at the urban planning of the greater Golden Horseshoe and make sure that it doesn't continue on as it has, on a business-as-usual basis, to provide sprawl and a demand for car-based transit that in the end is going to have a very negative impact both on our environment and on the health status, the mortality of people in this urban area. I would hope that the Minister of Transportation would look at this larger question and not simply end her efforts or interests with dealing with the questions of street racing and alcohol.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from London—Fanshawe.

Mr. Ramal: Thank you for giving me the chance and opportunity to comment on the speech by the member from Durham region. I was listening to him. As my colleague mentioned, he travelled all over the province, but I would commend to the member for Durham that he go back and learn geography. He mentioned many different spots that don't exist.

He also talked about the 407. He was part of the government that sold that highway. He could have played a pivotal role in blocking his government from selling it if he thought it was important for the people of Ontario. Now we have to pay the price.

I congratulate the minister for bringing a very important piece of legislation to help support the safety

of this province, especially banning people from drinking and driving and also street racing. We see a lot of young guys who have fast cars, and they like to race. It's not safe for themselves, for the people around them and for other cars driving on the same street.

It's happened in my riding of London–Fanshawe—two young, beautiful guys, 18 or 19 years old. They felt strong. They had two fast cars and they were speeding and racing. What happened? They had an accident. One of them is almost paralyzed right now. So we have to put those pieces in place to protect the people of Ontario.

I want to congratulate the Minister of Transportation again for bringing such an important piece of legislation to protect the people in this province, and also to equip the police, to give them the chance, the authority and the technique to protect themselves, to use their blue and red lights. It's very important. Sometimes you cannot see a certain light in certain conditions, and the blue ones will be seen obviously in other conditions. This mix of lighting is very important to give an indication to people that the police are coming, to create safety for the police and for others.

I hope the members opposite will stand up and support the bill because it's a very important bill.

The Acting Speaker: The time for questions and comments has expired. I look forward to the response by the member for Durham.

Mr. O'Toole: Please forgive the fact that I'm not wearing my jacket. It's kind of warm in here this afternoon.

I thank the members from Nickel Belt, Ottawa–Orléans, Toronto–Danforth and London–Fanshawe. Comments have been made that are important. In this business you have to give and you have to receive, and often they're complimentary and often they're not.

That being said, I think I've made the point very succinctly that we're calling for hearings on this bill. I think it's important to consult with stakeholders and young people. This has an important educational opportunity as well as finding the right mechanism for changing behaviour. Consult with some of the educators in the province who work with children that find and want other outlets. I suspect members on all sides would be happy to participate in that.

There are other substantive parts in the bill that may be challenged in the courts; that's the licence suspension provision as well as the impaired provision when someone has not been found guilty, has been charged but not had a hearing on it. The suspension could be challenged as well.

We'll leave those things for the brighter lights to describe and discuss. I just want to thank the people from the ministry for carrying forward the good work that Frank Klees has done. I look forward to Frank returning there in October 2007. And also Dave Bradley from the Ontario Trucking Association—I know the work they're doing on 105 and the speed limiter issue. The Ontario Road Builders are important partners in this process going forward because they have to form partnerships to

build the capital—and we need Kris Barnier from the CAA, the work he does, and Brian Patterson from the Ontario Safety League. And the school bus operators—Rick Donaldson and others.

There are a lot of issues. There are a lot of stakeholders. What we're advocating is to listen to the stakeholders, refine this bill and get it right. It's about making our highways in the province safer for our young people and for all people who are citizens and pay taxes in this province.

The Acting Speaker: Time for further debate. The Chair recognizes the member from Toronto–Danforth.

Applause.

Mr. Tabuns: It's late on a Thursday afternoon, Mr. Speaker; I can tell. Thank you for the generosity and the applause, colleagues.

This act deals with issues that are financially, emotionally and morally quite consequential. Before we get into the content of the bill, what I'd like to talk to you about—my colleagues in the chamber—is the larger context. What are the issues that we're grappling with? What's the bigger picture that we have to take into account when we assess this bill?

In 2004, the injury surveillance program of Health Canada put out a study, Road Safety in Canada. They talked about the reality that in Canada, one of the largest countries in the world, we have a population density that's very small. Across Canada—and frankly even here in the GTA—we're in a situation where public transportation is limited, not really available to the population in a way that needs to be there to keep people out of their cars, on buses, on subways, on streetcars. This low density, this lack of transit, leads to the fact that Canada relies more heavily than most other countries in the world on private motor vehicles. In fact, we had in 2004 almost 19 million vehicles on our roads, 21 million drivers, 900,000 kilometres of road. Unfortunately, one of the fallouts from that reality is that we have a large number of collisions; we have a large number of fatalities and injuries that result in hospitalization or require other medical care.

In 2001, there were almost 2,800 deaths in Canada from motor vehicle collisions. In 2000-01, there were 24,400 hospital-related admissions that resulted from traffic collisions. Many of the victims are young. Traffic collisions are a leading cause of premature death and disability in this country.

We have a very large population in cars all the time in this country, every day, so it's not surprising that vehicle occupants account for approximately three quarters of all road users killed and seriously injured during the year. The remaining victims are vulnerable pedestrians, motorcyclists and bicyclists. But the bulk, three quarters, are occupants of motor vehicles. So when we're talking about road safety, we're talking about an issue that touches on life and death issues for very large numbers of people in this country.

Interestingly, in this study that was released in 2004 the health care costs, the property losses, other factors,

were put together—and, I assume, had an accounting model applied—and the annual cost in Canada from collisions on highways is in the range of \$25 billion, which is an extraordinary amount of money, an extraordinary amount of loss to this country, to its economy, to its people. We have an obligation, on a lot of levels, to take care of this problem, to address it, to do everything we can to reduce it.

1700

It's worth noting that within the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development—OECD—countries, Canada has the fifth-lowest rate of traffic deaths per billion vehicle miles traveled. We have the 13th-lowest rate when measured as deaths per 100,000. Our rates of death and injury are comparable to those of other developed countries. We're not a particularly bad player, but we still have a significant burden that we have to deal with in this country. In fact, in this country we've seen a substantial decline in deaths over the last few decades. Since 1982, the death rate on highways in Canada has declined by about 50%. That has happened even while we've had this very significant increase in the number of people on the roads and the number of cars on the roads. That is a worthwhile achievement, and it has been a reality that has occurred under a variety of governments with a variety of policies. Obviously some of the things that have made the biggest difference are mandating seat belts, child restraints, more stringent drinking and driving laws, public education, more enforcement campaigns, safer vehicles, and investment in road infrastructure. All of these things together have meant fewer people killed on the road and fewer people injured on the road, but we still have rates of death and injury that are very high, that are clearly not acceptable to society as a whole and certainly not acceptable to the members of this Legislature.

When you look more closely at those statistics—and that bears directly on the context of this bill—drivers account for more than half of all road users killed. You can look at a variety of things: driver experience, health limitations amongst elderly drivers, single-vehicle crashes on undivided rural roads—often connected to drinking—and obviously non-use of seat belts. In fact, approximately 40% of all fatally injured occupants are unrestrained. Beyond those, we have the questions of alcohol and excessive speed that are recognized as important contributing factors in many collisions.

Our two groups that are at greatest risk are people at the youth end of the spectrum, ages 16 to 19, and elderly drivers, 75 years and over, at 27 deaths per billion kilometres travelled—that's the rate for those young drivers—and 20 deaths per billion vehicle kilometres for the older drivers. In Canada, we've done some things around young drivers. In a number of provinces we have graduated licensing programs. They've proven effective in reducing collisions causing injuries amongst young drivers, and we've taken action on people who are drinking and driving. That is one of the central pieces of this bill.

We have to know that we've seen a decrease in the number of people killed because of drinking and driving; it's much less than a decade ago. The use of programs such as alcohol ignition interlock, which is proposed in this bill, was actually being discussed a number of years ago. Programs for rehabilitation, training and assessment have been introduced in other jurisdictions. Those are things that we need to do here. Frankly, they should have been done earlier, but better late now, even with an election coming on, than never having them dealt with at all.

Having talked about Canada, Ontario in 2001 reported the lowest fatality rate in Canada. So we obviously, over a number of decades, have been doing some things right. In fact, in 2001 we had the lowest number of people dying on the roads than any previous year since 1950, even though in that year 845 people died. So, consistent with what the minister was saying: two per day; a little more than that a number of years ago.

There are a number of factors in Ontario that are directly related to fatalities and injuries. One hundred and forty-nine or 18% of Ontario road fatalities in 2001 involved speeding: going above the speed limit, going too fast for conditions. Seventy-two fatalities involved drivers who failed to yield right of way, and a number involved drivers who disobeyed traffic controls.

We've seen, from 2001 to 2004, continued drops in road fatalities. In fact, drinking and driving fatalities in Ontario decreased by more than 10% between 2001 and 2004. So we're continuing to see an improvement in safety conditions on Ontario roads, and it's to our advantage to keep that rolling along.

But when we talk about this bill, let's keep in mind very clearly that we're talking not about simple administrative or clerical matters—and we're not talking just dollars and cents, although that certainly is there—we're talking about lives; we're talking about deaths and tragedies that come to families. There is a huge, huge personal cost.

The organization Transport 2000 earlier in this decade put out a report about spine and brain injuries from vehicle crashes. Their focus in this report was talking about why Ontario needed to invest much more in transit, much more in rail and much more in development of an urban form that allowed people to walk or take transit to their destinations. They use some pretty powerful examples. They talked about the level of deaths—as I said, about 840 fatalities a year, and 82,000 injuries per year, obviously not all of them requiring hospitalization. But that's a lot of injuries and a lot of people suffering in the course of a year. When you talk about a \$25-billion cost to Canada as a whole for injuries and fatalities on roads, when you look at Ontario, they cited a 1990 study of about \$9 billion as the burden on Ontario's economy.

I have to say that their report was quite striking because not only did they talk about the numbers—which are stark enough, which are impressive enough—but they actually talked about the situation of a number of individuals whose cases they traced through spinal cord

injury and brain injuries that they'd suffered in their vehicles. These stories of people whose lives had been turned upside down—who had gone from being athletes, who had gone from being mothers, fully employed, looking after children, who were young people in university who became paraplegic, quadriplegic or suffered brain injuries that essentially put their lives into limbo—were very moving, very stirring, very disturbing stories. The reality for us is that even though the numbers have been declining, even though things have been improving over the last three or four decades in Ontario, the price that individuals have to pay, the price that families have to pay, the price that our whole society has to pay for the carnage on our roads is an unacceptable price. It's incumbent upon us to look at the measures available to us, to look at the steps that we can take to actually substantially change those numbers.

The simple law of averages says that we will never get to zero. But the reality of the last few decades is that we've had a substantial impact through implementation of common sense measures. My hope is—again, going back to the Minister of Transportation—that she will take this bill and look at the larger picture of what has to be addressed, because simply putting in place punitive or administrative measures, as useful as they may be, is not going to be enough to take the further steps that we need to get as close to zero as we can.

1710

What's in the bill? What has the minister actually put before us? This bill gives the government increased authority to impose fees for administration costs for impaired driving, for road racing, and there's authority to impose consequences when fees or penalties are not paid. As has been remarked earlier by the member from Nickel Belt, there are exemptions from payment, under certain conditions and circumstances, that are going to be set out in regulation. I think it's important for the minister or her parliamentary assistant, in the course of debating this bill, to speak about the conditions under which exemptions will be granted, to give us, as legislators, a sense of precisely what they envision and what sort of burden will be placed on those who are not driving responsibly, who are not treating the community—society—in a way that it should be treated.

Bill 203 provides for increased roadside suspension of licences of impaired drivers. Police can stop vehicles and do a breath test with an approved and calibrated screening device or instrument. If the blood-alcohol concentration is 50 milligrams of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood, that's .05—in the course of this debate, you'll hear .05, .08 or zero.

If those levels are detected and indicated by a “warn” or “alert” diagnosis, the roadside officer can suspend the licence of the person who has been pulled over. The blood-alcohol threshold for suspension has been reduced from .08 to .05. I think there's a general agreement that it makes sense to do that. We continue to have people dying on our roads—killed on our roads—because people have consumed alcohol and gone driving.

The period of suspension for those who are found to be violating the standard: first offence, three days; second offence, seven days; third offence, 30 days. It's interesting that previous suspensions won't be considered if they occurred five or more years previously. Whether this is material, whether this is a weakening of the bill, I have to think about some more.

But it's interesting that the officer may also impound the vehicle of an impaired driver at the expense of the owner of the vehicle. I think that makes sense, frankly. If you are irresponsible, if you've been out drinking, if you are putting yourself and the lives of others at risk, then it makes sense to me that not only should you be suspended but that your vehicle be impounded. I think you will probably find a fair amount of support in this House for this measure as this bill goes forward.

We should note that even if people have their licence suspended three times at the roadside, there's no guarantee that there will be a conviction after that; obviously, a judge has the discretion to decide who will and will not be convicted. But we should know that the more severe penalties don't flow automatically from these simple suspensions. There's no certainty that a repeat offender will lose driving privileges over the long term. That's something I look forward to hearing the minister address. I'd like the minister to tell us how many repeat offences are necessary before there are harsher consequences in place. If the parliamentary assistant can address that in his comments, it would be useful.

If a driver is convicted, then licence suspension is increased: first conviction, one year; second conviction, three years; third conviction, indefinitely. Note that the bill provides for an ignition interlock condition that will make it easier for offenders to apply to get their licences early, if they agree to a conduct review program—I'll talk about that a bit later—which may include the installation of an ignition interlock program. That's a device that analyzes the breath of the driver before they put the key in the ignition and are allowed to drive away. One of the questions I'd have for the minister is, what's the penalty if they disarm or override that interlock?

This bill has had commentary from a number of stakeholders in a number of quarters. Mothers Against Drunk Driving put out a press release, and their commentary was that this bill had some steps in the right direction, but they were disappointed that zero blood alcohol content for five years is not included in the announced legislation, and I'm going to read what they had to say, because they are obviously one of the more significant, more pre-eminent, groups dealing with this issue in Canada.

“Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) Canada welcomes the Ontario government's proposed impaired driving legislation. MADD Canada's chief executive officer Andrew Murie describes measures announced by Premier Dalton McGuinty's today as ‘steps in the right direction.’

“‘It is good to see this government recognize our impaired driving laws need to be more effective,’ says

Mr. Murie. 'While we are pleased with the announcement, we are disappointed that the government did not take this opportunity to enhance its graduated licence program with a zero [blood alcohol content] limit for new drivers for five years.'

It's interesting. I wasn't aware of the initiatives that have taken place in other jurisdictions, and he goes on:

"Other jurisdictions like Manitoba and Nova Scotia have introduced zero-BAC-for-five-years laws. Zero and low BAC limits have been introduced for all drivers under 21 in the United States and this has resulted in significant reductions in impaired driving fatalities,' says Mr. Murie."

What I again ask the government to comment on is why we didn't follow the example of these other jurisdictions. If they have in fact seen further reductions in fatalities or injury from drunk driving, why have we not gone that course? Why would we stop at the point that we've stopped at?

Mothers Against Drunk Driving goes on in its press release:

"In its report, *Youth and Impaired Driving in Canada: Opportunities for Change*, MADD Canada presents a compelling case for introducing enhanced graduated licensing programs and a zero-BAC limit for five years."

Here are the facts that they rely on in their argument that the government should have gone further than they did in this bill. They say:

"Despite the progress that has been made, young drivers are still dramatically overrepresented in alcohol-related fatalities. While 16- to 25-year-olds constitute only 13.7% of the Canadian population, they account for 32.1% of the alcohol-related traffic fatalities."

Now, that's quite a difference. This is a group that's dramatically overrepresented in the alcohol-related statistics in this country. Again I would ask, why haven't we followed the lead of the United States and other jurisdictions in Canada in bringing forward legislation that will have a more profound impact on saving lives in this age category?

"Young people have the highest reported rates of daily, weekly and monthly heavy drinking and binge drinking. They also have high reported rates of driving after drinking and being a passenger in a vehicle of a drinking driver.

"While 2002 per capita rates of federal impaired driving charges are relatively low among 16- to 17-year-olds, they rose sharply among 18- to 20-year-olds, peaked among 21-year-olds and then fell gradually with age.

"Traffic crashes remain the largest single cause of death among Canadian youth, accounting for almost one third of all deaths. Even conservatively estimated, over 45% of these traffic deaths are alcohol-related."

Clearly, we have a significant problem here within that larger problem of alcohol-related traffic deaths. We have a group, young people in this country, who are car-reliant, car-dependent, who are at a point in their lives when they're quite likely to take risks, quite likely to

drink heavily, and yet this province didn't take the steps that other jurisdictions in Canada have taken to in fact deal with the problem more effectively, I guess would be the right term.

1720

Mothers Against Drunk Driving goes on to say:

"Professor Robert Solomon, MADD Canada's director of legal policy, states, 'Extensive research from Canada and abroad establishes that zero blood alcohol content limits for new drivers significantly decreases alcohol-related traffic deaths among this vulnerable population.'"

So, given the statistics, given the reality, I don't see why this government didn't set or follow the standard that is set in other jurisdictions and that actually is shown to have a positive impact on those death rates.

MADD Canada, talking about the seven-day roadside licence suspensions, says they "had also hoped the government would have followed the advice of its own transportation officials in extending the administrative drivers' licence suspension period to seven days, not to 72 hours as proposed."

The CEO of MADD goes on to say, "Ontario's officials participated in a national review of most effective licence suspension practices. There was a consensus that longer driver licence suspensions were needed to effectively alter a drinking driver's behaviour. All provincial and territorial officials recognized seven days as a meaningful suspension period."

Again, a question for the government: If in fact their own officials were recommending this, if this is in line with the best thinking that we have in Canada at this time, why did they not choose to follow this particular recommendation?

Mr. Murie, the Mothers Against Drunk Driving CEO, went on to say, "Although it is good to see the government announcing a 72-hour licence suspension, we hope that eventually Ontario and the remaining jurisdictions across Canada will implement the recommended seven-day licence suspension for impaired driving.

"With today's ... legislation, Mr. McGuinty took steps in the right direction." But he adds, "For our part, we will continue to work with the government and present the empirical research and international experience to achieve more effective impaired driving laws in Ontario."

It's an endorsement by Mothers Against Drunk Driving that's very heavily qualified. They see the value and the steps headed in the right direction but make a very good argument that in fact the government could have gone further, been more effective and dealt with the tragedies that play out on our roads on a daily basis across this province and across this country.

I want to go back to the act. Note that the act provides for a conduct review program that includes interviews, assessments, remedial programs, courses, individual or group education sessions, examinations, and, as I said earlier, installation of an interlock device. The logic behind this is good. I think simple punishment has its use but is not adequate to deal with the full scope of the problem at hand.

One of the things I came across in the course of preparing for this debate was a report that the Addiction Research Foundation had posted on their website entitled *Factors Influencing Aggregate Indicators of Drinking-Driving in the United States*, which is a long title. Essentially, these researchers had looked at the drinking-driving statistics in a number of jurisdictions in the United States during the period from 1982 to 1990 to try and understand what were all the aggregate indicators in the society that allowed one to determine whether a course of action had the impact that we needed or didn't. Can we tease out of those statistics a clear picture of the kinds of actions that will actually provide the relief on our highways so that we don't deal with the staggering social cost or the tragic personal human cost that comes from this long and large number of people injured and killed?

They looked at a number of items such as specific efforts to prevent drinking and driving or other alcohol-related problems. They found it often difficult to get data. They looked at a number of different prevention-relevant measures. They looked at traffic fatality rates. They looked at per capita consumption of alcohol and the rates of drinking-driving arrests, alcohol abuse treatment and AA membership, looked at the numbers in these periods and how different programs would actually give answers to legislators and decision-makers like those of us here today.

What they found was that the total fatality rates were very much related to, connected to, per capita consumption of alcohol and drinking-driving arrest rates. So if you have a society that drinks an awful lot more, regardless of other factors, you are going to have more drunk-driving problems. One of the things that was interesting to me is that they found that membership in Alcoholics Anonymous had a definite correlation with reduced drinking-driving fatalities and injuries in the societies that they were studying.

When they actually looked at the impact of enforcement and deterrent effects, they didn't find a strong relationship. They did note that if there were a lot more arrests for drinking and driving, that tended to reflect the fact that there was a very high level of drinking and driving in a society, not necessarily that it would drive down the numbers. I think that should not deter us from taking action as outlined in the legislation, but it says that we have to look beyond enforcement and deterrence to actually have the full impact that we need to have.

They say that it makes sense to proceed with tougher penalties around drinking and driving and that it would make a lot of sense to promote programs that help people avoid addiction in the first place. Clearly, as they say, AA membership, a reduction in addictive behaviour, helps to reduce traffic deaths, according to this research. They say, and I think quite correctly—

Interjection.

Mr. Tabuns: Welcome to the new Chair. Shift change—I hope you punched in the clock.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mario Sergio): Absolutely.

Mr. Tabuns: Anyway, my point was that if we actually want to deal with drinking and driving, it makes just as much sense, and in some ways maybe more so, to invest not only in transportation or enforcement but to invest in health measures and education measures that will drive down addiction.

It's very clear from the numbers that I gave earlier, the numbers of \$25 billion a year in Canada, \$9 billion a year in Ontario—roughly a third of those costs related to drinking-driving—that we're talking about a multi-billion-dollar impact on our society. Frankly, this is a society that would benefit tremendously from investing in all of those programs that would stop addiction in the first place.

When I talk to medical professionals in my riding who are dealing with addiction, they say that making sure that children are raised with love and with security has a huge impact on addiction rates in adulthood. There is not always a clear one-to-one correlation but a very strong tendency to suggest that people who go through extremely difficult childhoods—those who are abused physically, emotionally, sexually—are more prone to addiction than those who go through a childhood that's secure, that provides them with the warmth and the comfort that they need to grow up psychologically and physically strong.

1730

For us, to the extent that we don't invest in our children, to the extent that we don't make sure that our children are given all the supports they need to develop that strength early on, we pay for it very heavily much later. We pay for it in direct addiction costs and clearly we pay for it on our highways. In terms of moving the agenda forward, this bill can be a useful piece, but there is a larger piece that I would urge the government to consider—dealing with addiction development in the first place and then, later on, dealing with addiction treatment—so that at every stage we reinforce strength and stability in people's lives and in their psyches so that they aren't out on the highway driving a multi-tonne vehicle that can do huge damage to themselves, to the occupants of their vehicle and to others around them.

The legislation allows for the use of additional flashing-light colours on emergency vehicles. I note that it's there not because it's controversial; frankly, it's very straightforward. This is a step that was taken earlier in other jurisdictions. It made sense in those ones. I wish this government had brought this forward earlier in its mandate, but again, we should move forward on this piece. There need not be any great debate in the House on it. We need to move it forward.

The last significant piece of the bill tries to address the whole question of street racing. Interestingly, last year the CBC did a fairly big piece of research on street racing in Canada. This has been a phenomenon that's been a problem for decades here in Ontario. We've had something like 35 deaths since 1999. In terms of the hundreds who die every year on the road in Ontario, it's not a large number, but for those who are victims of it and for those

who are aware of those who have been victims of it, it's particularly horrifying.

We have a culture in this society in which street racing in films and in video games tends to be glorified, tends to be presented as fascinating and exciting, and my guess is that for those who are engaged in it at the time, it is. But for those who are victims of it, this is not a particularly pretty picture. It's not in fact a pretty picture at all; it's a horrifying picture.

We know about people who have died in street racing. In 2002, RCMP Constable Jimmy Ng was killed instantly when a car that was involved in street racing came through a light and hit him, rammed his car. He died on the spot. He was a young man, doing a job that we see as socially necessary, killed out of stupidity. We all feel the human impact of that kind of loss.

Closer to home, Rob and Lisa Manchester died in a suspected street-racing incident in May 2006, just north of Toronto. They left behind their 7-year-old daughter, Katie. They had been out celebrating their 17th wedding anniversary.

It's clear that there are very troubling, very disturbing human tragedies that occur out of this totally irresponsible, totally stupid behaviour by people who have no sense of what they're doing, out in cars that are quite powerful, in some instances using technologies that supercharge them. I think we have a responsibility to take action on this.

In Ontario there is a program, ERASE—Eliminate Racing Activities on Streets Everywhere—a joint project of a variety of police departments that is trying to deal with this problem. When contacted about their experience, they say simply that in Ontario the number of people dying from street racing is rising.

In Canada as a whole there is not a specific law against street racing. There are penalties for speeding and for reckless driving. If someone is killed or injured, there are a number of Criminal Code sections that would apply: criminal negligence causing death obviously, dangerous operation of a vehicle, criminal negligence causing bodily harm and the dangerous operation of a vehicle. But it's very unusual for street racers to be caught or to be in any substantial way penalized.

Constable Taylor, who's working on the ERACE program says that, to his knowledge, he knows of no "convicted street racer who's served more than five months in jail," which is an astounding thought, given the impact of this irresponsibility and given the distaste and disgust that people in this society feel for this particular activity. It's amazing to me that it's no more than five months.

One example he cited—and this was quoted by CBC, "In November 2000, street racers in Vancouver killed 52-year-old Irene Thorpe, a pedestrian, and were convicted of criminal negligence causing death." There were two teens involved and they were given conditional sentences of two years less a day and placed under house arrest. That was a sentence that outraged people, and I think rightly so. Someone, who was entirely innocent, walking

down the street, was killed because of outrageous behaviour on the part of these two street racers.

This behaviour needs to be dealt with both at the federal level and at this level, and it needs to be dealt with not only in terms of penalties but looking at other things that can be done to make street racing less attractive and make it less common in our cities.

One of the things the police will say when they talk about street racing is that it can be very difficult to peg a traffic accident on a street racer. It could have been just a racing car or it may be difficult to prove that there were two cars involved at the time that an accident occurred. One of the things police say happens is that frequently they find out about street racing after a race has occurred far more often than they actually ever encounter it or see it. That is an extraordinarily problematic thing. It says to us that punishing an act that is very rarely caught may not do enough to actually stop the act in the first place.

One of the things that's been done in Vancouver is to actually redesign streets, putting up medians and curbs in narrow roads that were used for drag racing, so that it became far more difficult physically to actually use a road that way. It makes sense to me. Police have developed a zero tolerance policy targeting cars that are modified to go faster even if drivers weren't caught speeding down the strip. I know that was mentioned by some members of the opposition, the need to take action on people who use nitrous oxide to soup up their cars to make them far more powerful. I would like to know from the minister why that particular issue wasn't addressed in the legislation because, again, we have to acknowledge that far too often we will never catch the people who are actually engaged in street racing. We occasionally will when there's a fatality, but we don't want that to be the measure. We want to stop the activity so we don't get the fatalities in the first place.

1740

One of the things that police say needs to be done is to change the image of street racing. A number of years ago, drunk driving was looked on as a joke. It was not considered reprehensible. People did it, particularly young people, and it was simply something that passed by and people went on. Well, that isn't the situation any more. People reject it. It's not something you want to be known for. It's not something you want your neighbours to know about you.

That move in our culture around drunk driving, I'm sure, contributed to this reduction in deaths from drunk driving in society as a whole, and we need to do similar things around street racing. We need to invest not only in enforcement, but we need to invest in that cultural marketing that changes people's perceptions, particularly young people—changes their perceptions of what's acceptable and what's not. Putting at risk the lives of quite a number of innocent people through street racing can't be acceptable.

Now, in the United States, there are a variety of measures related to street racing, a number of punitive measures that have been taken. One of the things that's very

interesting when you actually go to American websites and look at the steps that they've taken to address street racing—obviously a fair amount of surveillance makes sense, but even more interestingly, the police in a number of jurisdictions have sponsored legal drag racing on separate tracks.

They just simply decided that if people are going to be racing their cars anyway, do it in a place that's isolated from traffic and do it in a place where there's an opportunity at least to control drinking. In fact, drinking isn't allowed in these police-sponsored drag-racing areas. If people really want to be part of that culture and they really want to test their vehicles, let them do it outside of the streets where we walk, where we drive our own cars. That's something, again, the Ministry of Transportation should look at.

What we need to deal with this problem is a multi-pronged strategy that deals with culture, that deals with what you might call a harm reduction strategy to get drag racers, street racers, out of residential neighbourhoods, off of the thoroughfares that we use on a day-to-day basis, and get them into restricted areas where they can risk themselves but not the rest of us.

Let's look at what's in this bill on this matter, now that we have a sense of what the larger picture is. Street-racing fines have been increased to a minimum of \$2,000 and a maximum of \$10,000 and licence suspensions have increased as well. It makes sense. First conviction penalty: not more than two years. Subsequent conviction: not more than 10 years. Previous convictions won't be considered if they occurred 10 or more years previous, and a police officer is permitted to take the driver's licence for a seven-day administration suspension and impound the car of the suspected street racer.

It's interesting that the legislation will also apply to drivers' licences issued outside Ontario. I would say, again, given the distaste that we have in this society for this particular practice, the fatal consequences of this practice, that the government has made a useful first step on this.

Some questions that arise in going through the legislation: What are the consequences for repeat offenders? Where will the funding come from to implement enforcement? There have been some concerns expressed by police that they are already over-extended in covering duties. Where will they get the resources to do this greater work?

A lot has been left to regulation by the Lieutenant Governor: administrative fees for licence suspension, exemptions from payment for administrative fees and establishing conduct review programs, and the fee for conduct review programs.

It's interesting here that there will be an exception for persons from street racing requirements who have "prescribing conditions." It would be useful for all of us to know what those would be, and I look forward to seeing the definitions for "race", "contest" and "stunt" with respect to street racing.

We think it is useful for the government to move forward on these issues. In keeping with all that's been

done in Canada and in Ontario for the last few decades, we should strengthen penalties for these actions. We want to continue seeing a reduction in fatalities and injuries on the road. We need to have, however, as I've said, a multi-pronged strategy to actually substantially reduce the problems that are before us.

There are a number of comments that have been made about the bill. Adrienne Seggie, of Brantford, whose son was 21 years old when he was run over while crossing a Hamilton street last November, said measures introduced yesterday were only a good beginning. She said that she believes the legislation was rushed in an election year to appeal to voters, and said the government should have taken the time to draft a more proactive bill. "I don't feel it's enough" because the police still don't have the resources they need to do what has to be done.

Interestingly, the Toronto Star quotes York region police chief Armand LaBarge: "Impaired driving kills nearly five Canadians a day:

"Each year 2.3 million Canadians operate motor vehicles while impaired. Impaired driving continues to be the number one criminal cause of death in our nation," he added."

Again, I would urge this government to look at a multi-pronged strategy rather than simply relying on enforcement penalties.

We will need education and awareness in the tool bag of any minister who is going to move forward on this. We will need an allocation of funds, and I would hope that in the most recent budget, funds were allocated. If they weren't, they should have been and should be.

I know in my riding, when I ask the police about an enforcement problem, I'm told regularly that they're overextended. I talk to a probation officer in my riding who tells me that his experience is that the jails are quite full already. When people he is supervising on probation are in violation of their probation orders, they are simply ordered to have more probation. So I ask the government, in bringing this bill forward, how much more enforcement will actually arise from the increase in penalties that you've set out in this bill? Will it materially change the situation before us?

It was interesting that Brian Patterson, president of the Ontario Safety League, commented favourably about the legislation but noted as well—and I mentioned this in my earlier comments—"It could go further on the issue of nitrous oxide and vehicle modifications." That's something that the government had in its hands to actually move forward. It should have.

Canadian Taxicab Association treasurer Jim Bell says that stronger enforcement and impounding vehicles will help street racers to realize that they're putting other people's lives at risk. Jim Bell was talking in the aftermath of Tahir Khan's death. Tahir Khan was a taxi driver here in Toronto who died in a very tragic situation going through a wealthy area of Toronto. He was hit broadside by cars that were being driven by street racers and was killed on the spot. This was a man trying to support his family, trying to set up his life here in

Canada—truly dealing with a death that affected many people. Again, a needless and useless death.

I think I've talked about the non-regulatory measures that are required. I've talked about the potential here to strengthen the regulatory measures that have been put on the books and I've talked about the need for this society to look beyond the question of street racing and drunk driving to the whole question of urban design so that we can rely on transit and walking far more for transportation than we do today.

1750

It's interesting when you look at situations in other jurisdictions, as in Florida, where sprawl is a significant problem and where they have a very difficult time with seniors who shouldn't be driving but who, frankly, if their licences were taken away would be prisoners in their homes because it's miles and miles to get to any store.

We here will make for more dangerous drivers on the road in future if we don't deal with sprawl. We will make for more dangerous drivers on the road if we don't deal with addiction and the roots of addiction. We will have more dangerous drivers on the road if we don't take action to change our culture so that the very thought of street racing is something that is rejected in the way that drunk driving is today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): It's time for questions and comments.

Mr. McNeely: I thank the member for Toronto–Danforth for, as usual, having a very in-depth analysis of the legislation and treating all the issues very seriously. Certainly issues that have been brought up today will be dealt with in committee. I would like to respond to a couple. Maybe I'll just start in the reverse order.

The nitrous oxide: We had a conference or a get-together, a round table, with people who were involved in street racing problems—insurance companies etc. This issue came up, but out of all the reported cases of street racing in Ontario, nitrous oxide is not known to be a factor. Using existing regulations in the Highway Traffic Act, police can charge racers with offences relating to vehicle and equipment standards. With the safety of any motor vehicle in question, the police have the authority to order a safety inspection of the vehicle. So from the information that we have, that is already taken care of.

To go to the other issue you mentioned in a minute and a half—we'll be able to deal with those a lot further down the road. But with blood alcohol levels of .05 to .08, drivers were eight times more likely to be involved in a collision than drivers who had not been drinking. So that is a section, the blood alcohol level, that we're addressing. In the first instance, the driver is suspended for three days. A day is defined as 24 hours. Before, it could be any time—today and tomorrow was the one day—but now it's 24 hours. In the second instance it's seven days, and they must undergo remedial measures. In the third or subsequent instance, the driver is suspended for 30 days, must undergo remedial measures and have an ignition interlock for six—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Further questions and comments?

Ms. Martel: I want to commend my colleague from Toronto–Danforth for outlining both his concerns and the issues that the government needs to take into account when the bill goes to public hearings. He did a very thorough review of not only the legislation that we're dealing with right now but what the possible changes could be, possible amendments that would strengthen the legislation, as has been the case, for example, in Manitoba.

I just want to reinforce a couple of things that my colleague made mention of during the course of his remarks.

First is the whole issue around the resources of police. There is no doubt that police are supportive of this legislation—so are we—but it is also very clear that in trying to enforce the law, we are going to have to find ways to support police services to allow them to do so. I think none of us should be under any illusion that the mere fact of passing a law is suddenly going to reduce street racing or deal with drunk drivers. The reality is, in order to make this legislation work, enforcement is going to be key, and a key part of enforcement is going to be the police resources at hand in all of our communities to be out on the streets, to be in a position either to be pulling drivers aside applying tests or pulling aside drivers who are also street racing.

Secondly, I think my colleague is quite correct when he talks about there being punitive measures here. We're not averse to that, but really we need to be changing a culture. The culture around street racing that is glamorized on television is going to be a really difficult one to address and is going to be one that requires some significant public education particularly targeted at young people so that they are very clear on the dangers and all of the possible very negative—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Further questions and comments?

Mr. Ramal: Thank you, Speaker, for giving me a chance to comment on the speech of the member from Toronto–Danforth. It was a good speech. He spoke about different elements. He talked about the safety of the public and the importance of enforcing laws about drinking and racing and penalizing people who are abusing the law.

He also mentioned seniors and public transit. We depend on his effort and his advocacy power to convince his leader to accept the subway to North York, because it's very important.

Mr. Leal: —kill that subway. That's what they want to do.

Mr. Ramal: Yes, the member from Peterborough heard him when was talking about safety. I know he's sincere and honest about it, but we have to make sure—it's important to create safety and also to make this an effective bill to protect the people of Ontario.

Again, I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the chance to speak. I'm willing to listen to what the opposite side has to say about our comments.

The Acting Speaker: Time for a response.

Mr. Tabuns: My thanks to the members from Ottawa–Orléans, Nickel Belt and London–Fanshawe for their commentary.

I'll go to the member from London–Fanshawe first, just to say that my leader, Howard Hampton, is a strong supporter of public transit and has never said that he would cancel the York subway line. I think it's useful and I thank him for giving me that opportunity to get it on the record.

The other thing I want to say—I appreciate the comment from the member from Ottawa–Orléans about nitrous oxide. I look forward to the committee hearings

on this matter and what you have say. There's a lot of sense in that. Let's have the witnesses forward and go through that. I hear that it's an issue that you are familiar with and have thought about and I look forward to having it sorted out in committee. I appreciate the kind and useful comments from the minister—sorry—member from Nickel Belt; hopefully minister again.

I think we're out of time.

The Acting Speaker: It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday, April 23, 2007, at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 1758.

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Estimates / Budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Tim Hudak
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Garfield Dunlop
Kim Craitor, Bob Delaney,
Garfield Dunlop, Andrea Horwath,
Tim Hudak, Linda Jeffrey, Phil McNeely,
Jim Wilson, David Zimmer
Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Finance and economic affairs /
Finances et affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Phil McNeely
Ted Arnott, Wayne Arthurs, Toby Barrett,
Pat Hoy, Judy Marsales,
Deborah Matthews, Phil McNeely,
Carol Mitchell, Michael Prue
Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

General government / Affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Jim Brownell
Jim Brownell, Vic Dhillon, Brad Duguid,
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Jerry J. Ouellette,
Tim Peterson, Lou Rinaldi,
Peter Tabuns, John Yakabuski
Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Government agencies / Organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Présidente: Julia Munro
Vice-Chair / Vice-Présidente: Cheri DiNovo
Cheri DiNovo, Brad Duguid,
Michael Gravelle, John Milloy, Carol Mitchell,
Julia Munro, Laurie Scott,
Monique M. Smith, Joseph N. Tascona
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

Justice Policy / Justice

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-Présidente: Maria Van Bommel
Bas Balkissoon, Lorenzo Berardinetti,
Christine Elliott, Frank Klees, Peter Kormos,
David Oraziotti, Shafiq Qadri,
Maria Van Bommel, David Zimmer
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

Legislative Assembly / Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Ted McMeekin
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Mario G. Racco
Peter Fonseca, Ernie Hardeman, Linda Jeffrey,
Rosario Marchese, Ted McMeekin,
Norm Miller, Jennifer F. Mossop,
Shafiq Qadri, Mario G. Racco
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

Public accounts / Comptes publics

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Ernie Hardeman
Ernie Hardeman, Jean-Marc Lalonde,
Lisa MacLeod, Shelley Martel, John Milloy,
Richard Patten, Liz Sandals,
Monique M. Smith, Norman W. Sterling
Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Regulations and private bills /
Règlements et projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Présidente: Andrea Horwath
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Jeff Leal
Gilles Bisson, Bob Delaney,
Andrea Horwath, Jeff Leal, Dave Levac,
Gerry Martiniuk, Bill Murdoch,
Lou Rinaldi, Mario Sergio
Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Social Policy / Politique sociale

Chair / Président: Ernie Parsons
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Khalil Ramal
Ted Chudleigh, Peter Fonseca,
Kuldip Kular, Jeff Leal,
Rosario Marchese, Bill Mauro, John O'Toole,
Ernie Parsons, Khalil Ramal
Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

CONTENTS

Thursday 19 April 2007

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital, private member's notice of motion number 57, <i>Mrs. Savoline</i>	
Mrs. Savoline.....	8167, 8173
Ms. DiNovo	8168
Mr. Flynn.....	8170
Mrs. Elliott.....	8171
Mr. McMeekin.....	8172
Mrs. Witmer.....	8172
Ms. Mossop.....	8173
Negatived.....	8172
Stevenson Memorial Hospital, private member's notice of motion number 55, <i>Mr. Wilson</i>	
Mr. Wilson.....	8174, 8182
Mr. Qaadri	8175
Mr. Rinaldi.....	8176
Mrs. Witmer.....	8177
Mr. Prue.....	8178
Ms. Scott.....	8180
Ms. DiNovo	8181
Negatived.....	8183

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Children's mental health services	
Mr. Yakabuski	8183
Grape and wine industry	
Ms. Mossop	8183
Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration grants	
Mrs. Munro.....	8183
Poverty	
Ms. DiNovo	8184
Health care funding	
Mrs. Jeffrey.....	8184
Government's record	
Mr. Hardeman.....	8184
Ontario Coaches Week	
Mr. Delaney	8184
Coal-fired generating stations	
Mrs. Mitchell	8185
Nuclear energy	
Mr. Fonseca	8185

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

Occupational health and safety	
Mr. Peters.....	8185
Mr. Runciman.....	8186
Ms. Horwath	8187

ORAL QUESTIONS

Ministry of Citizenship

and Immigration grants

Mr. Tory	8188, 8189, 8191, 8193, 8195, 8197
Mr. Colle	8188, 8189, 8190, 8191, 8192, 8194, 8195, 8196, 8197, 8198
Mr. Prue	8190, 8191, 8198
Mr. Sorbara	8192
Ms. Horwath.....	8192
Mr. McGuinty	8194
Mr. Ferreira	8194
Mr. Colle	8194
Mr. Tabuns	8196

School safety

Mr. Arthurs.....	8193
Ms. Wynne	8193

Ontario Trillium Foundation

Mr. Rinaldi	8195
Ms. Di Cocco	8195

Small business

Ms. Mossop.....	8196
Mr. Takhar	8196

PETITIONS

Laboratory services

Mr. Miller.....	8198
-----------------	------

Cancer treatment

Ms. Martel.....	8198
-----------------	------

Long-term care

Mr. O'Toole	8198
-------------------	------

Court support staff

Ms. Horwath.....	8199
------------------	------

York subway extension

Mr. Balkissoon	8199
----------------------	------

Stevenson Memorial Hospital

Mr. Wilson	8200
------------------	------

Children's mental health services

Ms. Martel.....	8200
-----------------	------

Regulation of zoos

Mr. Leal.....	8200
---------------	------

Pope John Paul II

Mr. Klees.....	8200
----------------	------

Minimum wage

Ms. Martel.....	8200
-----------------	------

Lakeridge Health

Mr. O'Toole	8201
-------------------	------

SECOND READINGS

Safer Roads for a Safer Ontario Act, 2007, Bill 203, <i>Mrs. Cansfield</i>	
Mrs. Cansfield.....	8201, 8204

Mr. McNeely	8202, 8213, 8221
Mr. O'Toole.....	8203, 8204, 8214
Mr. Tabuns.....	8203, 8213, 8214, 8222
Mr. Leal	8203
Ms. Martel	8212, 8221
Mr. Ramal.....	8213, 8221
Debate deemed adjourned.....	8222

OTHER BUSINESS

Visitors

Ms. Pupatello	8188
Mr. Klees	8188
Mr. Sergio.....	8198

Legislative pages

The Deputy Speaker	8188
--------------------------	------

Business of the House

Mr. Caplan	8201
------------------	------

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Jeudi 19 avril 2007

DEUXIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 2007 visant à créer des routes plus sécuritaires pour un Ontario plus sûr, projet de loi 203, <i>M^{me} Cansfield</i>	
Débat présumé ajourné	8222