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Jeudi 10 mai 2007

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Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 10 May 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 10 mai 2007

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS

PRESCRIPTION MONITORING ACT, 2007
LOI DE 2007 SUR LA SURVEILLANCE
PHARMACEUTIQUE

Mr. Ramal moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 108, An Act to monitor the prescribing of certain drugs / Projet de loi 108, Loi visant à surveiller la prescription de certains médicaments.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr. Ramal, you have up to 10 minutes. The floor is yours.

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe): I am privileged and honoured to be given the chance to introduce this bill, Bill 108, An Act to monitor the prescribing of certain drugs.

Before I start, I'd like to introduce and welcome, in the west gallery, our guests today: Ada Giudice-Tompson and Rick Tompson, who lost a family member; Laurie Miller, who also lost a family member; and Marvin Siegel, a supporter of the bill and also a patient advocate. Hopefully all of my colleagues will join me to welcome the guests who came here today.

Very often in this place we introduce a bill concerning a certain political issue to advance our political careers, to mention and to indicate about certain issues in our ridings across the province of Ontario or to score a political point. But this has nothing to do with a political point and has nothing to do with political issues. Today I will speak about a humanitarian aspect of our life, about a humanitarian issue and about the lives of many people across the province of Ontario who suffer from this very important issue.

Two years ago, a lady came to my office. She explained to me about this important subject, which is to create monitoring for the prescription of certain drugs. That lady first lost her husband, and a year or two years later she lost her son—all due to narcotic drugs being prescribed and dispensed and people taking them without any monitoring. And what happened? Two overdosed and they died.

This issue touched my heart. I brought it to this place. I tried to explain it to the Minister of Health, to many

people, to my colleagues, and then I started reading about it. I went to the Internet. I talked to many people, and many people phoned me back. They explained to me how important this topic is to them, because some of them lost their family members, some of them lost friends, and some of them lost loved ones. And all of us in this province lost a lot of great Ontarians.

In this province, our role as MPPs is to be the voice of the people we represent, to bring forward issues that concern many people in this province. That's why today I've been given the honour to introduce such an important bill for many people across the province of Ontario—especially when I read the statistics. In 2003, 101 Ontarians died from narcotic drug overdoses.

Many doctors and physicians prescribe medications wisely. Many people know what they're doing, but certain people cannot take those drugs. For a certain small segment of the specialized among us, they make a mistake. Therefore, by creating a monitoring board to oversee the conduct of physicians and doctors and people dispensing drugs, I think we'll eliminate the suffering of many people in this province.

Many provinces in this great country of Canada have passed laws to create monitoring boards to oversee the dispensing of drugs in their provinces. So I hope after we listen to people debate this bill, on our side and the opposition side, we'll get support for one direction in order to first create awareness and convince the Ministry of Health to adopt the bill and include it in the many different great bills that have been introduced through our mandate.

Statistics show that so many people, for some reason, cannot take the drugs. For some reason too, some physicians and doctors think that it's an easy thing to quiet someone's pain by giving them drugs. The patients become addicted to them and establish terrible health conditions, psychological conditions, because they're very addictive. And then what happens? A tragedy happens: people die.

We don't want to see the suffering. The people who die from these narcotic drugs leave, but their families stay around. They stay with memories, with history, especially when your loved one was a young individual who was trying to make a future for himself or herself. Because of a prescription overdose, they lose their lives, and they leave grief and sadness behind them.

That's why I'm introducing this bill today. I'm hoping that all my colleagues on both sides of the House will give me their support so that we can proceed to third reading, pass the bill, proclaim it and have it become law

in the province of Ontario. I think all our guests this morning in the gallery hope to see this bill passed, and many other Ontarians who cannot be with us today want to see it passed, because it's very important.

As I mentioned at the beginning, it's not a political bill. It's not trying to advance my political career or score any points against any party. My point today is to score points for supporting a human tragedy and to save lives.

Our statistics show that so many people in the province of Ontario and so many people across Canada—almost 125,000 people across Canada are addicted to drugs: cocaine, opium, many different narcotics. I also want to tell you that there are so many legal drugs being used on the streets, because so many people receive them legitimately but give them away—by selling them, by giving them to anyone—and other people get addicted to them, without any monitoring. That's why we're losing lives.

1010

By creating a board to monitor the dispensing of those drugs, I think we'd be doing a great job for humanity, a great job for Ontarians, and a great job for the great people of Canada.

I know that on the streets of London and the streets of Toronto, many people get lost and lose their lives, because for many different reasons, they get addicted to something—something they don't want to be attracted to. But as human beings, we are very fragile. We get affected sometimes by emotional things, by a tragedy, by circumstances. Sometimes we lose our job. We divorce. For many different reasons, we are affected psychologically, and we think taking narcotic drugs will help us to control ourselves, to maintain our personality, give us some kind of forgiveness or help us to forget our problems. That's why we get addicted to something that will kill us in the future.

I think by creating a monitoring board, we will help many people. I know many different colleagues are going to speak to this bill, especially my colleague from Etobicoke North, who is a doctor. He knows the importance of prescribing and dispensing drugs. At many times I've gone to him, and I've taken his advice about certain drugs. Because for so many drugs which have been admitted by the federal government and supported by the province and put on a list to be covered by OHIP, we don't understand the explanation of the drugs. We don't know what it means, because not all of us are doctors or specialists or chemists. We know the chemical structure of some drugs, the side effects of the drugs, but some of them will affect us badly. Some of them will cause much harm to our lives, to our friends, to our loved ones and to our family members.

That's why I'm hoping I will get the support of all members of the House, because it's a very important issue—not just for us but for many great Ontarians and the future of this province.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): My appreciation goes to the member for London–Fanshawe,

who has brought forward Bill 108, An Act to monitor the prescribing of certain drugs. It's obvious, in listening to him, that he is very passionate. He obviously has been moved to action as a result of visits and conversations that he has had with constituents in his community, and I want to welcome those individuals here today.

I think the role of an MPP is exactly this. Obviously, on a regular basis, we have communications, we listen to the concerns of our constituents, and if we see an opportunity to move an issue forward, to make sure that some action is taken, that awareness is raised, we have that opportunity in private members' hour to do so. This member from London–Fanshawe has done exactly that: He has brought forward this bill.

This bill ostensibly would establish a program for monitoring the prescription of certain drugs in order to promote the appropriate use of the monitored drugs and the reduction of their abuse and misuse.

The bill proposes to create an Ontario prescription monitoring board. It says that the board would include representatives from the CPSO, the RCDSO and the OCP. It would be administered by an administrator, and it would require that prescribers and pharmacists give access of information to the administrator, including medical records that the administrator reasonably requires to achieve the objectives of the program. It would also extend protection to those who act in good faith to disclose information or documents in a manner required by this act.

I would certainly concur with the member: This is a serious issue. I think we've all heard from constituents, in our roles as MPPs, about individuals who unfortunately have lost loved ones as a result of drug use.

I would suggest, and I've had the opportunity to consult with some of the groups that are going to be impacted by this type of legislation, that although this bill is well intended and although there may well be very, very good reason to establish this type of a board, an Ontario prescription monitoring board, it's extremely important that we take the time to do the due diligence and consult with the individuals who are going to be impacted, because as I say, this well could be the solution for reducing the incidence of abuse and misuse of drugs. However, there has not been consultation with any of these stakeholders or any of the representatives, and I think we need to take a look at how large this problem is and how we can best resolve this problem.

I think as the bill is currently worded, it is probably too broad. Certainly, we need to make sure that when we introduce legislation, we have support and we are capable of actually doing what the bill is proposing to do. We can't simply have another level of bureaucracy and not achieve its objective of reducing abuse and misuse.

I think this bill does speak to a commitment that we need to always have in the window, and that is patient safety, so this bill is certainly on the right track because it is an attempt to make sure that the government takes steps to promote patient safety. We certainly do support safe prescribing, and we need to do everything we can to

protect the public. Part of what we obviously need to do is to focus our efforts on establishing electronic medical records for all Ontarians, which currently we don't have.

Certainly, I think the timing of this bill is very appropriate. There's a lot of merit in this bill, and I would hope that as a result of the member coming forward and raising our awareness of this issue, we could bring together the colleges that are being proposed to be representatives, that we could bring forward the Ministry of Health, that we could bring forward and include in this the nurses, because I think nurses have a lot of information. Perhaps what we need to do is to first set up a working group to develop a consistent protocol and take a look at this issue: How widespread is the issue and how can we most appropriately deal with this issue? Because it is a real issue. I applaud the member for bringing it forward.

We know there are abuses, so certainly this notion of monitoring the prescribing of certain drugs is one that is opportune at the present time. I think we all know of very troubling cases related to inappropriate prescriptions. If you take a look at it, perhaps it makes good common sense to create a central agency that could monitor the prescription of drugs.

So I would highly recommend that we take a further look, because this bill makes a good start, but I think now it's important that whatever we introduce would be well supported by the people in the field, that if an agency were to be set up, it would do the job that it is intended to do, and that is to reduce the abuse and misuse, and of course we need to make sure that the colleges, if they're going to be involved in this, are in a position where they actually can do what is intended here. This is certainly a worthwhile agency for consideration, but without further consultation and without further examination of some of the details as to how it would be established and what it would actually do, and what type of regulations are going to be necessary to make it function, I think it would be premature to support this moving forward, simply because the stakeholders, the people who are going to be involved in trying to take action to reduce the abuse and misuse, have not been involved in consultation. But having said that, in talking to those stakeholders, there is an interest on their part to be involved in further consultation. Certainly they think the timing is appropriate, and possibly this is the most appropriate vehicle.

1020

I applaud the member from London–Fanshawe. I appreciate his representation of his constituents. I appreciate that he's brought this issue forward because it is a very serious issue and he has raised awareness. I would hope it would prompt the government to move forward and take a look at the problem and identify how we can best address this particular problem and this particular issue, which is serious, take a look at what other provinces have done and then, if it is determined that this would be the most appropriate vehicle, this particular Ontario prescription monitoring board, move forward with its creation. So thank you to member, and I appreciate your bringing this forward and raising this for our public attention.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): I too commend the member from London–Fanshawe for addressing an important issue and an important problem and welcome the visitors to the gallery.

Certainly as the representative for Parkdale–High Park, I've had a great deal of experience with those with addiction and mental health issues. The two tend to go hand in hand, as we all know. Along with many others in my community, we started a West End Angels program, a drop-in for those with mental health and addiction issues, and work very closely with a wonderful organization in my riding, Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre that feeds about a thousand people a month, many of those with mental health and addiction issues.

In fact, in response to those in our riding, we set up a round table of caregivers and we looked at the issue of narcotic abuse and use and what we could do to address it. One of the stumbling blocks we initially came over was not so much the monitoring, but the fact that Ontario does not have a drug strategy at all, and this is a huge oversight. The people at home will ring with this when they recognize that the city of Toronto has an excellent drug strategy. In fact, Susan Shepherd, who helped develop that drug strategy, sits on our board and is looking at developing a Parkdale–High Park drug strategy that we hope we might bring forward to become an Ontario-wide strategy, because we certainly need one.

When it comes to the actual use and monitoring of narcotics and other drugs, I'd like to—because I think this is an important bill and does take a first step towards an issue that needs addressing: that we have both an overprescription of drugs and an underprescription of drugs problem in this province, and it's not only narcotics. I'm quoting here from a CTV news release—this is earlier this month—which says, “Seniors prescribed antidepressants such as Prozac, Paxil and Zoloft are almost five times more likely to commit suicide during the first month on the drugs than those given other medication to treat depression, a study suggests.”

“The research, conducted in Canada, adds to the controversy already surrounding popular selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors or ‘SSRI’ drugs.”

Here's a quote from Dr. Juurlink, lead author of the study by the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences. He says, “Doctors are way too liberal with these drugs” in prescribing them. So there is another case of an overprescription of drugs.

Then, on the other side, there's underprescription. Again, from the same day that that CTV article came out on their website, we know that a Mr. Teotonio had just paid \$40,000 for injections at a private clinic in Toronto. He said, “It should be plain for all to see.... It's bad enough to have a terrible disease”—cancer, in his case—“without having to worry about drug accessibility.”

John Colacci, who was treated at his hospital, took Avastin, and it cost him \$36,000. He said, “I expect more from the Ontario government, not just for me but for every other Ontarian who could encounter this problem.”

Wendy Mundell paid \$18,000 up front for Avastin last year and was lucky to receive some financial assistance

afterwards from a third party benefit package. She asks, "Why doesn't this government agree that my life is worth \$18,000?" Again, when we look at an Ontario-wide drug strategy, we should look at who's not getting the drugs they need as well as those who are getting too many drugs and drugs that they don't need.

The first thing I did when I did research for this bill was consult a friend, a constituent and someone I trust in the matter of pharmaceuticals, because he's the director of the pharmacy services at Trillium Health Centre, Dr. Allan Mills. He sent me a very enlightening e-mail about what perhaps needs to go into this bill before we consider passing it. First of all, he says that in the province of BC, where they have similar legislation, the "program was well-intentioned but was not successful ... as it relied on copies of the prescriptions being sent to the central processing office where they would be entered in the computer due to difficulties with gathering and entering the data. An estimate in 1995"—when they looked at this initially, when they introduced it—"suggested that 20% of the data was lost due to the ineffectiveness of the process. It wasn't"—and here's the critical point he's making about the BC system—"until the Pharmanet system was introduced that the process finally worked. This system made the triplicate process a little redundant as each prescription entered into a pharmacy computer was logged on a provincial database. This made it easy to track utilization and identify cases of diversion"—drug diversion.

So here's the problem with the act as written. He says:

"[W]e don't have an electronic database for prescriptions, which would be the backbone of such a system. Many have been asking for this for years, but it has never been made a priority" by this government. "Without this infrastructure (which could be used for more than just narcotic diversion"—as I pointed out in the case of the SSRIs—"i.e. identifying medications people are on at home when they come into ER) it would be a false sense of security at best, a waste of time and money at worst.

"Again, the act was well intentioned, but it could also be used as a witch hunt to prevent prescribers from giving those patients who need ... narcotics the medications they require." For example, he says, "(palliative care physicians would be 'picked up by the system' because they would prescribe these agents at a higher-than-normal rate—their patients require the medications...). The other concern would be that artificial barriers must not be put up that would prevent patients from getting their prescriptions filled. Since many pharmacies are worried about security of the agents and robberies in some places, it can be hard enough to get straight narcotics filled at a neighbourhood pharmacy—can you imagine if they started to be identified as 'high dispensers' and had to justify their dispensing? There has to be a balance between access and diversion risk. And this has to include participation"—which really echoes some of what we heard from the member for Kitchener–Waterloo—"from the Ontario College of Pharmacists, Ontario College of Dental Surgeons and the Ontario College of

Physicians and Surgeons. It is really important that this be considered as a means to prevent diversion" but "not to limit practice."

I can also imagine that in areas where there is a high concentration of seniors, for example, or a high concentration of the disabled, that particular pharmacy might be targeted. But I think the critical point he's making, other than that, is that without the database, this is pretty well a bill without teeth. Again, I hearken back to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, who says that what's really needed here is consultation, because, trust me, if I can find this out in a couple of hours of research between about 1 o'clock and 3 o'clock this morning, I'm sure, if we get the stakeholders around the table, we'll get a great deal more input on how to put teeth into this legislation and actually make it what it should be and what I think the member from London–Fanshawe and all the stakeholders want it to be. I am not arguing against this being a good first step; I'm concerned that it not just be a first step but that it go the whole distance.

I always love talking about health care, because it gives me a chance to talk about, of course, our health care system and, interestingly enough, bring forward what should be in place, not only in the province of Ontario but across this country of ours, and that is a pharmacare strategy. One of the aspects of Canada that makes us so Canadian and so proud to be Canadian is our medicare system, and that medicare system is under threat here provincially and of course nationally as well. One of the ways in which it is under threat is—the example I gave you of the folks who cannot afford to pay for cancer drugs and who need those cancer drugs. So already we have a two-tier system: one for those who can afford the drugs and one for those who cannot afford the drugs. This is pretty clear across the board in a lot of different areas. For people with children with autism, they know this directly—again, where there's not funding available.

1030

One doesn't need to do much research to discover some of the solutions to that problem. The Canadian Health Coalition and the Ontario Health Coalition have both done work on this, and I'd like to just read what their recommendations are for a pharmacare system:

"(1) Universal public drug insurance:

"—expand first-dollar coverage according to the principles of the Canada Health Act: no user fees, co-payments or premiums for insured first-line therapeutic treatments;

"—fully fund the insurance plan through the public sector. Governments self-insure to control costs. No partnerships with the private sector; and

"—options"—as Roy Romanow called for—"for 'catastrophic' drug coverage (covering costs that exceed high thresholds)..." We think of those who suffer with AIDS and how much it costs them for prescription drugs. Only the wealthy can afford them.

"(2) National formulary for essential drugs:

"—insure first-line therapies on a national formulary based on evidence of efficacy; and

“—use nationally integrated cost-management methods, including bulk purchasing, cost-volume price negotiations, and reference-based pricing.” These are things that we could do to bring the costs way down.

“(3) Drug regulation that puts safety and efficacy first”—and behind this, of course, we’re also talking about that database that we need, and it really is quite outrageous that we don’t have it. Imagine that you are in a coma or you’re unconscious or you’re taken into the emergency ward and nobody knows what drugs you’re on. This should be computerized today—yesterday. Without that, a monitoring system doesn’t make a lot of sense.

“(4) Reform of the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board.” We also need that.

I don’t have a lot of time, so I’m just going to read the main points: accountable and transparent decision-making; patent reform; regulation of drug promotion and marketing; a national prescribing service; establish a public drug information system, which is what this bill wants to take one small step toward; and regulation for ethical conduct in clinical trials and research.

I really highly recommend their report, which is many, many pages in length and has been signed on to by a broad swath of stakeholders in the health community—because we get that we do not have a true medicare system without a pharmacare system as well.

I did promise the Ontario Health Coalition, so I will—because it is Nursing Week, and we’ve heard it heralded in this House—make mention of another attempt to really chip away at our medicare system in Ontario, and that is this move to private-public hospitals. They say, in no uncertain terms—300 nurses signed on to this: “Hospitals are not commodities to be bought and sold on the market as revenue streams to make money for investors. They are valued public institutions upon which our communities rely for life-enhancing and life-prolonging care.”

They are absolutely and steadfastly against the development of these hospitals, which are already running into huge cost overruns before they’re even built. I’m thinking of Brampton and others that we’ve heard about many times in this House.

With just a few minutes remaining, I would say that one of the major concerns that has come out from our own roundtable in Parkdale–High Park that we need to address right away for those who suffer from drug addiction issues is more rehabilitation beds. We need more treatment options. We are turning people away by the thousands to die on the streets of our city because of lack of housing, lack of treatment, ODSP that doesn’t pay for them to eat and pay their rent. This is what we need, and this is the answer to those who are out there suffering from addiction issues right now. It’s clear that this is not going to help that.

Having said that, are we supportive? We’re supportive of this as a baby step. We would love, like the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, to see stakeholders around a table discussing this, because as I say, if this much comes out of an evening’s work of research from the director of pharmacy services at Trillium hospital, then surely a

great deal more needs to go into this bill in terms of regulations, in terms of teeth, in terms of really making it what it needs to be. So we need that right away, as well as transparency and openness.

Even further than that, we need a pharmacare plan that actually pays for the drugs that those who have illness need and that helps to introduce a database system and an electronic monitoring system so that lives are saved. That’s what I think we all want as MPPs in this House. We all look out upon our ridings. There’s not one riding represented in this Parliament where we have not seen first-hand the devastation of addiction issues, the devastation of the lack of money in our health care system, the devastation of the lack of treatment beds.

I have folks coming to me all the time. They want treatment; they want rehabilitation. They cannot find it. It’s only there for the rich. It is not there for the poor and it’s not even there for the middle class, because it’s profoundly expensive. We need treatment options; we need beds for those suffering with addictions. We need all the stakeholders, all the caregivers, to sit around a table, just like we’re doing in Parkdale–High Park, and come up with real solutions. We need to put teeth into this baby step of a bill. We need to have a database that monitors the prescribing of drugs and that looks at who gets what so that when that person comes into the emergency room and is unconscious, we know what they’re on, we know what perhaps they’re overdosing on, so we’re not overprescribing yet again when they get into the hospital or prescribing the wrong medication when they get into the hospital.

It has been a pleasure to speak on this. We’ve all of us lost loved ones. My prayers and my thoughts go out to the family and those in the gallery. Rest assured that I and the New Democratic Party will do everything we can to make a difference in this province for you.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): It’s a pleasure to speak in conjunction with my good friend from London–Fanshawe, my seatmate. I want to congratulate him for taking a leadership role on this particular issue.

I’m wont to talk about issues by example, because I think that’s one of the ways I can really understand issues or have a better comprehension. Let me just say that when it comes to drugs and prescription drugs and what we take in our lives, I’m not an expert, but I want to talk about some experiences.

Less than a year ago I had the misfortune of losing my father. He was quite ill for quite a while. I had the opportunity to spend the last month with him on a daily basis and I knew the number of drugs that he took. I took him to the doctor—and this is no fault of the medical profession by any means, because I think those folks in the medical profession really try to do the best they can. In a couple of instances we’d go to a specialist or a doctor who said, “You’ve got to stop taking that drug because this is why this is happening to you,” and they’d give him something else. He wasn’t well, so a couple of weeks later I’d take him somewhere else, because he couldn’t drive anymore.

In a period of only a month—here's somebody who was 84 years old when he passed away, but for the last couple of years he was having a really difficult time. Sad to say, I actually only spent maybe six weeks with him every day, but he'd been doing this for the last couple of years. Like I say, the profession was very kind to him, they were very good, but he had some challenges with some drugs and he was bouncing back and forth. That really gives you some sense—I touch wood that I'm not dependent on any particular drug today and hopefully can stay that way.

But let me tell you of another story about a neighbour of mine where I live in Brighton. She's an elderly lady. About 10 years ago—and she was fairly healthy all her life, but over the course of her life, and I don't know the whole history, she'd been prescribed different drugs for different symptoms. Of course, she didn't know any better; she kept on taking these drugs. It came to a point where one day they had to rush her to the hospital. The prognosis wasn't very good. Thank God one of the doctors in the emergency room, after trying to figure out what the problem was—she was very ill. As a matter of fact, they told her husband that she might not come home.

One of the things they normally do in the hospital when you go into emergency is they check what kind of drugs you take. She had quite an array of drugs that she was taking; some were over the counter because when she got a headache she took this and so forth; some were prescribed. The doctor in the emergency room decided to take all the drugs away: "Let's see what happens. I'm sure it's more complicated, but I'm trying to make it as simple as I can." She suffered dearly for a couple of days, maybe a week, with no drugs—some withdrawals. I'm not sure of the age of this person—this happened about 10 years ago—but she's probably in her mid-80s. I saw her a couple of weeks ago and she's doing great. All she takes now when she gets a really bad headache sometimes is an aspirin. But she knows that she can only take it once or twice and then she doesn't take it anymore.

1040

I'm not a chemist; I'm not a doctor. I don't know what those drugs do, but these are real-life experiences that I was able to be associated with, and I know the challenges that those people went through. Whether this bill fixes the problem, I don't know for sure, but any little thing we can do to alleviate those problems we might face I think we need to do in this House. So I will be supporting this bill. If it goes to committee and if it could be made better, all the power to it. Along with my colleagues from all sides of the House, I hope we can move forward and make life better for everybody in Ontario.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 108, the Prescription Monitoring Act, 2007, brought forward by my colleague from London–Fanshawe. He spoke quite passionately about the need for more awareness when he introduced the bill. It's nice to have private members' time on Thursday mornings so that we can have some

non-partisan discussions and issues, and have more public debate and more awareness of situations out there, like prescription monitoring for certain drugs.

I want to thank the families who are in the gallery and who've been touched by the tragedy of losing someone to a prescription narcotic overdose. I want to have them stand and acknowledge that they're here today.

Applause.

Ms. Scott: They have been tireless in trying to bring this problem to the attention of legislators, to get the rules changed and to talk with all the stakeholders.

For some of you who don't know—I guess some in the gallery know—I was a nurse for 20 years before I had the opportunity to be elected as the member for Haliburton–Victoria–Brock—

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): And an excellent nurse too.

Ms. Scott: Thank you to the member from Peterborough for the compliment.

You do see things first-hand as a nurse—problems—and we say, "What can we do to make this better? This system is not right. We have to be able to protect people in a better way."

The articles that were in the Star—I'm going to mention one from the Toronto Star from April 24 and part of one from April 25. They describe—I know the family members are present in the gallery—the situation that occurred in the family, how they knew there was something wrong in the system, and how they couldn't get access to correct it and rectify it so that other families didn't go through it. It's a very tragic story—a young man who was initially treated for kidney stones and then started taking medication. It's described here in the Toronto Star. It has pharmacy records that show he was taking a plethora of pills—Valium, Oxycocet, Endocet, Dilaudid, anti-depressants and even Ritalin—all prescribed by a doctor. More than 10,000 pills over 14 months—it's in the article—were prescribed.

So I think we need to highlight the seriousness and how things can just get out of hand. This young man went in for kidney stones and was over-prescribed narcotic medications. They're not just habit-forming; they're highly addictive. As I talk to the families and how there's not enough awareness of how highly addictive these medications can be—just the information they're given isn't correct. They aren't aware. They love their family members, and their family members aren't aware that this is highly addictive. And once they get on them, once they realize that an addiction has formed, there aren't enough resources, clinics or help. Through just the purpose of going in for medications for kidney stones and how that evolved, that young man ended up losing his life. That should not have happened; it did happen. His family has worked tirelessly to bring this issue forward.

We all collectively—there have been many, many stakeholders mentioned here today that are willing: the Ontario Medical Association, the College of Pharmacists, physicians and surgeons, dental surgeons and nurses—need to get in the loop, as we say; we all need to be on

the same page. We should hear from the families of these victims of instances that have not happened.

When you think that this young man has been taken from us, and the other family members who were lost because of over-prescription—there's the College of Physicians and Surgeons; I know they're there, and I know that situation specifically has been dealt with, but what else is going on that we don't know about? Patients who go in for symptoms don't have the knowledge of medications or what they're being prescribed for, so we have to do a better job of informing the families, the patients, of what these medications are composed of, how highly addictive—not just habit-forming; sometimes the words “habit-forming,” I'm told, are in there, but they are highly addictive. Unless we make them aware—there is certainly, I know, in the hospitals, short-time use of some narcotics, but they're monitored in the system, and it's for short-term, it's for pain relief until they can get through the worst of the healing.

When physicians can over-prescribe to the extent that they do, I think it speaks to the fact that we have to have better checks in the system. It was mentioned earlier about eHealth, electronic medical records. That's been in the papers a lot. But what we're trying to establish here is communication between doctors and pharmacies of patient records. The privacy issue, certainly, we acknowledge and are working with. But in the hospital setting, when I was in emergency—when they come in, and 25% of the reason they come in is related to medications, that's a red flag for all of us. I don't think any levels of government have moved quickly enough to establish the information sharing that is needed to protect patients who come in. That's big hole in our system that we need to address.

I want to thank the member from London–Fanshawe for bringing this forward, for this debate that we're having this morning. The families—I know it's very hard for you to come here and to relive some experiences, but I just want to say thank you very much for coming and for your tireless efforts. Thank you.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri (Etobicoke North): At the outset, I would first of all like to declare my complete support of this particular bill brought by the honourable member from London–Fanshawe, Dr. Khalil Ramal.

I know that our member from London–Fanshawe has been passionate on a number of fronts, not only in representing the interests of his community, his own riding, but also more broadly: Canada's diverse communities, and now, today, specifically with individuals who are here represented by people in the gallery today who have had such negative and life-changing experiences with these particular groups of medications that we're speaking about.

I'll speak here in a number of different capacities: as the MPP for Etobicoke North; as you'll know, I'm the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health Promotion; and of course as a physician. In those various capacities all wrapped into one, I think that more scrutiny, more monitoring, more measurement of outcomes in

any realm of scientific endeavour, whether it's medicine or other realms, is certainly going to serve the interests of the province of Ontario and our people. For example, the Hippocratic oath, which I remember being administered some 20 years ago at the University of Toronto—one of its first tenets is the idea of “above all else, do no harm,” or in Latin, “primum non nocere.”

I think the honourable member from London–Fanshawe very rightly brings this to our attention, that when individuals, in whatever pain situation it may be—whether it's, for example, seeking treatment for an acute situation like kidney stones, or renal colic as we say, or for deeper and more long-lasting and possibly terminal illnesses, whether it's post-surgical pain or cancer pain or traumatic pain from, say, car accidents, motor vehicle accidents, and so on—when we as physicians are entrusted with the care of our patients, for hopefully restoring some semblance of order and well-being to mind, body and spirit, if in that situation the physician over-prescribes, whether it's narcotic medications or a whole host of other medications, of course the medical interest, the medical profession and the medical aspiration are not being fulfilled. So I wholeheartedly support this idea of a prescription monitoring board.

1050

At the same time, I would like to say, hopefully for the benefit of the members of this chamber, that there are a number of individuals—for example, we have four million Canadians who have arthritis and 20,000 individuals who are diagnosed on an annual basis with lung cancer, and there's a huge number of other pain situations—acute and chronic pain, acute on chronic pain and so on; there's a great deal of vocabulary attached to this. In those particular cases, some of these narcotic-level medications, hopefully used in a judicious manner, hopefully not over-prescribed, are in fact necessary. So I really have to bring this idea of balance to this particular discussion. Having said that, what I think the creation of a drug monitoring and prescription monitoring board, as brought forward by my colleague from London–Fanshawe, stipulates is that we must have more discussion on these issues; we must have continuing medical education, or CME, as we would say to physicians and other practitioners.

Our own Ministry of Health, by the way, has instituted what we call a MedsCheck, which is performed by pharmacists for their patients—it's now a billable service—in which they will actually analyze the prescriptions that patients are taking and hopefully use that as an alert to the various bodies, including physicians themselves, for potential conflicts, drug interactions, side effects, under-management as well or possibly over-prescription of these narcotics. Because of course, when we have public trust, not only as legislators but also as physicians, it's very important and imperative that we prescribe judiciously and appropriately. The medical teaching is: what is necessary, but kind of on the minimal side—not to over-prescribe and then unfortunately addict patients to these very powerful, important and useful but potentially

dangerous and, unfortunately, potentially lethal medications.

I would simply say that our perspective is certainly: Above all else, do no harm—*primum non nocere*—the medical motto. I would wholeheartedly support my honourable colleague Dr. Ramal, from London–Fanshawe, on his bill for a prescription monitoring board. It will bring scrutiny, it will measure outcomes and I think it will definitely serve the interests not only of individuals comprising the riding of London–Fanshawe but the people of Ontario broadly.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): First, let me congratulate the member from London–Fanshawe for this bill.

Briefly, why do we need this Prescription Monitoring Act? We know, for instance, that the prescribing of narcotics has increased significantly over the last few years. In 2003, 101 Ontarians died with narcotic drugs in their system. This was a tenfold increase over the past decade. Also in 2003, 2.8 million psychotropic drugs were dispensed, mostly in Ontario. That's the equivalent of two pills for every man, woman and child.

On April 25, the Toronto Star printed an article about a prominent Toronto psychiatrist who had been found guilty of professional misconduct for prescribing excessive amounts of narcotics to 23 patients. Over a 14-month period, this doctor prescribed one patient over 10,000 pills. Of course, that patient died of an overdose.

Let me give you an example that I myself have experienced in the riding I formerly represented. I was driving by the methadone clinic and saw a number of people standing in front of the entrance of this methadone clinic. I was wondering what they were hanging around for. What were they doing there? By further inquiry, I found out that some people who were standing in front of this clinic were actually buying and selling methadone. By further inquiry, I found out that if a patient went in and really made emotional requests to the doctor or to the dispensing agent, they could indeed get a bit more methadone that later could be sold on the street.

This bill is very necessary. Can this bill pass quickly? Of course it was said earlier that we need to have consultation with the stakeholders. Yes, that's very important, but remember this: The province of Manitoba passed Bill 107, and Mr. Ramal's bill is patterned after the Nova Scotia bill.

“The purpose of the bill is to establish a program for monitoring the prescription of certain drugs, to be designated by regulation of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, in order to promote the appropriate use of the monitored drugs and the reduction of their abuse and misuse. The bill proposes the creation of the Ontario Prescription Monitoring Board composed of directors that include representatives of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario and the Ontario College of Pharmacists, as well as persons appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council who are not members of these licensing authorities.”

Just one more item: I think I would be remiss if I didn't mention that at present there is a shift in focus in terms of the health care system. In the past—and it might even be in the present—we were looking at patients who were sick, and the move is away from sick care to prevention. I want to give the McGuinty government full credit for establishing for the first time in the history of this province, and indeed in the history of Canada, a minister who is responsible for the promotion of health. That is a very significant issue.

Finally, the member from Parkdale–High Park mentioned earlier that, yes, there are social determinants of health that we must look at. We are making some steps in the right direction to ensure that some of these social determinants of health, which do cause illness, are being looked after at least to some degree. We need more housing, we need more education, and we need more nutrition and supplement programs. In short, we are going in the right direction, but we need more time.

Congratulations to the member and congratulations to the McGuinty government.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Ramal, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Ramal: First, I want to thank the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, who was the Minister of Health at one time; the member for Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, who has been a nurse for many years; the member for Etobicoke North, Dr. Qaadri, who is also a physician; and also the member for Parkdale–High Park, the member for Northumberland—my seatmate—the member for Davenport and all the people who are with us in the gallery.

I know it's a very important issue. I'm not going to take it lightly. Hopefully it will go for a third round. Also, we have to do a lot of work to strengthen the bill by consulting the stakeholders across Ontario: the doctors, the physicians, the nurses and the pharmacists. It's very important to bring all the people on board to create a strong bill that is able to serve the people of this province.

The member from Parkdale–High Park was talking a little bit about the bill, but she talked about different issues. Anyway, I want to thank her for in essence supporting the bill, and also all the members who spoke in support and brought very important elements to the discussion.

As you know, I'm not a physician, I'm not a pharmacist, I'm not a chemist, but I've heard a lot of stories from the media, from talking to people about the importance of creating such a board to monitor the dispensing of pills and narcotic drugs that can harm a lot of people. So we are here in this place to protect the people of Ontario and create rules and laws and regulations to make sure that all the people live in peace and harmony and are safe.

As we mentioned, not all of us are experts about drugs, not all of us know exactly how we can use them. A lot of people misuse those drugs, and by misusing them, it affects a lot of lives. That's why I'm introducing

this bill today and I'm looking forward to seeing support from both sides of the House.

1100

LINCOLN ALEXANDER DAY ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LE JOUR
DE LINCOLN ALEXANDER

Ms. Mossop moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 220, An Act to proclaim Lincoln Alexander Day /
Projet de loi 220, Loi proclamant le Jour de Lincoln
Alexander.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Ms. Mossop, you have up to 10 minutes. The floor is yours.

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): It was his voice that first engaged me and captured me: so varied, so deep and so rich, like the man himself. So today I move a bill to proclaim the third Wednesday in February in each year Lincoln Alexander Day in Ontario schools.

February is Black History Month, the third week in February is Heritage Week in Ontario and the third Monday in February is Heritage Day across Canada. Who among us embodies black history and our heritage as a province and as a country, growing towards tolerance and inclusion, more than our own oh, so accomplished, very charismatic and most generous Lincoln MacCauley Alexander?

I'm going to read out his many accomplishments for you. This could take a minute or two, and then I will get into the story of how we got to today.

Lincoln Alexander is a former Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, 1985-91. He's the chair of both the Raptors Foundation and the Ontario Heritage Trust. He was named the greatest Hamiltonian of all time in June 2006, in a contest sponsored by the Hamilton Spectator newspaper. Mr. Alexander is a former federal Minister of Labour, a former chairman of the then Ontario Workers' Compensation Board and the former chair of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation. He served as an MP for 11 years for the riding of Hamilton West.

Lincoln Alexander is a Companion of the Order of Canada, a member of the Order of Ontario, he received his B.A. from McMaster University and his L.L.B. from York University's Osgoode Hall. Lincoln Alexander is the recipient of six honorary Doctor of Law degrees and one honorary Doctor of Sacred Letters degree. He is a member on the boards of the University of Guelph, Doctors Hospital, the Shaw Festival, the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair, chamberWorks ensemble of Hamilton, and he acts as a consultant to the board of George Weston Ltd. and is a member of the Quebecor Ontario advisory board.

The Lincoln M. Alexander Parkway, fondly known as the "Linc" in Hamilton, is named after him. He is an honorary colonel in the RCAF, an honorary commissioner of the OPP and honorary chief of the Toronto Fire

Services. He is the honorary chief of police—Toronto, York Regional Police and Hamilton Police Service—and he also serves as patron or honorary officer of several charitable organizations.

The genesis of this bill came when the Ontario Heritage Trust contacted me about Linc's 85th birthday, which is going to be celebrated next Thursday in an enormous bash, and they said, "Is there any way we could maybe have that day proclaimed as Lincoln Alexander Day in Ontario?" That led me to think, what better national holiday could we have in Canada than Lincoln Alexander Day in February, which is Black History Month, and in the middle of Heritage Week?

But, as all of you know in this chamber, getting things like that accomplished can be timely, and we didn't have a lot of time. We wanted something ready for this special occasion. I started to think about all that Linc was about, all that he had achieved and how he had gotten there, and his commitment and dedication, especially to education and to people. That's when I decided, maybe a first step to a national holiday could happen right here in this Legislature among all of us—maybe a little subversive, but we'll start with a first step towards a national holiday right here by declaring the third Wednesday in February to be Lincoln Alexander Day in Ontario schools. So that's how we got to where we are now.

The reason why schools—and I have to pick up this book that he wrote, his autobiography. It's called *Go to School, You're a Little Black Boy: The Honourable Lincoln M. Alexander: A Memoir*. On the back of this book, Linc writes: "Throughout my life I have believed thoroughly in the power of education, and that belief is the grand gift that my mother, Mae Rose, gave me. The title of this book, the quote, 'Go to school, you're a little black boy,' is hers, and I have used it to honour her insight and wisdom. Those words, her words, have been at the core of what I have accomplished in this life. She was a mere maid, but her knowledge and foresight transcended her station in life; she knew that accepting defeat was easy, but success was possible, and education was the vehicle to take you there. She was right, and it has." It has, indeed.

He grew up in a very white Canada in the Depression era, the son of a maid and a railroad porter. Blacks at that time were uncommon, and often unwelcome. In his book, he talks about the many times that he became angry, and he had many reasons to be angry—the injustices, the ugliness that he met in his fellow human beings in this world. One occasion was when he had already served in the military. He had been through law school—an excellent student. He landed a job interview. It was over the phone, and the interview went extremely well. He got to the end of the interview, and he asked the gentleman on the other end of the phone, "Would it make any difference to you if I was black?" There was a long pause. He did get a first-hand, one-on-one interview for that job, but in fact he did not get the job, and he didn't get it because he was black. He got angry—not the only time in his life he would be angry and face such injustice and such ugliness—but he never got mired in the anger.

He never let the futility of anger overtake him and defeat him. He always moved beyond it. He always looked deep inside people and found something good. In return, we would have the gift of that instant friendship that Linc offers. When he turns his gaze on you, you have his full attention. It is an amazing gift. It's like the sun beaming down on you, and that deep, rich voice reaches out to you, engages you and talks to you, not about trivial things. He doesn't chat about the weather; he gets right to the crux of the issue.

In government, we have many people who come to us. You're sort of like a walking dollar sign, in fact. You spend all your time with people coming to you wanting money, whether it's a group or an organization—all needy, all worthy. I got to know Linc better as the chair of the Ontario Heritage Trust, and while everybody else brought briefing notes and PowerPoint presentations and would spend half an hour on the preamble, he just walked in the room and said, "I need money. I want money for my heritage trust." He just got straight to the point. Why waste time? We all knew why he was there, and you know what? That's what made him a success. He didn't waste any time on trivialities. He always got to the point, always gets to the point, and always sticks to what is the most important in life.

So I was taken by the fact that he never allowed anger to overtake him. It's something that many of us do in life. Anger is often justified, but if it's not used as a catalyst to move beyond and to move to better things, then it can destroy us, destroy those who are angry.

When I was preparing my bill—I introduced it last week—I quickly realized, because I started having people come up to me and talk to me about this bill and the response to it, that what we would be doing this morning in private members' time was, in fact, not having a debate about my bill. My bill is an opportunity for each and every one of us to tell our favourite Linc stories, and there are many of them.

I had the opportunity to meet with Colin Millar, a former chief of police of Hamilton, the other evening. Colin Millar's father was Lincoln Alexander's law partner—one of those genuinely sincere people back in a time when blacks were not welcome—who welcomed him with open arms, and, as Linc says in his book, loved black, thought black was beautiful. Colin was telling me about the great relationship he has and the great affection he has for Lincoln Alexander. He told me one quick story, which I will try to relay here, and that is that Linc never drove. He never got his licence, he never learned how to drive. He did everything else in life. He went on to rub elbows with royalty, but I suppose because he was so busy doing other great things, he never learned how to drive. But now he is 85, and to conserve that good energy for good purposes, he uses one of these motorized scooters. So now, a man who has never driven in his life is scooting around Hamilton in one of these motorized scooters. Colin, being the police officer that he is by trade, says, "This man knows nothing about the rules of the road. He doesn't know what an advance green is. He goes scooting out into the road. People start honking, and

Linc just throws up his hand and waves because he thinks they're honking because they know it's him." And you know what? They do know it's him. Everybody knows Linc in Hamilton. People all across Canada know him, adore him, love him and are so honoured to be able to count him among their countrymen and among their friends.

There's so much for the students of Ontario to learn about not just black history, not just heritage, but about life and living a successful life and learning how to overcome life's toughest challenges and how to be one thing that's actually really hard to be in life sometimes: happy. I've seen Linc saddened, but he's never been truly unhappy. He's a happy man, and he is because he gives so much.

1110

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just want to introduce a class that's here from Humbercrest French immersion. We're delighted to have them here from my riding of Parkdale–High Park.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I'm pleased to rise as part of the debate on Bill 220, which recognizes the contributions of Lincoln Alexander by declaring Lincoln Alexander Day throughout public schools, not only in Hamilton and Niagara, where his name is well-known and he's made a tremendous impact, but across the province of Ontario, where similarly Lincoln Alexander has had a tremendous impact, and continues to do so, and is an inspiration for young people across this province. So I congratulate my colleague Ms. Mossop, my neighbour from the Stoney Creek riding, for bringing this forward today. It's something that can have a lasting impact on young people across the province of Ontario, and it's a chance for all of us who have interacted with Lincoln Alexander over the years to celebrate this incredible man.

As my colleague Ms. Mossop indicated, we all have our Linc stories to tell. I had a chance to work very closely with His Honour when I was the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation in 2001-02. Of course, Lincoln Alexander was the chair of the Ontario Heritage Trust, and he continues in that capacity today. And he was persuasive: You didn't say no to Lincoln Alexander. As Ms. Mossop indicated, you have all kinds of good projects that come forward on a regular basis, but whether it was with his eyes, his tone, his confidence or his passion for preserving our heritage, you just couldn't say no to Linc. We were pleased to work together in investing more funds in the Ontario Heritage Trust to help to rebuild some of the institutions that had not been in the shape that many of us would like to see them, and I'm pleased to see that further investments have continued in that regard.

It was a lot of fun doing those announcements with Linc, who has an extraordinary stature both physically and in his presence—incredible charisma—but also his infectious humour. It's absolutely impressive how he, in a few short words, will win over any crowd.

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): Nice guy.

Mr. Hudak: My colleague from Simcoe–Grey says, “Nice guy.” No doubt about it: a true gentleman in the classic sense of the word.

Not too long ago, actually, I was down—my colleague the Minister of Tourism, Mr. Bradley, was there, and Mr. Craitor from Niagara Falls as well—celebrating the Ontario Heritage Trust plaque for the Fenian raids. We all remember the Fenian—well, we don’t remember the Fenian raids per se; we’ve read about the Fenian raids.

Mr. Wilson: You probably do.

Mr. Hudak: He says that I probably do. At any rate, we had lined up the redcoats and the Fenians. The Fenians were mostly American residents or citizens who had dressed up in the Fenian costume of the day and had come across the border. They probably had never met Lincoln Alexander and, because they’re from across the border, may not have heard of Lincoln Alexander’s contributions, eloquently described by my colleague Ms. Mossop a few moments ago. But when Linc took the stage, he charmed those Fenians. The Fenians, because they were in costume and in their roles, were a rowdy bunch. You don’t want to mess with the 19th century Fenians. Their legend for creating havoc is well-known. But Linc, with that Lincoln Alexander charm, won them over immediately, and they joined in raucous applause as we commemorated this very important event.

As well, not too long ago, that same band of Niagarans—Mr. Craitor, Mr. Bradley and I—were together to celebrate the Niagara Parks Commission, begun by one of Ontario’s greatest Premiers, Oliver Mowat, over a century ago. And Linc there continued to do excellent work promoting our heritage at that spot.

Lincoln Alexander is absolutely inspiring—that great Canadian immigrant story that we all love to celebrate. He had come over, as Ms. Mossop indicated, from the West Indies as a child. He faced enormous obstacles at the time, incredibly bearing through it; and a list of accomplishments that made him very worthy of winning in 2006 the Greatest Hamiltonian of all time in the Hamilton Spectator contest—Lincoln Alexander prevailing.

In fact, some pretty tough competition: runners up Boris Brott, Arthur Weisz, Thomas McQuesten—Lincoln Alexander, of course, the victor. In politics we know Ellen Fairclough, Sheila Coppins, her father Mayor Vic Coppins, John Munro among others. So some pretty heavy competition; Lincoln Alexander, of course, prevailed.

I think of the fellow all the time when I get to take that Lincoln Alexander expressway when moving around Stoney Creek and navigating through that part of Hamilton toward the 403; appropriately named after the former Lieutenant Governor, that new highway in the area.

We also, Mr. Speaker, had a recent contest on my website—I don’t know if you joined in. We called it the Great Dominion Dustup. We pitted 64 great Canadian politicians from Confederation to modern times and had people vote online as to who their most inspiring Canadian politician was. Lincoln Alexander squared off against C.D. Howe. C.D. Howe had a major impact after

the war in Canada; a member of Mackenzie King’s government. The C.D. Howe Institute, of course, is named after him. Lincoln Alexander trounced C.D. Howe in that first round. He then ran up against Lester Pearson in the second round. Pearson, of course, made it all the way to the final in our contest before being defeated, believe it or not, by Louis Riel. But Linc held his own against Lester Pearson, an accomplishment in itself as well.

My colleague Laurie Scott, the member for Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, just shared with me that Lincoln Alexander was good friends with her dad, Bill Scott, the long-time MP for the area. Laurie Scott remembers Lincoln Alexander as her Santa Claus. Little Laurie Scott used to sit on Lincoln Alexander’s lap at the Christmas parties where Linc played a jolly Saint Nick. Hopefully Laurie did get the gifts that she desired at that time as a girl in celebrating Christmas—a special memory, no doubt, for my colleague from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock.

His Honour Mr. Alexander’s accomplishments are legion, not only as Lieutenant Governor but as a former cabinet minister in the Joe Clark government, a four-time MP for the Hamilton area, and all kinds of boards, universities and the health care sector he was involved with. I want to say I’m very pleased Lincoln Alexander plays an important role in the charity I also care very much about. He helps with scholarships given to children from low-income families whose parents want to send them to independent or faith-based schools. That’s not always affordable for a lot of families across the province of Ontario. Linc is always there to help celebrate these families whose children have worked hard to enjoy those scholarships.

I’m very pleased to rise in the House today in strong support of Lincoln Alexander Day in our schools. I again congratulate my colleague from Stoney Creek. It’s a pleasure to be part of the debate this morning.

Ms. DiNovo: It’s a pleasure to rise and speak to the member for Stoney Creek’s bill to declare Lincoln Alexander Day. This is, of course, exciting, and one of the exciting aspects of it is that it is non-partisan. This man was a Progressive Conservative, he was a cabinet member and he was known for, of course, among other things—I have a wonderful picture of him seen in a screen shot from CBC speaking to the press about the fuddle-duddle incident during the Trudeau era, and I was wondering what he would have to say about the Flick Off campaign if he were here today.

It’s a wonderful and very non-partisan moment when we’re all thrilled to support celebrating an incredible Ontarian. I always wonder as I walk into this place—and if people who are watching this are wondering who Lincoln Alexander was, he was the first black Lieutenant Governor of this province. If you walk down the halls of this Legislature, you’ll see his portrait there, and it is the only face of colour represented on all of the walls. That’s both a great triumph for him and also, in a sense, somewhat of a tragedy that that’s the only face of colour represented. There are portraits all over the walls of this place. They’re all of men, they’re all of white men except

for him and the Queen. Again, I think the fitting homage to this great man is really to work more towards inclusion—inclusion in the political world, inclusion of all sorts.

1120

I wanted to recount a little story, because I know we have schoolchildren here from my own riding, about being a schoolchild about their age. A photographer came by our schoolyard. I was very fair, and my best friend at that time was the only African Canadian girl in our school, Marva Jackson. We played together and the photographer snapped a photo of us, and we became the poster children for Brotherhood Week of the Canadian Council of Christians and Jews. We got to have lunch with the then mayor, Nathan Phillips. But what was very strange about that whole experience was that I had never noticed anything particularly different about Marva before that experience. We were just friends. I noticed that all the other girls and all the other boys looked different from me, so I didn't understand what all the fuss was about. It would be wonderful to have that degree of naïveté again, to have that degree of innocence again, that degree of inclusion that many of us experienced when we were children and yet somehow lose as we grow older.

Four hundred years ago was the date of the first African to arrive on the shores of Canada and to become a Canadian. Mathieu Da Costa arrived as a slave. We did have slavery in this country, and we had slavery for quite a long time after that first arrival. In fact, in 1793 the Abolition Act was passed in Upper Canada, now known as Ontario. It was the first act of its kind to declare freedom for slaves in all of the British Empire. So we can be proud of that as Canadians and as Ontarians, but we can be a little saddened by the fact that though we had the law on our side and have had the law on our side for some time, the impact of that law isn't what we would hope it would be.

I was looking at Black History Canada—and I commend Ms. Mossop, who introduced this day during Black History Month. One of the first paragraphs on the website says, “While Canada did not have legal segregation, there were always ‘understandings’ about”—and they're talking about most of the last century and some of this—“which neighbourhoods black people could live in, or where they could worship. Most professional organizations”—how high they could rise in those organizations, who would and “would not hire them.”

We also have to, in commending Lincoln Alexander, look to the future and how we can never have that happen again and educate our children.

I also did a little bit of research and found some wonderful words—I'm going to read some of them—from a study that was commissioned by this Ontario Legislature back a ways, in 1992. I'll tell you who wrote these words in a minute, but when you read these words, we should feel a little sad. The author writes, in the study commissioned:

“The long and the short of it is that when you read the recommendations, it's as if virtually nothing has changed

for visible minority kids in the school system over the last 10 years. I have to admit that it stopped me in my tracks because I know that the Toronto board, of all the boards, has made a Herculean effort to get the schools to be responsive to the startling multiracial and multicultural changes in the community.

“The students were fiercely articulate and often deeply moving. Sometimes angry. They don't understand why the schools are so slow to reflect the broader society. One bright young man in a Metro east high school said that he had reached grade 13 without once having read a book by a black author on the curriculum. And other students, in the large meeting of which he was a part, started to name the books they had been given to read, the titles were *Black Like Me* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*.” Those are books I read when I was in school. “It's absurd in a world which has a positive cornucopia of magnificent literature by black writers. I further recall an animated young woman from a high school in Peel, who described her school as overwhelmingly multiracial and then added that she and her fellow students had white teachers, white counsellors, a white principal and were taught black history”—the little bit that they were—“by a white teacher. There wasn't a single non-white member of the staff. And then there was a black participant, who rose shyly from the audience to say that he was a teacher and that his most touching experience came on his first day on the job, when a group of black youngsters approached him, solemnly shook his hand and said, ‘Thank goodness. A black teacher at last.’”

Those words were written by Stephen Lewis, a member of this Legislature at the time, in a commissioned study that he completed. They were written in 1992—15 years ago. So I see them as a challenge to us all. He, at that time, proposed a secretariat to look into the issues of race in the province, an anti-racism secretariat to be founded back then. Here we are 15 years later and those words still ring as if they were written today. I think that's what's sad.

Here's what's glad. I had a visit from a wonderful organization called the Black Youth Coalition Against Violence. This is a group that grew out of what we call the summer of the gun in Toronto. They're an incredible group of young activists who really want to make a difference, both in the educational system and in the lives of children and adults of colour. They recognize that what Lewis was speaking about so very long ago—he goes on in that document to talk about how mothers watched their young black sons leave home and didn't know whether they'd arrive home alive at night. I know there are a number of women I've spoken to, even in my own riding, who share that same fear for their children.

This coalition against violence has some wonderful programs, and I want to talk about one of them. This would make Lincoln Alexander so proud, because I know that the best accolade to someone who has accomplished a great deal on their own is to see that their legacy is being upheld and carried forward. One of the programs is called BLING—Bring Love In, Not Guns—which I think

is terrific. They've had a series of dinners in Regent Park and other places.

Interjection.

Ms. DiNovo: Good, isn't it? They've had a BLING summit harmony dinner. They get 350 to 400 youth out at these dinners and they talk about those issues that are relevant. Again, most of the youth representatives who are going to be here a little later are teenagers or young adults in their 20s.

They wanted me to bring forward what really is a petition, but I wanted to read some of it just to give us a feel for the kind of legacy that I think Lincoln Alexander would love to see perpetuated. Linc was all about and is all about—because he still is. By the way, there's going to be a big celebration on May 17 to honour him. He's now 85 years old, as many of us know. To go back to the Black Youth Coalition Against Violence, I think this kind of sentiment really honours Linc Alexander. They say:

“Whereas the purpose of the provincial educational system is to provide all students with the knowledge, skills and self-respect to become a self-sufficient and productive member of society; and

“Whereas the Ontario curriculum should be a source of valuable, necessary and truthful information about the development of the world and particularly western civilization; and

“Whereas for decades the province of Ontario has ignored the education crisis among black students reflected in a push-out/dropout rate now estimated to be between 40% and 60%; and

“Whereas the dropout/push-out rate among black students can be partly attributed to feelings of inferiority, hopelessness and alienation, as a result of being taught a curriculum that does not reflect any positive contributions of black people to world and western civilization; and

“Whereas by deliberately omitting the profound role that black people have played in the development of world and western civilization, the provincial educational system is fostering a false sense of white superiority and black inferiority amongst its students;

“We, the undersigned, respectfully petition:

“(1) that the Greeks and Romans, widely considered the founders of the arts and sciences and consequently western civilization, were educated”—and here's something interesting for our students—“by black Egyptians who had already developed a highly sophisticated education system centuries earlier;

“(2) North African Muslims called the Moors ruled Spain from 712 to 1492 A.D. and laid the base of knowledge that brought Europe out of the Dark Ages and into the Renaissance; and

“(3) apart from economic exploitation, the motive behind slavery and colonialism was to systemically destroy the black family unit and instil mental conditioning to keep black people divided, envious, hateful and distrustful of one another.”

This is written by teenagers, high school students, and they're bringing it forward in terms of what's developing

into a mass movement across the city in response to what we call in Toronto the summer of the gun.

It's one thing to declare a day and to celebrate someone like Lincoln Alexander—and so we should. This is wonderful, and of course as New Democrats we support it. He's an amazing man. It's a non-partisan move; it's a wonderful move. He played such an important role and a role that I think we should uphold not only as Ontarians but as all Canadians, as Ms. Mossop said. After all, we look south most of the time in this country, and one of my personal heroes, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, is celebrated all the time, yet we don't uphold our own Canadian and Ontarian heroes. So this is a chance to do that, and of course we support that.

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But on a more profound, deeper level, the real accolade to Lincoln Alexander would be to make a difference for our children and our youth, which is what he tried to do and tries to do in everything that he does. So I would urge all members of his House, when BYCAV comes here to protest out in the front, to go out and join them, to speak to their leaders—they are the future of this province and of this country—to sign the petition when it comes before the Legislature, when it comes to them individually as MPPs, because it will, because these kids are organized and they're determined, and so they should be; and that we look at our educational system, that we look at the stories we tell to each other, that we look at how we tell the history of our world and that we tell a true history of all of our world, not just some of our world.

Again, it's an honour to support this bill from Ms. Mossop, an honour, of course, to celebrate Lincoln Alexander and an even greater honour to look at the legacy that we might leave in this Legislature in his honour, and that is to look after the futures of black youth.

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): It's my pleasure to speak this morning in support of An Act to proclaim Lincoln Alexander Day. I'd like to congratulate my friend and colleague Jennifer Mossop, the member from Stoney Creek, for bringing this bill forward. She's a strong advocate for her riding and the great city of Hamilton.

As a member of provincial Parliament for Hamilton Mountain, I can think of no greater representative of our fine city than Mr. Alexander. As a former Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, Mr. Alexander has broken through many barriers in his lifetime. This is a lifetime of firsts. He was a partner in the first interracial law firm in Canada, the first black Canadian elected as a member of Parliament, the first person of colour appointed to federal cabinet and the first black Lieutenant Governor in Canada. Although he is now in his ninth decade, Mr. Alexander is a role model for a new generation of young people.

He has been my role model since the age of 14. That's when I first met Mr. Alexander, when he was campaigning in west Hamilton. He came to a Greek dance. I

was there with my family. That was pretty well my social activities back then, being raised in a very strict manner by a strict family. He was the first person to ask me to dance a tango. He was such a gentleman. He offered his arm. I didn't know what to do. He took my hand, he put it on his arm; so he taught me things, and we went dancing. I'll never forget that moment.

I reminded him of that years, years, years later when I was first elected. He always says to me, "You're my favourite minister," and I say, "I bet you say that to all the ministers." And he says, "Yes, I do." So he's right to the point. The other thing he always says is, "When are you going to give me more money? When are you politicians going to give me more money?" As the member from Stoney Creek said, he's always to the point. Seriously, I can't think of a more important or a more accomplished or a sweeter Hamiltonian.

During his term as Lieutenant Governor for Ontario, he made youth and education issues key parts of his mandate, speaking to students at over 250 schools. He consistently and constantly promotes the importance of education. Mr. Alexander's commitment to young people was recognized by the Ontario government in 1993 when they established the Lincoln M. Alexander Award. The award recognizes young people who have demonstrated outstanding leadership in eliminating racial discrimination. Each year, three young people between the ages of 16 and 25 receive an award of \$5,000 each and a framed scroll.

At age 70, Alexander was named a Companion of the Order of Canada. The citation at his induction provides a very good summary of his life:

"Motivated by his continuing concern for social justice, he has led an exemplary life as a lawyer, politician and Lieutenant Governor of Ontario.

"Known for his good judgment, tolerance, compassion and humanity, he has served the citizens of Ontario well, striving to instill these values in young people and working tirelessly for improved race relations."

Mr. Alexander has been a visionary and a role model for the people of Ontario for over half a century. This act is a wonderful opportunity to ensure that his hard work, his unmatched contribution to our province and the mentorship he has provided for countless youth in our province are acknowledged. I am proud to stand in support of this bill which would make the third Wednesday in February each year Lincoln Alexander Day.

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I am very pleased to join in the debate today. I have looked at Bill 220, which deals with proclaiming Lincoln Alexander Day in Ontario public schools. I noticed in the preamble, though, it didn't mention that the Honourable Lincoln MacCauley Alexander was elected in 1968 and re-elected right on until 1980 as a Progressive Conservative MP. Why that's important is because I was going to McMaster University at the time. In 1970, I did my honours BA and then my MBA.

Mr. Hudak: How long was your hair?

Mr. Tascona: It was always short. I'm an Italian; I can't grow it too long. You've got to look good.

During those times, I got to know that Lincoln Alexander was my MP for Hamilton West, which is where the McMaster campus is, and for the period of time that I was at that school, he was there for at least three terms.

It's not surprising that Lincoln Alexander had an outstanding career as a politician, but also I think as a humanitarian. When you look at his CV, it really is outstanding. I had the privilege of sitting with him at the 50th annual Commonwealth parliamentary conference, which first started in Quebec City, and then we moved it to Toronto when Speaker Curling was in charge at the Legislature. So we were together, and it was quite a good evening in terms of talking with him and discussing, not politics, but things that are important in the parliamentary system, because we were dealing with all the Commonwealth countries, whether they are in Africa, or whether England or Australia. It was a good evening, and I remember that, especially since he was the member when I was at university.

When you look at his record in humanitarian work—it's something that I have looked at. I think it's important. I think most members here think it's important in terms of the work that they do in their constituencies.

When I was going to McMaster, that was when the hospital was built. We were very proud of that hospital in terms of the money that went into it and having it on campus. It was a state-of-the-art facility, also a facility where a good friend of mine whom I went to school with, Dr. Peter Leggett, got his training. He is a doctor in Hamilton now. You could go there, and you didn't necessarily have to come from a specific area. He came out of kinesiology in the phys-ed program at McMaster. They were looking for people with a broader perspective on what it would be to be a doctor in terms of caring for people. That's what I think was outstanding about the facility at McMaster. But it took politicians such as Lincoln Alexander and other strong politicians in the Hamilton area to make that happen.

I think it's something that's important, because of the work that I do with respect to the Royal Victoria Hospital, and bringing a new hospital there in 1997 after there hadn't been a hospital there since—I believe it was built 50 years prior to that. To have a new hospital in your community, a state-of-the-art facility, is something that's very important. That hospital at McMaster has only grown in terms of its importance and significance to the area, just like RVH has in terms of the expansion that we're looking at in the next year or two—a 101-bed expansion—along with the cancer care centre that we've done a lot of work at in terms of bringing forth, not only the cancer care centre but working with Hospice Simcoe and bringing forth the first mobile cancer radiation unit, which will be coming to RVH this fall.

It's important for our area, because Hamilton has a number of hospitals. St. Joseph's is another one that I recount, because that was the hospital we used to go to before they had the one on campus. So you need those health care services in your area. I think Lincoln Alexander epitomized that. There are also the social

services that you need in an area. I remember Hamilton was the first family law court in the province. That would have been during the time, in the 1980s, that Lincoln Alexander was the chair of the Workers' Compensation Board of Ontario, and there is no doubt that he had some clout with respect to making those types of things happen within the community.

1140

We talk about Canadian heroes. This is an Ontario hero, and certainly closer to home in Hamilton. The work that he has done to make sure that—you know, he's 85 and he is still out there. He's still out there doing public work. I think that's something we should remember as politicians and people who represent their communities: that when we leave here, it's not something we should stop doing, in terms of representing and bringing the best to our community. So it's important that we recognize someone who not only—I know Tim Hudak would share with me that he was a very well respected Progressive Conservative MP, who served as Minister of Labour in the Joe Clark government. Certainly that was his foundation: Progressive Conservative values. It followed through in terms of what he felt was important for his community.

It's obvious, when I was going to school in McMaster in Hamilton West—it's a very diverse community. The fact that he represented that area as a Progressive Conservative, and the fact that he chose the Progressive Conservative Party to enter politics, and was there for over 10 years, I think says a lot with respect to what he thought was important not only for himself but as we go on. I think that epitomizes the type of work that is important to any member.

This week I met with GO Transit officials, as we're having GO Transit move into our area this fall. That's something Hamilton has had for many years. But the meeting I had with the GO Transit officials this week was very positive in terms of bringing that to Barrie, when it was cut out back in 1992. We have that link, and we can link right now all the way over to Hamilton. I think that's important.

Just in passing as I close here, I do have this Saturday, May 12, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., an environmental project. It's at Lovers Creek and Chalmers Park, where we're going to be planting trees as an environmental project to enhance the environment in the city of Barrie. I welcome all my constituents to join me this Saturday from 10 to 1 at Chalmers Park.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm just checking—yes, two minutes. I was told they saved me two minutes. Sorry, I had to be outside the Legislature for a few minutes.

I've come back just to speak about Lincoln Alexander. I'm sure everyone has talked about his many accomplishments, so I'm going to leave that for the record. I share in those many accomplishments over the years.

I'd like to talk about Lincoln Alexander the man: the man I have come to know, the man who, when I come into a room, always remembers my name—and he must know far more people than me. The man, when I was

first elected as a councillor and had the opportunity to meet him, was very gregarious, very charming, very honourable. In my time as a mayor when I met him, he continued to remember those. He always was there to speak, and to speak so honestly and forthrightly. He was always there in a very charming capacity with a wonderful, wonderful sense of humour. I remember meeting with him and talking about issues, and even though some of the issues were very dear to his heart and he felt very passionately about the causes against racism and the proposals he was making to try to help black youth in trouble—he felt very strongly about them, but he always, when he spoke, did so with compassion and understanding. He never did it with rancour or bitterness, he never got angry with those who opposed his point of view, and he was and is a true gentleman in every sense of the word.

The last time I saw him, or the last time I remember having a lengthy conversation with him, was at an event in the dining room here in the Legislature. It was one of those evening events that politicians like to go to. I remember some of the speakers standing up, and sitting beside him as he commented wryly on the merits or demerits of what they had to say. But he did so in such a jovial way that the people sitting around him enjoyed—even more than listening to the politicians talk about subjects, they listened to Lincoln Alexander's running commentary of those same politicians. I look fondly on all of my experiences with him over the years. I understand it to be his 85th birthday either now or in a few days, and all we can all do is wish him a long life and many more happy memories to him that he has brought to us.

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): It gives me great pleasure to rise to compliment my colleague from Stoney Creek as well as to talk about my good friend His Honour Lincoln Alexander.

I have been very privileged in life to meet some great Canadians. I have been close friends with people, from Lois Wilson, to John Diefenbaker, to Tommy Douglas—of course, Paul Martin; I've met Mother Teresa, Nelson Mandela, Terry Fox. But I want to tell you, as a great, great Hamiltonian, there's Lincoln Alexander, whom I'm fortunate to call a friend.

I first met Lincoln, like Mr. Hudak's colleague, as a student at McMaster. He was my MP as well, as it turns out. I recall in 1972 attending a debate, and it was a very hot day. There was a huge crowd of students, several hundred students, and the NDP candidate of the day, Peggy Leppert, took ill. She fainted while speaking, only to be scooped up into the arms of the giant Lincoln and literally carried from the room to have her brow mopped down by His Honour, who then escorted her back in so she could finish the debate. It was one of those moments I'll never forget.

Later I had a chance encounter with Linc that sort of sealed our friendship. We both, as it turns out, ended up being featured speakers at an annual meeting of the Alzheimer Society of Canada. His beloved Yvonne was

stricken with the illness, as was my late mother. We had that in common and we did some work together raising funds for that very wonderful group. He continues, as I do, to have an interest in eradicating that disease.

Later I had a chance to work quite closely with Lincoln, when he was made a patron of the Burlington Teen Tour Band. A couple of my staff people have a long history with the teen tour band, so we're quite involved at the McMeekin constituency office in affirming these young folk.

I can remember one particular incident. I don't want to talk about all the honorary degrees and stuff; that's all been covered. I want to talk about the man. I remember at one concert the teen tour band was doing, Lincoln was invited to speak, and he spoke to those of us in the audience as leaders of today and of himself as a leader of yesterday. He said, "Look, the leaders of yesterday and the leaders of today ought to get their chequebooks out and write cheques for these kids. While you're writing the cheque—forgive my back—I'm going to talk to these young folk," and he did exactly that. For the next seven minutes on stage he turned and spoke intimately; walked around having intimate conversations, with these young people. One of these kids said to me, "You know, he instantly went from old fart to icon." I thought that was kind of an interesting way of putting it.

I remember being at a fundraising banquet for the teen tour band later and, given that I was a friend of Lincoln's, I was given the task of getting him out of the kitchen. He insisted on walking around and affirming everybody, all the volunteers who were working in the kitchen, and we were about 20 minutes late getting started because we had to get Linc back in the room.

Sir William Hughes, the musical director of the teen tour band, speaks very, very highly of him. I recall something he said recently: "Public morality really relies on private character," and that is Lincoln Alexander, who himself has always exemplified that public service is not an option, it's an obligation.

Lincoln Alexander, my friend, our friend, friend of young people across Ontario, is a very deserving person in terms of this honour, and I look forward to supporting this bill.

1150

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): I'm absolutely delighted and honoured to rise to speak in support of the proposed Lincoln Alexander Day Act, 2007. If ever there was a man in Ontario who is deserving of such an honour, it would be the Honourable Lincoln Alexander, or, as we affectionately call him in Hamilton, simply "Linc."

It has been said that it's not where a person ends up but rather how far they come that defines their strength of character. As you have heard, Lincoln Alexander's journey is a testament to his tenacity, his persistence, his integrity, coupled with a huge capability and competency, and supported by an undeterred belief in the improvements of the elements which will contribute to a better life for Ontarians.

Linc represented the federal riding of Hamilton West, and it's with great pride for Hamilton West that we celebrate his achievements today. It's widely known that Lincoln's contributions to Hamilton are legendary. His accomplishments are amazing. And his continued involvement in support of culture, arts and education is an inspiration to everyone.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to tell you a little bit about the human element of this giant of a man, who casts a tall shadow in stature and in leadership. I'm going to share some personal experiences. I was attending a local event many years ago and was very intimidated to go over and introduce myself to this honoured and celebrated public figure. I gathered my courage, I walked over to him, I extended my hand, introducing myself, and with a booming voice he said, "I know you. Keep up your good work." I was astounded. He was referring to my community work and my business. And when Linc speaks, his eyes twinkle with a kindness he projects.

A few years later, when our paths crossed again, he walked up to me, clearly this time with a purpose. He had heard I was thinking of embarking on a new career in politics and wanted to offer me advice and encouragement, as only Linc can do, with an earnest interest in Hamilton, sharing his reflections and his knowledge. Over the years we have attended countless events as guests and enjoyed chatter and laughter and shared some very interesting and similar experiences.

I have never had the benefit of listening to Linc address the House of Commons, but I did get a glimpse of his powerful ability as an orator at a very moving event in Hamilton last year called Perlasca. He was a guest speaker, along with the Israeli and Italian Consuls General and Rabbi Emeritus Bernard Baskin. Lincoln spoke with passion and authority, holding every guest in Hamilton Place emotionally entranced.

Linc embodies the experience of Ontario through his life works, and I offer three observations. He's demonstrated courage to not see barriers as a block to his progress, but rather as opportunities to change the lives of the people in Ontario for the better, to change them through his presence, through his commitment, through his hard work and through his dedication. Secondly, he offered hope to those whose ambitions were previously limited by race, education or circumstance. Third, he encouraged others to follow their dreams, not to give up and not to give in but to proceed against all odds.

I stand before you as someone who's been encouraged by the Honourable Lincoln Alexander. I am indeed thankful for his friendship, for his personal words of wisdom and for his support. Lincoln Alexander recounts his remarkable life in his memoir entitled *Go to School, You're a Little Black Boy*, of which I am very privileged to own a signed copy.

Last year Linc was named Hamilton's most distinguished citizen. Clearly, the citizens of Hamilton value Linc's contributions and his fortitude. We in this Legislature also value the immense contributions of the Honourable Lincoln Alexander. I support this motion

with great intensity and thanks to a man for whom I hold great respect, and whom I consider a personal friend.

Linc, to you from Hamilton West, we say, "Thanks, and keep up the good work."

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph–Wellington): I too am delighted to rise to speak in support of Ms. Mossop's motion to create Lincoln Alexander Day in Ontario schools.

My Hamilton-area colleagues have spoken about their personal connections with Lincoln Alexander, but there's also a Guelph connection: Linc has been the chancellor of the University of Guelph for a number of years. In fact, the university community has kept on insisting that he be reappointed. Many of you will know that, in most cases, being chancellor is sort of a ceremonial role. In Linc's case, it's an emotional role, where he seems to have managed to connect with the entire campus. As students come up and cross the platform at convocation, it's quite fascinating to be sitting there beside Linc, because as he takes each person's hand and they kneel before him to receive their hood and accept their degree, Linc has a personal word for each student. In fact, if it's a young woman, he tends to check out the hand to see if they're wearing an engagement ring, and in those few seconds that it takes to go by and be granted their degree, he has usually checked out their wedding plans and their future plans for life. With the young gentlemen, he can't check out the wedding plans, but he does check out what it is that they're planning to do next.

I know that when my own daughter graduated, he grabbed her hand and said, "Your grandmother is down there with a camera. Turn around and smile," and wouldn't let her go until she'd done what she was told and smiled for her grandmother.

So he has just been amazing at connecting with people all over the province on an individual basis.

I want to go back to the autobiography *Go to School, You're a Little Black Boy*. This was co-authored with Guelph author Herb Shoveller. The publisher was apparently very concerned that people would be offended by the title, but Linc insisted that he wanted to quote his mother in the title because he thought that captured the value of education for children.

This is a wonderful motion; I support it.

The Deputy Speaker: Ms. Mossop, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Ms. Mossop: I want to thank the members for Erie–Lincoln, Parkdale–High Park, Hamilton Mountain, Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot, Hamilton West and Guelph–Wellington for taking part in this debate/storytelling.

The bill is aimed, as I said, at schools and at students, so it is worth noting that there are three schools called Lincoln Alexander Public School, as well as Lincoln M. Alexander Secondary School. In 1993, the government of Ontario created the Lincoln M. Alexander Award to reward young Ontarians who have demonstrated exemplary leadership in the elimination of racial discrimination.

We have come a very long way since Depression-era white Canada, but racial discrimination and hatred, often based in fear, often based in ignorance and smallness, is still rife in our world, and it thrives in dark and foolish hearts. I don't know if there is a cure for it, but in Linc, we can take a cue. Many might have called him a fool for not lashing out at those who unfairly discriminated against him. They might have called him a fool for not lashing out with violence and with destruction. But Linc is no fool. He fought with an open and a generous heart, and he won. Oh, how he won. It is in his CV, it is in his eyes, it is in that deep, varied, rich heart of his that he met the world with and in that deep, rich, varied voice that so engaged me initially and that will resonate for many, many, many generations to come.

We have so much to thank Linc for. He has given us so much, and this is a small way of saying, "Thank you, Linc."

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

PRESCRIPTION MONITORING ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LA SURVEILLANCE PHARMACEUTIQUE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We shall deal first with ballot item number 6, standing in the name of Mr. Ramal.

Mr. Ramal has moved second reading of Bill 108. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe): Can I move my bill to the standing committee on social policy?

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Ramal has asked that the bill be referred to the standing commission on social policy. Agreed? Agreed.

LINCOLN ALEXANDER DAY ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LE JOUR DE LINCOLN ALEXANDER

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We shall now deal with ballot item number 7, standing in the name of Ms. Mossop.

Ms. Mossop has moved second reading of Bill 220. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): I'd ask that the bill be referred to the standing committee on regulations and private bills, please.

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

What a pleasure it has been chairing this meeting this morning of private members' business.

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

The House recessed from 1200 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NURSES

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): Today, during Nursing Week, it is a great pleasure that I rise on behalf our leader, John Tory, and the members of my party to pay tribute and celebrate the contribution of nurses to excellence in patient care and service. It is an opportunity to acknowledge the many contributions of nurses in their varied roles as direct care providers, educators, administrators, researchers and policy experts. It is an opportunity to thank them for serving with a compassionate and caring heart.

Yes, our nurses are very much the heart of our health system. It is their compassion, their dedication, their knowledge, their skills and their patient-centred approach that make them such a vital part of our health system. It is their commitment to always putting the patient first that has allowed them to make such a positive difference in the lives of so many Ontarians on a daily basis. It is their commitment to putting the patient first that has enabled them to work with governments of all stripes to develop policies to not only contribute to furthering the excellence in health care, but also to building a very strong nursing profession.

During our time in office, we were proud to work with them to position nurses to influence the policy and decision-making of government. We supported the advanced practice roles and we made investments. We championed educational reform and invested in research.

Congratulations to all nurses.

UNIVERSITY RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph–Wellington): Recently, I was proud to announce that the McGuinty government is supporting three research projects at the University of Guelph totalling \$8.66 million.

This investment is part of the Ontario research fund's research infrastructure program, which helps researchers obtain the lab space, equipment and computer software they need to stay on the forefront of innovation. To succeed in the changing economy we need to develop new ideas and turn these ideas into exciting products and services that we can market to the world.

Six hundred and sixty-six thousand dollars go to Dr. Paul Garrett, who will use an innovative new array of neutron detectors—the most advanced in the world—to conduct research at the frontiers of nuclear physics.

Dr. Jacek Lipowski received \$2.8 million. His team from U of G's Centre for Food and Soft Materials Science conduct collaborative biomaterials research among physicists, chemists and biologists.

Dr. Stefan Kycia's research team will receive \$5.2 million to create the new Brockhouse X-ray Diffraction and Scattering Sector as part of a national program of new materials discovery.

This funding will leverage investments from 14 other industrial and academic partners, for a total spending of \$36.6 million.

On a personal note, my father was chair of the physics department and the first dean of physical science. I'm proud of U of G physicists.

SIGN LANGUAGE IN SCHOOLS

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I am pleased to rise in the House today to draw your attention to the issues surrounding the education of those who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing.

On February 28 of this year, I had the opportunity to attend a community forum on deaf education, hosted by the Ontario Association of the Deaf. There were over 450 concerned parents and members of the deaf community who attended this event, including representatives from my riding of Haliburton–Victoria–Brock. They were passionately pleading with the McGuinty government to listen to their concerns.

This Friday, May 11, at 9 a.m., the Ontario Association of the Deaf is holding a rally here at Queen's Park to show support for deaf children's rights to American Sign Language education in Ontario.

The deaf community has stressed that the lack of adequate American Sign Language instruction in our schools is a primary concern among parents of deaf children. The association has stated that the creation of minimum standards for the use of sign language in our schools is a necessary step to ensure that deaf students are receiving an adequate education.

We all know that access to quality education is the key to a positive, productive future for these students and all students in Ontario.

The Ontario Association of the Deaf is calling on the Ministry of Education to create minimum standards for the sign language instruction. OAD stresses the need for this government to recognize that some students don't succeed in spoken language programs and a transition policy needs to be put in place for those students so they will have access to adequate sign language instruction. Let's ensure that all those who are deaf, deafened and hard of hearing have the adequate education to allow them to reach their full potential.

CHATHAM–KENT

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham–Kent Essex): In a recent survey titled North American Cities of the Future—Foreign Direct Investment, the business magazine for the

Financial Times of London, UK—it had cities in the United States, Canada and Mexico compete directly against each other.

Chatham–Kent placed ninth in the small cities of the future category in all of North America, fourth in Canada. It also ranked second as the most cost-effective in North America and first in Canada. The magazine considers a small city to have a population of 100,000 to 500,000. Chatham–Kent is barely over 100,000, yet they were able to compete with the entire of North America.

The judging criteria included economic potential, cost effectiveness, human resources, quality of life, infrastructure and business friendliness. Chatham–Kent's proximity to the United States makes it an ideal choice for industry. Automotive and other manufacturing companies also benefit from the easy access to major US markets within one hour's drive. Highway 401 is the main transport trade corridor throughout Chatham–Kent. They also offer the benefits of a highly skilled and motivated labour force.

Chatham–Kent has some of the best farmland in the province. As a lifelong resident of Merlin, and a farmer, I can attest to its diversity and agricultural richness. I can honestly say that if we can't produce it here, it doesn't grow in Canada. Our farmers are among the most productive and versatile in the world. Congratulations to all the people of Chatham–Kent.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): Has the Liberal Party not learned anything from Adscam? In the wake of the sponsorship scandal, where millions of dollars were shovelled out the door to groups with strong Liberal ties, Dalton McGuinty seems to be doing it all over again with his year-end political slush fund. It's Adscam number two. As Debra Kelly from the Newmarket–Aurora Era-Banner wrote:

“For several weeks, the opposition has been demanding to know how groups with close Liberal ties received hundreds of thousands of taxpayers' dollars without documentation, oversight or any kind of accountability.

“In Richmond Hill, for instance, \$200,000 was given to the Iranian-Canadian Cultural Centre, which was registered as an animal welfare group, with all seven of its board members having made donations to the Liberal Party.

“In all, \$32 million went to 110 groups in the past two years, with not so much as an application form.

“Just as Treasury Board President Reg Alcock then pooh-poohed \$12 million in Adscam dollars, Finance Minister Greg Sorbara called \$200,000 ‘a pittance’ in slush dollars.

“There it is, just like 2004, that absolute and utter disregard for taxpayers.

“As it was on Parliament Hill, fiscal responsibility, democratic accountability and ethical behaviour matter very little at Mr. McGuinty's Queen's Park.”

Yes, it's Adscam all over again. As the Globe and Mail wrote this week, “Laughter is a fitting response to the absurd tales the Ontario government is telling about the \$32 million it gave away to groups, some with Liberal connections.”

It's Adscam number two, all over again.

MILL CLOSURE

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): Yet again, there's bad news in northern Ontario. Today I rise, unfortunately, to talk about another mill that's closing indefinitely in northern Ontario. Today, 150 workers at the Northern Hardwood mills in Thunder Bay are going down indefinitely. For Thunder Bay, that means that two sawmills are slated to close, on top of two paper mills and one containerboard mill that have already closed.

Thunder Bay has received a huge blow, yet this government seems to think that everything is fine. They go around content with themselves as if everything is fine, that they're doing a great job. But for the workers in Thunder Bay and across northern Ontario, the story is the same. On the outskirts of Thunder Bay, you have the sawmill in Dorion that's closing. The Red Rock Norampac mill is closed. To the east of Thunder Bay, the Bowater Ignace sawmill shut its doors as a direct result of your softwood lumber agreement, and that was just but a short time ago. The woodlands workers at Ignace have seen layoffs recently. Now, the entire woodlands operation at Ignace is at risk of closing down indefinitely. For Ignace, a town with a population of little more than 1,000 people, that is a huge, devastating blow, as it was for the people of Chapleau, the people of Smooth Rock Falls, the people of Opatatika—and the list goes on.

1340

That blow dealt to Thunder Bay, Ignace, Red Rock and communities across the north, including, as I said, Smooth Rock Falls and Opatatika—it's a huge blow. Your energy policies have led to this, and this government's inaction will be well remembered in the next election when people have a—

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

McMASTER UNIVERSITY

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): I take great pleasure in making frequent visits to my alma mater, McMaster University. McMaster is not only one of Canada's premier research institutions, it's also a source of great local pride.

It's clear from listening to McMaster students that we have turned a new page on the divisive bitterness of past governments. Students understand that our government's priorities are different and include major reinvestments in education and far more money by way of direct student support.

Our \$6.2-billion Reaching Higher plan is ensuring that 80,000 more students receive grant support, three times the 2003 level; 86,000 new post-secondary spaces have

been created; and 145,000 more low- and middle-income students are receiving enhanced student aid. There's \$300 million more for student aid, \$220 million more in support of graduate education, and \$275 million more for much-needed facility improvement and research. Clearly, our government is getting things done.

We're making good progress with our investments in education because we've invested so much time actually listening to students and responding to their needs. Through research and innovation and strategic educational investments, we are responding to the challenges of the global economy. Ontario is helping our students to achieve their goals and, in so doing, is ensuring that Ontario can be its very best.

NURSES

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I rise in the House today to talk about the great things that are happening for Ontario's nurses, some of which are happening even in the riding of Leeds–Grenville, since the member for that riding doesn't seem to want to recognize the great progress being made by the McGuinty government.

We know that our honourable Minister of Health has said that our nurses are the heart of our health care system. As a result, we're working with them to address their needs and improve their supports. I should remind the member for Leeds–Grenville that Brockville General will benefit from eight nursing grads thanks to the McGuinty government's nursing grad guarantee.

Let's think back to what life was like for nurses under the sad record of the Tories. Between 1995 and 1998, there were 8,000 fewer nurses working in Ontario hospitals. The former Tory leader even referred to our nurses as hula hoops. After the Conservatives failed to address the nurse shortage in our province, we listened to what nurses said they wanted, and that is one of the reasons why we're creating 8,000 new nursing positions.

We know there is more work to do, but we assure our nurses that the Conservative days of underappreciation and underfunding are over. The people of Ontario are too smart. They have no intention of returning to those days. The McGuinty government is making progress with the continued input from our valued nursing professionals. We will keep moving forward for the betterment of our Ontario nurses and the betterment of the people of Ontario.

ELECTORAL REFORM

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I rise in the House today to talk about what the McGuinty government is doing to modernize our electoral process and how that would help to enhance the integrity and security of Ontario's electoral system.

By putting party names on the ballot, we can help voters to make more informed decisions. We're also making it easier to vote by extending polling hours by an

extra hour, and we have more than doubled the number of advanced poll days, from six to 13, during regularly scheduled elections.

We value the input of Ontarians, which is why we created the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform. We also know it is important for our voters to be knowledgeable on the issues of electoral reform, which is why we are giving the Chief Election Officer the responsibility to deliver a neutral public education campaign.

We're excited to move forward with the reforms as we head into October's election, and we're also looking forward to working with Ontarians to identify and implement their suggestions and their needs.

We know we need to continue to evolve to meet the needs of Ontarians and we are committed to doing so now and into the future.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on general government and move its adoption.

The Acting Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 184, An Act to protect species at risk and to make related changes to other Acts / *Projet de loi 184, Loi visant à protéger les espèces en péril et à apporter des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham–Kent Essex): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on finance and economic affairs and move its adoption.

The Acting Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

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 Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

1350

NO MORE FINANCING TIERS
IN EDUCATION ACT, 2007LOI DE 2007 ÉLIMINANT LES PALIERS
DE FINANCEMENT EN ÉDUCATION

Mr. Marchese moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 222, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to fundraising / Projet de loi 222, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation en ce qui a trait aux activités de financement.

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

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): The bill adds a section to the Education Act respecting fundraising by school councils. The section provides that school councils may raise funds in accordance with applicable policies established by the board and for purposes approved by the board or authorized by board policies. A school council shall ensure that any funds raised by it or by any other person or entity are not used for expenditures on the operating costs or capital undertakings of a school.

MOTIONS

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 165

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding discharging a bill from third reading back to committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Bradley has asked for unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding discharging a bill from third reading back to committee. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that the order for third reading of Bill 165, An Act to establish and provide for the office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, be discharged and the bill be referred to the standing committee on justice policy; and

That, in addition to its regularly scheduled meeting times, the standing committee on justice policy be authorized to meet Monday, May 14, 2007, between 11 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 165, An Act to establish and provide for the office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth.

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

OTTAWA SENATORS

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion):

On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Last night during debate I received unanimous consent to allow members to wear the Ottawa Senators pin. We distributed one to each person's desk, and I believe they're in your desks.

We wish the Ottawa Senators the very best in their first game against the Buffalo Sabres tonight. We know they're going to do great. They're going to bring us to the Stanley Cup championship.

VISITORS

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like all members to welcome a very special class from the separate school Archbishop Romero and their teacher Marlene Reeve-Newson. Welcome.

OTTAWA SENATORS

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

On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Would you clarify for us whether or not it's compulsory to wear these pins? I can clearly indicate to the House that I will not be wearing the pin that the member for Ottawa is wearing.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): On a point of order, Speaker: I'd just like to say that Mike Fisher, a Peterborough native, is one of the stars with the Ottawa Senators, and all my friends in Peterborough will be cheering for Mike tonight.

DEFERRED VOTES

BUDGET MEASURES AND INTERIM
APPROPRIATION ACT, 2007LOI DE 2007 SUR LES MESURES
BUDGÉTAIRES ET L'AFFECTATION
ANTICIPÉE DE CRÉDITS

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 187, An Act respecting Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters / Projet de loi 187, Loi concernant les mesures budgétaires, l'affectation anticipée de crédits et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1352 to 1402.

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

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Peters, Steve
Balkissoon, Bas	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Jeffrey, Linda	Racco, Mario G.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Kular, Kuldir	Ramal, Khalil
Bountrogianni, Marie	Kwinter, Monte	Ramsay, David
Bradley, James J.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Rinaldi, Lou
Broten, Laurel C.	Leal, Jeff	Ruprecht, Tony
Bryant, Michael	Levac, Dave	Sandals, Liz
Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Sergio, Mario
Chan, Michael	McGuinty, Dalton	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike	McMeekin, Ted	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dhillon, Vic	Meilleur, Madeleine	Van Bommel, Maria
Di Cocco, Caroline	Milloy, John	Watson, Jim
Duguid, Brad	Mitchell, Carol	Wilkinson, John
Duncan, Dwight	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Patten, Richard	Zimmer, David

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	MacLeod, Lisa	Savoline, Joyce
Chudleigh, Ted	Marchese, Rosario	Scott, Laurie
DiNovo, Cheri	Martel, Shelley	Tabuns, Peter
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norm	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ferreira, Paul	Munro, Julia	Tory, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Wilson, Jim
Hudak, Tim	Prue, Michael	Witmer, Elizabeth
Kormos, Peter	Runciman, Robert W.	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 54; the nays are 23.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

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

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): We have with us in the Speaker's gallery a delegation from the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, here on a study visit with the Pakistan Legislative Strengthening Project. The delegation includes members of the National Assembly, the Senate and the provincial assemblies of Pakistan. Please join me in warmly welcoming our guests.

ORAL QUESTIONS**MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP
AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS**

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier, and it concerns matters concerning the political slush fund. When I first met the Premier, I was in private life and he was the Leader of the Opposition. He said to me on a number of occasions what an honour it was to serve in this place, and he was right.

Several times in the past two weeks, he has said things that quite directly implied that PC and NDP members of the Legislature who questioned the granting of taxpayers'

money to various groups might be motivated by racism. What the Premier has never said—and I'm asking him through you, Mr. Speaker, to stand in his place as Premier and as a colleague and say it now—is this: "I do not believe any member of this House from any party on any side is racist, nor do I believe their questions in this House are at any time motivated by racism." Will the Premier stand in his place and say that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I agree entirely with the statement just made by the leader of the official opposition.

I want to advise the House, the leader of the official opposition and the members of the NDP that I have just sent a letter to the Auditor General of Ontario. I have asked him—I'll provide copies of the letter immediately—and I'll quote in part, "I request that you undertake a special assignment under section 17 of the Auditor General Act to review the grant decision-making processes with respect to the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration strategic year-end investments for the fiscal periods 2005-06 and 2006-07." I close with, "Be assured of our full co-operation with you to expedite this important review. Please advise that you will respond to this request and report by the beginning of July."

Interjections.

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

Mr. Tory: I want to begin by commending the Premier in particular for agreeing with the statement I made concerning the members of this House on all sides. I want to commend the Premier as well—albeit I think it's happening later than it should—for this matter being referred to the Auditor General.

I would like to ask this question: In light of the fact that there have been substantial questions raised with respect to the propriety of what has happened with this taxpayers' money, in light of the fact that you have now seen fit to refer this matter to the Auditor General for investigation—I agree with what you've done in that instance—I want to ask you whether you think it is appropriate at this time as well to ask the responsible minister to step aside pending the conclusion of this review by the Auditor General, with the hope that we all have in all instances when ministers step aside, that he will be found to be able to return to the cabinet at the appropriate time. Will you ask him to step aside?

1410

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I am not prepared to do that. Clearly, what we are doing now is inviting the Auditor General to take a look at what has in fact happened, to provide his very best advice with respect to the best ways for us as a government—or any government, for that matter—to demonstrate our commitment and support to immigration services. I have had the opportunity to work very closely with Minister Colle. He is exceptional in terms of his work ethic, his dedication, his determination, his motivation, and he has my continuing confidence.

Mr. Tory: I haven't been here in this House very long, but the issue, when it comes to a minister stepping

aside during a matter that's being investigated, doesn't have to do with whether one has faith in the character of the minister in particular; it has to do with the question of ministerial accountability. When there is any doubt cast on a minister at all, or on his ministry under his watch, it is the proper thing to do for that minister to step aside, not on the assumption that there's any finding of guilt, but on the assumption that it's better for the minister to step aside and have someone else administer the ministry during the time of that investigation.

You yourself called on many ministers, at the time of your being in this job as Leader of the Opposition, to step aside, and indeed it happened many times. I wonder, notwithstanding the confidence that you have in the minister as a person, whether you might reconsider and think that it is appropriate in the circumstances—especially given that the review you've asked for will hopefully be done expeditiously, by July—for the minister to step aside so the ministry can be run without doubt during that period of time.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, we have invited the Auditor General to take a look at this matter and provide his best advice. I know that the leader of the official opposition would not be suggesting that when—the Minister of Energy did the same thing: He asked for a special audit to review our government's management of the Bruce nuclear refurbishment. I don't think it would have been appropriate for the Minister of Energy to step aside pending the outcome of that review, just as I don't think it's appropriate pending the outcome of this review. The minister continues to have my complete confidence.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Tory: My question again is of the Premier and on the same matter. I think that there's quite a distinction between an instance in which the Auditor General is being asked to review a commercial transaction being entered into on behalf of the people of Ontario and an instance like this, where we're examining the allocation of taxpayers' money, but with the suggestion made, in a number of instances, that there may have been, for example, ties to the Liberal Party, ties to the minister's office; that really is at the focus or at the centre of the very investigation that you have just asked for—quite properly so—today.

I think, given that this is the nature of some of the factors that led you to ask for this investigation today, it is also a reason why the minister might, most properly, step aside until this investigation is completed, so that the ministry can operate without any thought that there's any cloud over him or over the ministry or over anybody else while the investigation is taking place. I'd be quite happy to see him come back if the Auditor General submits a report that says everything is squeaky clean. Will you consider having the minister step aside?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I disagree with the honourable member. He may choose to continue to put these questions to me, but I've given it some considerable thought. Based on my knowledge of the minister—we had another conversation with him a few moments ago, and he

reinforced for me that his sentiment when he first earned the privilege of serving as the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration was that he felt there was so much work to be done and that he was determined to do as much as he could, in the best way that he could. Minister Colle is chock full of integrity and commitment and he has a solid work ethic. I think he has performed admirably under some very trying and difficult circumstances. He continues to have my confidence. I think what is now incumbent upon all of us, as members of the Legislature, is to allow the Auditor General to do his work.

Mr. Tory: I think the Premier mistakes the import of my question as being something that's personal regarding the minister. It's about the issue of broader ministerial accountability and the issue of people being able to look at a process—which you have just, quite properly, commenced today—to ask the Auditor General to look into this in a very short period of time, and the confidence the public has to have that those who are even working with him in the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, the staff and others, will be people that the public will know don't have any particular vested interest in what's going on with respect to the investigation.

I could read you many quotes, as you know, because we've read them in here before, about things you have said about ministerial accountability and about how it's better to have a minister step aside when this kind of investigation is going on that could involve him, things he's done or decisions he's made. So I just ask you again, will you consider having the right thing done here, which is to ask him to step aside for the relatively brief period of this investigation?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I think the best thing for us to do and the appropriate thing for us to do under the circumstances is to invite the Auditor General in and to give him full and free rein. I put it right into the letter that we will give him all the co-operation he needs in order to have access to all the information he needs. I'm confident that that's the best way for us to deal with this issue, I'm confident that that serves the public interest, just as I remain confident in the ability of Minister Colle to continue to do his good work on behalf of immigrants and in support of immigration services.

Mr. Tory: My final supplementary is with respect to the letter, of course, which we just received, that you've written to the Auditor General. Can I take it that this language that I read here should be taken as nothing less than an invitation, absolutely unrestricted and unqualified, for the Auditor General to look at any aspect of this entire matter that he wishes? Because there is language in here about things being taken in certain contexts and that there's money that's left over at the end of the year and so forth and so on. Can I take it that what this really means—and it could have been said shorter—is an unqualified, unrestricted examination by the auditor to get to the bottom of this matter and submit a full report by July?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Yes, I can offer that assurance, without reservation.

There is a reference in the letter to the practice. It says in here, "As has always been the case, governments respond to evolving revenue information by making year-end investment decisions to support public policy objectives which are consistent with generally accepted accounting principles."

That is not with a view to limiting the ambit of the review about to be conducted by the Auditor General. Rather, I'm asking that he, among everything else he might choose to comment on, comment on this practice, which has been around for a long, long time, when there is a change in revenue expectations. Governments over the decades have dealt with those in various ways. I'm asking him to comment specifically on that, in addition to the money that went out to support immigration services.

The Speaker: New question?

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): Premier, the question I want to ask is this: For three weeks, members of the opposition have been calling for an immediate investigation and report by the Auditor General. For three weeks, you and members of your government have voted against such an investigation and report by the Auditor General. You voted against a resolution here in the Legislature, in the public accounts committee, and just yesterday, you said that such an investigation was not required. Premier, can you tell us what changed after three weeks of stonewalling?

1420

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I infer from the question that the leader of the NDP supports the step that we have taken today as a government and believes that it's the appropriate direction for us to pursue.

I have provided the leader of the NDP with a copy of the letter that we have just sent to Mr. McCarter, the Auditor General of Ontario. We're asking him to move as expeditiously as possible. We have asked that he report by the beginning of July at the outside. But we think that is the appropriate thing to do in the circumstances, and we look forward to him completing his work. We offer him our every support and co-operation as he undertakes that work, and we ask that he move as quickly as he can.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, I think the people of Ontario, I think all those editorials written across the province, the people who are asking the questions, deserve an explanation. If we go back to April 24, when I asked you for an auditor's investigation, your response was that my request was an effort on my part to smear you and the government. I simply want to ask, Premier, just a few days ago when we asked for an auditor's investigation and an auditor's report, you were saying that we were trying to smear you and smear your government. Tell me, what has changed, Premier? What has changed from your total opposition to an investigation and report by the Auditor General? What has changed between now and then?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I want to assure the leader of the NDP, members of this House and the people of Ontario generally that we will continue to find oppor-

tunities to support immigration services in the province of Ontario.

Just today, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration announced that we're going to do still more to break down barriers for internationally trained nurses. The Centre for Internationally Educated Nurses will receive over \$2 million to expand its successful bridging programs for internationally educated nurses, including exam-preparation courses, individual feedback and tutoring, occupation-specific language training and clinical workplace experience. What we've discovered is that through these bridge training programs, it gives a huge leg up to new arrivals so that they become accustomed to the testing and get some workplace experience, so that they can quickly be accelerated to a point where they can work at their highest level of training. They've proven to be very effective—

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Hampton: Premier, just as before we were asking a very simple and straightforward question—we were asking for an Auditor General investigation and report on the McGuinty government slush fund—I'm asking you again a very straightforward question. For three weeks, you and your Minister of Citizenship and backbenchers voted against every measure to bring in the Auditor General. You denigrated any member of the opposition who asked for an investigation and report by the Auditor General. There were insinuations and innuendo of racism whenever opposition members asked for an investigation and a report by the Auditor General. I think you owe the people of Ontario an explanation. What changed? What changed from a smear campaign to now saying a report, an investigation by the Auditor General, is required?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, I think the appropriate thing for us to do in the circumstances is to do what we've done: to invite the Auditor General to take a look at this and to provide his best possible advice.

Again, we will continue our work. I think we've laid a pretty solid foundation in terms of providing ongoing supports to newcomers. In addition to the program just announced today by the minister, we've also, as you will know, Speaker, negotiated the first ever Canada-Ontario immigration agreement. That will provide us with an additional \$920 million of federal funds for newcomer services. We have in place now our new Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, which became law in March of this year. We have also created the first-ever Office of the Fairness Commissioner, who is responsible for assessing registration, licensing practices and breaking down barriers.

We will continue to move forward in a way that demonstrates our shared commitment to immigration services for new arrivals.

The Speaker: New question. The leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: To the Premier: Premier—

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): You're not happy, Howard. Be happy.

The Speaker: The Minister of Natural Resource will come to order.

Mr. Hampton: Please, Speaker. I think he needs some help.

I think you'd agree with me, Premier, that calling now for a special investigation by the Auditor General is not something that usually happens in the case of a minister or in the case of a ministry. You have now called for a special investigation by the Auditor General of Ontario. That's something none of us have the authority to call for. Only members of the cabinet have that authority. Premier, how can a cabinet minister stay in his position as a cabinet minister when you've now asked for a special investigation of a \$32-million slush fund which happened under that minister's nose? How can he stay in his position while a special investigation is under way by the Auditor General?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Actually, the wording is a special assignment, under section 17 of the Auditor General Act, which is the kind of assignment that was also made by the Minister of Energy.

I've expressed, in answer to a question from the leader of the official opposition, my decision to keep Minister Colle in his position. He has my continuing confidence. He is completely devoted to the cause of finding ways to support opportunity for new Canadians in the province of Ontario. I think he has demonstrated that he's bona fide, time and time again, both in terms of the new programs he has been able to roll out and the new initiatives he's put in place. The number of events that he attends in support of new Canadians around the province, but in particular here in the GTA, is absolutely staggering. He continues to have my confidence.

Mr. Hampton: The Premier may choose to use different words, but the reality is that the Auditor General can only investigate ministries in two ways: One is what is called an ordinary end-of-the-year investigation and report. The other is a special process. This is not going to be an ordinary at-the-end-of-the-year examination of the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, which falls under the responsibility of Mr. Colle. This is going to be a special investigation and report. I say to the Premier again, are these the standards of your government, that a minister can undergo a special investigation and report by the Auditor General of Ontario for \$32 million that was handed out without announcement, without any formal application process, without any criteria and without any follow-up, auditing or evaluation? Is this the standard of the McGuinty government, that a minister stays in his post while under—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: It is true that the Auditor General does conduct a general audit at year end and he has it within his purview to decide which areas he's going to lend particular emphasis to. But he also, through the legislation, under the Auditor General Act, creates opportunities for the government of the day to invite him or her to examine specific issues and to conduct an audit on some of our practices. That's what we've done.

I think the best thing in the circumstances now is to allow him to do his work. I've assured him of our complete co-operation. He can be as expansive on this matter as he desires. I've asked him to touch on the practice of the way governments have traditionally managed year-end monies. I expect that he will be thorough, and I've also asked him to be expeditious. But I think that the best thing for all of us to do now is simply to co-operate with him in any way possible and to allow him to get his work done.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, I'm all for the Auditor General being allowed to do his work. In fact, I wanted to see the Auditor General doing this work three weeks ago, but you stonewalled for that long.

The question is this, Premier: This minister and his ministry will now be subject to a special audit by the Auditor General, a special audit, and let me refer as the *Globe and Mail* does: "Laughter is a fitting response to the absurd tales the Ontario government is telling about the \$32 million it gave away to groups, some with Liberal connections, without publicizing the fund, without creating a formal application process, without even bothering to give the fund a name."

1430

Premier, that is the gravity of the situation: \$32 million of public money went out the door—no process, no name for the grant and no criteria. Are you saying that it's okay for a minister to stay in his office when he is now going to be subject to a special audit of how \$32 million went out the door with no process, no announcement and no criteria for evaluating the proposals? Is that the McGuinty government standard in Ontario today?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I think there's a distinction between serving the public interest and serving partisan interest. I think allowing the Auditor General to do his work serves the public interest. We've assured him of our complete co-operation. We've asked him to get this done in short order. I've just assured the leader of the official opposition that I'm not putting any restrictions or reservations of any kind on his review, and I'm asking him to proceed.

I think, given the circumstances, that the best thing all of us can do now is to simply assure him of our co-operation, show him our determination to allow him access to all the information he needs and wait for the outcome of his review.

The Speaker: New question.

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): My question is for the Premier and it concerns the slush funds being run by his government. Recently the Premier, in talking about money going to various cultural groups, said, "The money goes out the door, just like that.... No application form. No formal process." But when the Minister of Culture was asked about the Premier's statement, she contradicted the Premier and said there was an application process. So I asked her again on Tuesday, and her answer was a bizarre recital of her briefing book. I'm hoping the Premier will be able to shed some light on the matter. So I'm asking, through you, Mr. Speaker, which

version of events was correct: the one told to us by the Premier or the one told to us by the Minister of Culture?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Mr. Speaker, through you to my friend from York North, just to confirm to all members of the House: Every expenditure in government, whether it is part of the original estimates presented here in the Legislature or supplementary estimates, is reviewed by Management Board of Cabinet, treasury board of cabinet, before being approved by the full cabinet.

Mrs. Munro: It is a very simple question, and I don't know why the Premier refuses to answer it. He made a clear statement with respect to the cultural groups, "The money goes out the door, just like that.... No application form. No formal process." But his minister said there was and so have you. One has to be wrong. So I ask the Premier again, through you, Mr. Speaker, who gave us the correct version: the Premier or the minister?

The Speaker: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: I thought I was very clear with my friend from York North, but I'll try to review it again.

Every single expenditure is reviewed and approved by the treasury board and Management Board of Cabinet. In the expenditures that she's talking about, I think we made it clear several weeks ago that what was wanting was a process, and that that process has now changed, and my friend the minister has got very stringent criteria for future programs.

But I want to tell her again a third time so that it's very clear: Every single expenditure is reviewed and approved by Management Board of Cabinet and treasury board before being approved by cabinet as a whole.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I have a question to the Minister of Education. We checked the budgets of all the boards across Ontario, and of all the ones we reviewed, 64 had numbers that reveal the following: \$550 million is being raised by parent councils across Ontario. People for Education did their own study. They came up with the same conclusion. We have moved, and are moving, beyond the bake sale, do you understand? The Peel board said, "We're open for business," and they say it might include raising money for capital-related or small-scale capital items such as computers, furniture, street signage and so on. There might also be occasions when there will be fundraising for capital projects such as a school auditorium, theatre and/or pool.

We believe that we're moving the threshold beyond where you or anyone else ever dreamed of. Where do you draw the line on this, Minister?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): Let me just say off the top that this is an issue that I take very seriously. In fact, in 1997 I was part of the group that put together the survey that People for Education

uses, so I'm very, very familiar with it—in fact, the whole issue of fundraising we've been talking about for many years in this province when the member opposite was a member of the Toronto school board. So I'm paying close attention to this issue.

We have put \$3.5 billion back into education in this province. I know that it is going to take some time yet to recover from the damage that was done by the previous government to publicly funded education in this province: eight years to get us into this mess. We've been at this for just over three and a half years. We're climbing out of that hole. There is more to be done, but \$3.5 billion has gone back into the system.

Mr. Marchese: Minister, 64 boards report having raised \$550 million, money of which we are aware. It could be more because some money is not reported. When you include other boards that don't include how much money they've raised, we're into \$600 million, possibly \$700 million. It cannot be acceptable to you. You know—

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): You're making it up.

Mr. Marchese: Oh no, Georgie, we're not making this up. We did the study, and People for Education did the same study. The evidence is very clear: Parents cannot, do not have the time, the energy or the money to fundraise for essentials. You know that and we know that. We have introduced a bill that says that a school council shall ensure that any funds raised by it or by any other person or entity are not used for expenditures on the operating costs of capital undertakings of a school. Will you support that bill, Minister? Can we count on your support, or is two-tiered education all right with you?

Hon. Ms. Wynne: As is the wont of the NDP, the issue is being completely oversimplified. The member opposite knows that—

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): That's a nice word.

Hon. Ms. Wynne: Yes. Here's the thing. I have said I take this issue very seriously. I am gathering information. I know the concerns around what's happening in Peel. I know that those concerns are there. The People for Education report, which is the document upon which the member has made his claim, also says this: "Elementary class sizes are smaller, there are fewer students on waiting lists for special education, and there are more elementary schools with physical education teachers. Graduation rates are up." Kids are doing better on their "EQAO tests, and on international tests, Ontario schools rank among the highest." That has been the result of our investment. I understand the concerns of the member opposite. It is something that we are paying attention to. In fact, we have made it clear to boards that we—

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

ENDANGERED SPECIES

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Through you, Mr. Speaker, my question is regarding the Endangered Species Act, which will make Ontario a North American leader in species-at-risk protection and recovery. Compare this to the Tory legacy which, according to the 2002 auditor's report, "left threatened animals and plants at risk of extinction due to the lack of overall strategy for protecting endangered species."

1440

At committee yesterday, the opposition parties tabled amendments that would effectively gut this legislation. Conservative amendments included watering down the definition of habitat, preventing effective interim habitat protection and eliminating automatic listings of species at risk based on scientific data.

According to Janet Sumner, director of Wildlands League, the Conservative motions appeared to be aimed at harming endangered species.

Mr. Speaker, my question through you to the minister is, can he please tell this House why Bill 184 is so important, and can he explain the ramifications—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. The question has been asked.

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): I would like to thank the member for Huron–Bruce. I also appreciate the invitation she gave me about a month ago, when we went up to her riding and had a consultation on this bill with the agricultural community there. It went very well.

I want to make clear that this legislation is a giant step forward and, I'm going to say now, when passed, will be the best bill in North America in regard to species at risk. We're very proud of that.

I was appalled at the Conservative motions from the committee the other day. One of those amendments would have watered down the habitat definition. This is just not acceptable, as it would not achieve effective interim habitat protection, and you can't effectively protect a species if you don't protect their habitat. If you don't have interim protection of that species, it will be further imperilled while you develop a recovery strategy.

The second Conservative motion would have eliminated the automatic listing of a species. Their objective with this was to get rid of the scientific listing, which is a very key principle of this legislation. I also disagree with the premise here and believe that the science should prevail and the protection—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Mitchell: Thank you, Minister, for providing that insight.

The Conservatives weren't the only opposition party that tabled amendments. The NDP put forward some as well. Unfortunately, their amendments would also have watered down the bill.

Dr. Rick Smith, executive director of Environmental Defence, pointed out yesterday that "the NDP allege that

they are friends of the environment, but their motions would undermine the Endangered Species Act. In this case the NDP's actions are completely at odds with its rhetoric."

During committee hearings, we listened to many different groups about how this legislation may impact rural landowners. Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Natural Resources: Can the minister please clarify for us the impact this bill will have on rural Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: I just want to say to the Legislature that the Liberal Party of Ontario is 100% committed to protecting endangered species. That's why we're moving ahead with this legislation.

I believe that Robert Wright, counsel for Sierra Legal, put it best when he said, "Bill 184 cries out for all-party support." He went on to say that "with this new act we will have a more effective and more flexible system that will emphasize recovery and substantial funding for private stewardship efforts. The \$18-million stewardship fund that accompanies this bill will be key to its success."

Stewardship is a very important part of this legislation. The Ministry of Natural Resources will continue to work with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and landowners, along with many other stakeholders, to develop a program that ensures the continuation of endangered species.

I have heard concerns from many groups about the MNR entering private land, and I want to make sure it's very clear that this legislation gives no authority for government officials to enter private land.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP
AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): Mr. Speaker, through you to the Premier: I want to indicate, of course, that we appreciate his announcement today. He has obviously been dragged kicking and screaming to this decision. After three weeks going through the public accounts committee and opposition day, and week after week of questions in this House without answers, today, for some puzzling reason, whether it was overnight polls or whatever, he has finally come to the right decision.

I think it's important for all Ontarians that the Premier elaborate, Mr. Speaker, and I ask, through you, for some explanation with respect to why the change of heart? What happened, after three weeks of struggling and fighting with this government to do the right thing, that today they finally have done it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): The opposition can't take yes for an answer. They have admittedly been raising this issue for quite some time now.

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I'm not going to go there.

In the end, I think it serves the public interest. There have been a number of questions raised, there has been innuendo, there have been allegations—all kinds of those things. I think the best way for us to have conclusive

findings, in combination with some good public policy advice, is to refer it to the Auditor General, and that's exactly what we've now done.

Mr. Runciman: I'm sure the Premier will categorize this as something less than factual, but I couldn't help but be struck by the fact that I was walking by the Whitney block yesterday afternoon and there was a large shredder standing outside the building.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The Minister of Finance will come to order. The Attorney General will come to order.

The member for Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Runciman: It does lead me to ask a question about the preservation of evidence and the ability of the Auditor General to conduct a thorough investigation, including talking to the—

Interjections.

The Speaker: I will not warn the Attorney General again, and I would like him to withdraw that last—

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): Withdrawn.

Mr. Runciman: I think it's an appropriate question to ask about the preservation of evidence. Certainly, as the Premier indicated, serious allegations and questions have arisen over the course of the past few weeks with respect to the awarding of monies to organizations without any application or approval or audit process. I think we have the very legitimate right to ask the Premier: Has all the evidence that may have some impact with respect to the auditor reaching a conclusion been adequately preserved?

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: As I read the standing orders for rules of debate, "In debate, a member shall be called to order by the Speaker if he or she ... imputes false or unavowed motives to another member."

The Speaker: That would be so, Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I think the opposition historically has had, and should have, tremendous latitude when it comes to holding the government to account. That is their job; that is their supreme responsibility. But I think there's a line you can cross from time to time. I would say to my honourable colleague that I think he comes dangerously close to crossing that line in somehow suggesting that we have been active in destroying evidence. I personally find that offensive. I think he's dangerously close to that line.

I offer to the Auditor General our entire co-operation so he has access to all the information connected to this so that he can conduct a thorough review.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

Mr. Prue: Mr. Speaker, if I can get the floor—

The Speaker: Order.

The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Prue: A question to the Premier: After weeks of stonewalling and delay, you have, by your actions today, admitted that there is a serious problem at the Ministry of

Citizenship and Immigration. In taking the extraordinary action under section 17, which has only been done once before in the history of this Parliament, you are calling for an extraordinary investigation.

My question, through you, Mr. Speaker, is very simple: While the investigation is being conducted, will the Premier ask the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to step aside pending the auditor's report?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I've answered that question. I can, for the benefit of the member, make it perfectly clear that it is not my intention to ask the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to step aside. I think the appropriate thing to do in the circumstances is what I think we all thought we should do—I thought there was some collective sense that that was the appropriate thing to do—which is to invite the Auditor General to take a look at this. That is, in fact, going to happen. We provided him with our assurance of our entire co-operation, and I think we should just now allow him to get on with his work.

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Mr. Prue: The Premier, by his very actions here today, has been forced to admit that the ministry potentially and possibly may not have been run in the best style possible. He has been forced to admit that there were serious problems with the way the money was distributed. He has been forced, after three solid weeks of questioning, to call in the auditor. My question through you, Mr. Speaker, is very simple again: How could any minister of the crown, including this one, possibly continue under such an investigation?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I think what we have to ask ourselves is, what serves the public interest here? It is true there has been much by way of innuendo and allegations. We would dispute those, but we've now invited an independent individual to review the matter and to provide his best advice with respect to how to move forward when it comes to supporting immigration services, particularly insofar as those relate to year-end monies.

So I would suggest to my friend opposite that he remain patient. We assure him and the auditor of our full co-operation, and we should simply now allow him to do his job.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): My question is for the Minister of Education. When we say "safe schools," we are talking about learning environments that are safe for students physically, emotionally and psychologically. We know bullying can take its toll in all three areas.

The members opposite didn't get it right when they introduced the so-called zero tolerance policy into our schools, and they didn't get it right by not including bullying as an infraction. I understand that we are changing the safe schools legislation to include bullying as an infraction. The parents in my riding are very supportive of this change, as bullying in our schools is one of the major concerns I consistently hear about.

Minister, can you advise the House and my constituents of the other initiatives we have undertaken to prevent bullying from happening in our schools?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): I completely agree with the member that preventing bullying in the first place is extremely important. We've invested \$7.83 million into schools for bullying prevention programs. That's \$1,500 per elementary school and \$2,000 for every secondary school. We've established a three-year, \$3-million partnership with Kids Help Phone, which will double the 24-hour helpline's capacity to provide counselling to students. That'll help 30,000 more students a year.

We've provided training for 7,450 principals and vice-principals on bullying prevention. It's very clear that the leadership in the school is extremely important in having the whole school community understand how bullying works and how to prevent it.

We've also invested in AirDogs and mirror-image software, provided to 3,100 schools for grade 7 and 8 students, which deal with issues of Internet bullying, luring, cyber-stalking and child pornography. And I have to say that that issue of the role of the Internet in bullying and cyber-bullying is the single most important issue that people raise with me these days.

Mr. McNeely: Just a few days ago, a young student was waiting for a bus in my riding of Ottawa-Orléans when she was shot in the eye from a paintball gun by a passenger from a moving vehicle. This was a cowardly and criminal act, and that young girl has suffered serious injury to her eye. That incident isn't bullying, but it's associated with it.

My constituents have told me that we must reduce bullying-related activity and behaviour in our schools, and it will please them to know that these initiatives will help serve that purpose.

It's very interesting that when the member from Leeds-Grenville was asked about our proposed amendments to the safe schools legislation, the member said, "Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater," commenting that the current act works. I suppose the member just doesn't get it when it comes to safe schools in general, and bullying prevention in particular.

Minister, with respect to the \$7.83 million for bullying prevention programs you alluded to, will you please advise the member from Leeds-Grenville, as well as the rest of the members in the House, how this specific initiative will help prevent kids from being bullied?

Hon. Ms. Wynne: I know that the member for Leeds-Grenville would be pleased to know that of the \$7.83 million I talked about that's been invested in bullying prevention, \$66,000, or \$1,500 per school, will be invested in the 44 elementary schools in his riding, and \$20,000, or \$2,000 per school, will be invested in the 10 secondary schools in his riding. So those bullying prevention strategies will be developed at the school level, which is entirely appropriate, with resources given to the schools and the school boards by the provincial government.

There's a distinct difference between the way we engage school communities and the way the previous government did. We engage our educators, we talk to parents, we bring students, parents and educators into the creation of our policies. That's the reason that Lou Rocha of the Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario said, "There has never been a time in Ontario's history when such a singular goal has been articulated so clearly and consistently across the sector," and that's the same moral purpose of improving teaching—

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

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. I ask the minister this: If there was no reason at all, then I presume there wouldn't be any investigation commenced at the request of the Premier this afternoon. The Premier specifically mentioned that there have been allegations made, and the fact is, when allegations are made, they get investigated, and that's why the auditor is here.

The minister knows that he is at the heart of the decision-making process here and that in fact a large part of what is going to be looked into is decisions that he made, grants that he personally allocated.

Other people on both sides of the House in the past, when they have been at the heart of the decision-making process that's being inquired into, such as we have here, have decided at their own instigation, let alone being asked, that the honourable thing and the proper thing to do is to step aside until that inquiry is finished so that the ministry can operate without any kind of distraction and so on and so forth. It's not because of who you are, but it's because of the position you hold.

I wonder if you've given any thought to standing aside during the course of this investigation so there can be no questions asked while it proceeds and you can be free to participate in it without the burdens—

The Speaker: Minister?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I totally welcome the Auditor General's coming in. I think it is something that will again reaffirm the fact that a lot of the investments we've made are in organizations and programs that we are proud of. I think the Premier's invitation to the Auditor General is the appropriate thing to do. My office and I, myself, will totally co-operate with every aspect of this investigation by the Auditor General.

The Speaker: Supplementary? I will remind the Leader of the Opposition that he needs to place the questions through me, in the third person.

Mr. Tory: I thought I did, Mr. Speaker, but certainly. Thank you. I wonder if I could, then, ask the minister, because he didn't answer the question the first time—maybe it was because I didn't put it through you, sir.

I would like to ask the minister whether he doesn't think it might be better, from the standpoint of the public's perception of the inquiry that's under way, the public's perception as to the continued operation of your ministry without any distraction on your part by this investigation—in terms of consistency with past parliamentary practice where ministers in many cases have not waited to be asked by the Premier but have in fact felt that the appropriate thing to do was to step aside so as to allow an investigation to take place without being there, and to take full part in it without the constraints of being a minister, for that matter. I wonder if you've given any thought to that and to making that offer on your own, regardless of what the Premier's standard is in this matter.

Hon. Mr. Colle: As I said, the opposition has been asking for the Provincial Auditor to undertake this review of those investments we made, and that's exactly what he's going to do. He has, as I said before, updated and expanded powers that we've given him. The Premier has done the right thing. As the minister, I will do whatever I can to co-operate with the review, and second, continue to do the much-needed work that must be done across Ontario in many areas of immigrant settlement and language training. This work must continue. I will continue to be committed to that work. The Provincial Auditor's review will take place with all the powers that he has.

The Speaker: New question, member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Premier. On April 10, 2000, an MPP told this House: "I want to talk about your double standard. When a staff member of Minister Jim Wilson revealed confidential information, Wilson rightfully stepped aside. Bob Runciman also stepped aside when a matter affecting his ministry was under investigation. Steve Gilchrist, reluctantly but ultimately, did the right thing and stepped aside after the police were investigating him.... The precedent has been set."

That MPP was you, Mr. Premier; that MPP was Dalton McGuinty. In light of the standard that you set yourself in the year 2000, is it not right that your minister step aside?

1500

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): No, I disagree with the honourable member. I've said why before, and I would be pleased to repeat that again. We're talking about a review here that we've asked the Auditor General to conduct, a special audit, for him to come in and take a look at the circumstances here. We've assured him of all of our co-operation. We've asked him to move as quickly as he possibly can. I think the best thing to do in the circumstances, that which best serves the public interest, as distinct from a partisan interest, is for us to simply allow the Auditor General to do his work. That's what we intend to do.

Mr. Prue: In the Premier's own words, the precedent has been set. The Ministry of Citizenship and Immi-

gration is under an extraordinary audit, only the second time in the history of this House that a similar audit has been done and the first time against the ministry. Even the minister has admitted that there were serious errors; even the Premier has admitted that things could have been done better and has instituted a whole new program. How can the minister continue under this cloud when even you, by your own past statements, admit that he should not?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, we're not comparing this to police investigations. We're talking about a government that I would argue remains firmly committed to this notion of transparency and accountability, whether you take a look at what we've done with respect to the sunshine law, which incorporates salary disclosures—we've expanded that to include OPG and Hydro One—the additional authorities we've given the Auditor General himself and his office to audit hospitals, school boards and children's aid societies; what we've done to the freedom of information legislation to expand it to include Hydro One, OPG and universities; and to the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act that ensures that the auditor looks at the state of public finances before an election.

Minister Duncan invited the Auditor General to do a special audit; now I've asked the Auditor General to do a special audit. If anything, this speaks to our determination to introduce ever more accountability and transparency into our government.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Minister, I have an important question about safe, clean drinking water in rural Ontario, and I would like to make sure that the rural citizens of Leeds–Grenville, indeed all of rural Ontario, are properly informed about the McGuinty government policy in regard to rural Ontario.

Last week, a petition claiming that the government is contemplating legislation mandating water meters on private wells was forwarded to my office. This petition is absent of fact. It is being circulated by local Progressive Conservative members and candidates.

There was a newspaper article that appeared in the Colborne Chronicle on Thursday, May 3, and it states "that Mrs. Galt said yesterday she sent the petition through her electronic mailing list after it was sent to her by Progressive Conservative MPP Bob Runciman. Bill 198 does not make mention of metering private wells, but information given" by "Mr. Runciman indicates that such a regulation could be in the works...."

Will the minister please help me set the record straight? It's important that we reassure the many hard-working rural Ontarians and their families.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I want to thank the member for Northumberland for his championing of rural Ontario and for his keen interest in ensuring that we set the record straight.

As I have said numerous times in this House and while traveling throughout rural Ontario, the McGuinty government has absolutely no plans to meter private, residential wells. I find it absolutely shocking that the members of the opposition and their now newly nominated candidates continue to scaremonger and play politics with water resources in rural Ontario.

They only need to take a few minutes and read Bill 198, because that bill puts in place something they refused to do. It will protect water for the future of this province. Agriculture is exempted, private homes are exempted, institutions are exempted. We will ensure that we provide good, clean, safe water to rural Ontario for generations to come.

Mr. Rinaldi: Thank you for reminding rural Ontarians that the McGuinty government has no plans to meter private residential wells in rural Ontario.

Further to my first question, last week I received a letter from Robert Kyle, commissioner and medical officer of health for Durham region, in response to the Say No to Meters on Private Wells petition that was circulated.

The letter states, "I am writing to confirm that the statement of the alleged 'secret agenda to require the installation of meters on all water wells in the province of Ontario' attributed to me is completely false."

Instead of fearmongering, the members of the Conservative caucus should get their facts straight.

Minister, instead of spreading misinformation about residential wells, I know you are working hard to make sure that rural Ontarians have clean, safe drinking water.

Will the minister tell rural Ontarians how we have improved the wells regulation?

Hon. Ms. Broten: At the beginning of our mandate, one of the things that we had to do was fix the mess that the last government left us, and throughout our term in office, we have done that on every occasion.

The wells regulation, regulation 903, is consistent with Walkerton recommendation 86. It states that the provincial government is to provide the public with information about how to supply water safely and ensure the availability of microbiological testing.

We have funded a number of programs across the province.

I continue to reach out and work with rural Ontario, work with AMO, work with ROMA, to receive input to make sure that those regulations meet the needs of rural Ontario.

Our Well Aware program is second to none.

We will ensure that rural Ontario has clean, safe drinking water for generations and generations to come, something that the last government was a dismal failure with respect to.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. The Premier gave us an interesting recitation a few moments ago about his govern-

ment's great commitment to transparency, yet we had a situation—and it's just interesting to sort of review the history of this and try to see how we can explain some things that happened over the last couple of weeks.

One of the other things the Premier said in the last election which he has not followed through on is that he would empower committees of the Legislature and give members of the Legislature more responsibility.

This very matter went to the public accounts committee a couple of weeks ago, and a motion was put that would have started this very same process two weeks ago to have the Auditor General look into this matter, yet the Premier's office instructed the Liberal members to vote against this, and it was voted down.

I just wondered if the Premier would be kind enough to explain why his members would have come to a meeting two weeks ago—we could have had this investigation started at that time—why they were instructed to vote down the very matter that the Premier initiated today.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): We work together as a strong caucus. We consider these matters on an ongoing basis, and one of the things that we were determined to do with respect to this particular issue was to ensure that we continued to move toward, both effectively and from a perception perspective, greater transparency. When you consider the steps that we've taken toward greater transparency and accountability, it only made sense, from that perspective alone. There are other good reasons to do this, but from that perspective alone, the appropriate thing for us to do, which we have decided to do together, is to invite the Auditor General to come in and take a look at this matter, review it thoroughly and give us his best advice.

PETITIONS

STEVENSON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): "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;

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"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 want to thank Sylvia Biffis from Alliston for sending that to me and all the people who signed the petition. Of course, I’m signing the petition.

GTA POOLING

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition here to the Ontario Legislative Assembly for which I would like very much to thank Gail and Dave Gibbons of Thomas Street in Mississauga for kindly mailing it along to me. It reads as follows:

“End GTA Pooling: Pass Ontario Budget

“Whereas the city of Mississauga has a long-term labour shortage, resulting in some 60,000 more people commuting into the city of Mississauga than leave Mississauga to earn their living and support their families each and every day; and

“Whereas 10 years ago the Ontario government of that day introduced the concept of GTA pooling, whereby funds are taken from the municipalities surrounding the city of Toronto and channelled into the city of Toronto without benefit or accountability to the taxpayers of those fast-growing cities, which face big-city needs and issues of their own; and

“Whereas GTA pooling places an additional tax burden on the municipal property tax bases of some \$40 million each and every year to the city of Mississauga; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario in its 2007-08 budget proposes to completely eliminate GTA pooling during a seven-year span beginning in fiscal year 2007-08, and that as pooling is phased out, Ontario will take responsibility for social assistance and social housing costs currently funded by GTA pooling;

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

“That all parties within the government of Ontario support the swift passage of the 2007-08 Ontario budget and ensure that its provisions ending GTA pooling are implemented.”

Very eloquently put. I’m pleased to affix my signature in support and to ask page Matei to carry it for me.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a petition regarding the Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare funding. It reads:

“Whereas demand for health services is expected to continue to rise with a growing retirement population in Muskoka-East Parry Sound; and

“Whereas studies indicate that overcrowded emergency rooms result in higher mortality rates; and

“Whereas growing demand and lack of availability of long-term-care beds place increased pressure on acute care beds; and

“Whereas the operating budget for MAHC must reflect the growing demand for service in the communities of Muskoka-East Parry Sound;

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

“That the McGuinty government and the Minister of Health provide adequate increases in the operating budget of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare to maintain current health services for the people of Muskoka-East Parry Sound and allocate more long-term-care beds for Muskoka-East Parry Sound.”

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition today to regulate zoos. I want to thank my good friends John and Nora Martyn, who live at 1219 Bridle Drive in Peterborough, Ontario.

“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’m in favour of this petition and will affix my signature to it.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

“Whereas there are ongoing concerns with air quality, heating and ventilation, electrical, plumbing, lack of air

conditioning and the overall structure of the building, including cracks from floor to ceiling, to name a few;

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

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

I want to thank Milva Biffis and Gaynor McLeary for that, and of course this is the school my mother taught at and the grade school I went to.

GTA POOLING

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale): This petition is to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

“End GTA Pooling: Pass Ontario Budget

“Whereas the city of Mississauga faces a long-term labour shortage, resulting in some 60,000 more people commuting into the city of Mississauga than leave Mississauga to earn their living and support their families each and every day; and

“Whereas 10 years ago the Ontario government of that day introduced the concept of GTA pooling, whereby funds are taken from the municipalities surrounding the city of Toronto and channelled into the city of Toronto without benefit or accountability to the taxpayers of those fast-growing cities, which face big-city needs and issues of their own; and

“Whereas GTA pooling places an additional tax burden on the municipal property tax bases of some \$40 million each and every year to the city of Mississauga; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario in its 2007-08 budget proposes to completely eliminate GTA pooling during a seven-year span beginning in fiscal year 2007-08, and that as pooling is phased out, Ontario will take responsibility for social assistance and social housing costs currently funded by GTA pooling;

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

“That all parties within the government of Ontario support the swift passage of the 2007-08 Ontario budget and ensure that its provisions ending GTA pooling are implemented.”

I agree with the petitioners, so I put my signature on this petition as well.

FREDERICK BANTING HOMESTEAD

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

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

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

“Whereas the town of New Tecumseth has been unsuccessful in reaching an agreement with the Ontario Historical Society to use part of the land to educate the public about the historical significance of the work of Sir Frederick Banting;

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

“That the Minister of Culture endorse Simcoe–Grey MPP Jim Wilson’s private member’s bill entitled the Frederick Banting Homestead Preservation Act so that the homestead is kept in good repair and preserved for generations to come.”

Of course, I agree with that petition and will sign it.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I will read a petition from my colleague from Markham, the Minister of Revenue, Michael Chan. The petition is to regulate zoos to protect animals and communities and it reads:

“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 and I’ll sign this petition.

HIGHWAY 26

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

“Whereas the redevelopment of Highway 26 was approved by MPP Jim Wilson and the previous PC government in 2000; and

“Whereas a number of horrific fatalities and accidents have occurred on the old stretch of Highway 26; and

“Whereas the redevelopment of Highway 26 is critical to economic development and job creation in Simcoe–Grey;

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

“That the Liberal government stop the delay of the Highway 26 redevelopment and act immediately to ensure that the project is finished on schedule, to improve

safety for area residents and provide economic development opportunities and job creation in Simcoe–Grey.”

I agree with that petition, and I’m signing it.

1520

COMMUNITY MEDIATION

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): A petition to our assembly:

“Whereas many types of civil disputes may be resolved through community mediation delivered by trained mediators, who are volunteers who work with the parties in the dispute; and

“Whereas Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services established the Peel Community Mediation Service in 1999 with support from the government of Ontario through the Trillium Foundation, the Rotary Club of Mississauga West and the United Way of Peel, and has proven the viability and success of community mediation; and

“Whereas the city of Mississauga and the town of Caledon have endorsed the Peel Community Mediation Service, and law enforcement bodies refer many cases to the Peel Community Mediation Service as an alternative to a court dispute; and

“Whereas court facilities and court time are both scarce and expensive, the cost of community mediation is very small and the extra expense incurred for lack of community mediation in Peel region would be much greater than the small annual cost of funding community mediation;

“Be it therefore resolved that the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of the Attorney General, support and fund the ongoing service delivery of the Peel Community Mediation Service through Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services.”

I agree with this petition and with my good friend from Mississauga West, and sign my name and give it to page Marissa.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): The Chair recognizes the senior member from Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): Thank you, Mr. Speaker—very kind.

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty has promised to make the needs of students a priority for his government and that students deserve to have a bright future with a good education; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty has promised not to give up on students or Ontario’s public school system;

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

“That the provincial government work with the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board to establish an evening bus route from St. Joan of Arc High School in Barrie to the outlying communities. This would allow students to participate in extracurricular activities

and help them to fulfill their potential, secure a bright future and receive the best educational experience possible, as promised to them by the Premier.”

I agree with this petition, and I’m signing it.

GTA POOLING

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): I have a petition to present to the Legislature today.

“Whereas the city of Mississauga faces a long-term labour shortage, resulting in some 60,000 more people commuting into the city of Mississauga than leave Mississauga to earn their living and support their families each and every day; and

“Whereas 10 years ago the Ontario government of that day introduced the concept of GTA pooling, whereby funds are taken from the municipalities surrounding the city of Toronto and channelled into the city of Toronto without benefit or accountability to the taxpayers of those fast-growing cities, which face big-city needs and issues of their own; and

“Whereas GTA pooling places an additional tax burden on the municipal property tax bases of some \$40 million each and every year to the city of Mississauga; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario in its 2007-08 budget proposes to completely eliminate GTA pooling during a seven-year span beginning in fiscal year 2007-08, and that as pooling is phased out, Ontario will take responsibility for social assistance and social housing costs currently funded by GTA pooling;

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

“That all parties within the government of Ontario support the swift passage of the 2007-08 Ontario budget and ensure that its provisions ending GTA pooling are implemented.”

I’m going to sign this petition and give it to Caitlyn.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

It's signed by many people from my riding, and I'm going to hand it to page Marissa.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

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

On Monday, May 14, 2007, in the afternoon, third reading of Bill 203, the road safety act; in the evening, third reading of Bill 103, Independent Police Review Act.

On Tuesday, May 15, 2007, in the afternoon, third reading of Bill 140, Long-Term Care Homes Act; in the evening, third reading of Bill 69, Regulatory Modernization Act.

On Wednesday, May 16, 2007, in the afternoon, third reading of Bill 184, Endangered Species Act; in the evening, third reading of Bill 140, Long-Term Care Homes Act.

On Thursday, May 17, 2007, in the afternoon, third reading of Bill 165, Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth Act.

VISITORS

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I draw your attention to the parents of page Marissa, who are in the gallery with us today: Mark and Martha Hendriks from Durham region.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRENGTHENING BUSINESS THROUGH A SIMPLER TAX SYSTEM ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 VISANT À RENFORCER LES ENTREPRISES GRÂCE À UN RÉGIME FISCAL PLUS SIMPLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 8, 2007, on the motion for second reading of Bill 174, An Act to enact the Taxation Act, 2007 and make complementary and other amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 174, Loi édictant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts et apportant des modifications complémentaires et autres à diverses lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Pursuant to the order of the House dated May 9, 2007, I am now required to put the question.

On May 2, Mr. Sorbara moved second reading of Bill 174, An Act to enact the Taxation Act, 2007 and make

complementary and other amendments to other Acts. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1528 to 1538.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour, please rise one at a time to be recognized.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Gerretsen, John	Racco, Mario G.
Balkissoon, Bas	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramal, Khalil
Bentley, Christopher	Kular, Kuldip	Ramsay, David
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Kwinter, Monte	Rinaldi, Lou
Bountrogianni, Marie	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Bradley, James J.	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Brotten, Laurel C.	Levac, Dave	Scott, Laurie
Bryant, Michael	Marsales, Judy	Sergio, Mario
Caplan, David	McMeekin, Ted	Smitherman, George
Chan, Michael	McNeely, Phil	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Chudleigh, Ted	Miller, Norm	Takhar, Harinder S.
Colle, Mike	Mitchell, Carol	Van Bommel, Maria
Delaney, Bob	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wilkinson, John
Duguid, Brad	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Duncan, Dwight	Phillips, Gerry	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Qaadri, Shafiq	Zimmer, David

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed, please rise one at a time to be recognized.

Nays

Ferreira, Paul	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
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The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 48; the nays are 3.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated May 9, the bill is ordered referred to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs.

INDEPENDENT POLICE REVIEW ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR L'EXAMEN INDÉPENDANT DE LA POLICE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 3, 2007, on the motion for third reading of Bill 103, An Act to establish an Independent Police Review Director and create a new public complaints process by amending the Police Services Act / Projet de loi 103, Loi visant à créer le poste de directeur indépendant d'examen de la police et à créer une nouvelle procédure de traitement des plaintes du public en modifiant la Loi sur les services policiers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Is there unanimous consent to allow Mr. Chudleigh to complete the time on the clock? Agreed.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): I wouldn't have been disappointed if they had said no. I'm not sure if this is going to beat ringing the bells.

Yesterday I had the opportunity to address the long-service medal presentation to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in the Toronto west division. There were probably 50 police officers, all dressed to the nines in their red uniforms, and it brought back a lot of memories. One of my first memories was, of course, the musical ride, and I wonder how many children or adults in Canada whose first exposure to police of any sort was watching the—

Interjections.

Mr. Chudleigh: They've heard it all before—musical ride charge, especially the final part of it where they all lower their lances and charge down the field. What a wonderful experience that was. The first time I saw that was at the Cooksville fairgrounds. If you can imagine, there are probably 100,000 people living on the Cooksville fairgrounds now. There are, I think, a dozen apartment buildings there. Downtown Cooksville, of course, is now just a little bit south of what is referred to as downtown Mississauga. Cooksville is the town that grew up around the intersection of Highway 5 and Highway 10 and was the focal point for people who lived in that region of Peel. There was a main shopping district. The groceries—we used to drive about a mile and a half from Dixie to the grocery store in Cooksville. I was raised in Dixie. There was great rivalry between Dixie and Cooksville, especially in hockey. Dixie used to win; we had the arena. But the rivalry continued long after Mississauga was developed. We used to drive about a mile and a half to get to the Carload grocery store, which was probably a 2,000-square-foot grocery store, about the size of a very small Mac's milk today. If we really wanted to do heavy shopping, we'd go down to the A&P store, and that was probably six miles away. That was quite a trip, so you didn't go there every week. Maybe once a month you would go down there—a little different from today, wouldn't you say?

That was my first experience with the RCMP. It was wonderful sitting there, watching them receive their 30-year pins, their 25-year pins and their 20-year pins. It was wonderful to watch as they came up one by one in their glistening uniforms and highly polished boots to receive these awards. It was a very nice pin that came in bronze, silver or gold, depending on how long they had served. Watching the uniforms as they came up, they had crossed rifles on, I believe, their left sleeve; yes, it would be their left sleeve. Every once in a while you would see an RCMP officer come up and there would be a crown on top of the crossed rifles. That crown meant he was an expert marksman. He not only had his badge for being proficient in marksmanship, but he was an expert rifleman, and in the test he went through, he had no misses. I'm not sure what that test involves; I believe it's 100 shots or something in that area. To go through that with no misses indicated that he was a pretty good shot.

Some of the older gentlemen who were receiving their 25- and 30-year pins as well had crossed .38s on their sleeves, and those represented people who had been in the force for some time.

Some of the newer members, particularly those who were getting their 20-year pins, had crossed 9-millimetre handguns on their sleeves, and that represented the change from when they used to carry .38s to today, when they carry 9-millimetre semi-automatic handguns.

It was interesting to watch the various uniforms come up and what those meant.

Up in the shoulder area of the uniform, there are clusters of stars, and every star represents five years of service. So the 30-year men, of course, had six stars on their sleeve patch, which made quite a show. The officer sitting beside me mentioned that he had known one officer who had 41 years of service and therefore eight stars, and that he had never seen anyone with more than eight stars on his sleeve.

It was a very moving ceremony, and of course very highly respected by all the police officers who were there—there were a large number of family members there as well.

When I was asked to say a few words, I mentioned to the audience that my expertise was in speaking to the Legislature and that I wasn't really used to speaking in front of a live audience—if you look around this place today, you'll understand what those comments mean.

Actually, when I mentioned that yesterday, I got a big laugh, but apparently no one is paying attention here.

Interjection: Ha, ha.

Mr. Chudleigh: Thank you. There was a giggle down here.

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): It's Thursday afternoon.

Mr. Chudleigh: It's Thursday afternoon. Apparently, my party understands that.

One of the other things that came to the fore yesterday was talk about the three groups of people: one being the politicians, who enact legislation; the second being judges, who adjudicate the laws; and the third being the police, who enforce the laws. I think the public tends to lump those three groups—law, order and good government—into the peace of the country, as to whether it's working well or not working well.

In general, I think that most people on the street feel those three groups work together somehow to create this peace and tranquility that we have, by and large, on our streets and in our cities and towns across Ontario.

It's interesting to point out that when it works, it works extremely well. We do have a very safe society, when you compare it with the rest of the world. Yes, we have areas that perhaps aren't that safe and incidents from time to time that are very scary—house invasions and those things, the new types of crime that are coming into our society. But by and large, if you measure our society from a law and order point of view against societies around the world, I think you have to come to the conclusion that Canada is certainly in the forefront, in the top three, four or five countries in the world as far as peace and tranquility are concerned within our communities.

1550

That system works so well when those three bodies that we talk about—the police, the politicians and the judges—work in isolation from each other. If you were to get political interference in the application of the law through the judges, for instance—that has happened occasionally. We hear about it happening in foreign countries. It always turns out to be an unmitigated disaster. It is the ruination of peaceful and tranquil law and order in the community in which it is being perpetrated.

When you think about political interference within the police department, again, you conjure up thoughts of a dual system, a system of some people being elite in the eyes of the police and other people being without representation. That, again, would be an unmitigated disaster for any society to work towards or to promote.

Thirdly, you could have, in some places, like in Third World countries, police influences on politicians, which would be a scary situation. That's one that I certainly wouldn't support. A police community that intimidates politicians—or judges, for that matter—would throw law and order out the window. It would not be a safe community to live in.

Those three bodies—the politicians, the police and the judges—as they create safety in our communities, as they create a society that is based on law and order and where everyone has this feeling of equality and safety within that system, those three bodies create that environment, but they must also work independently and without undue influence on each other: Many of the RCMP officers who were receiving their long-term medals yesterday also had served in foreign countries on peacekeeping forces. I didn't speak to any of them directly, but I'm sure some of them were in Haiti, and I believe that we have had them in other jurisdictions, like the Middle East. I believe that there were some in Afghanistan and there might have been some in old Yugoslavia when that was in a state of unrest. Those officers had a special insight into how our system actually works and what makes it work well, and what might not make it work well, what might influence it to fall apart at the seams. When those three entities don't work in separate towers, as it were, the risk of that happening comes to the fore.

This bill that we're talking about, Bill 103, is creating a large bureaucracy. It creates a bureaucracy that oversees police complaints. We used to have a bureaucracy like that overseeing police complaints back in the 1980s and early 1990s. My recollection is—I wasn't an elected politician then—that it was onerous, it was overbearing, it was difficult to operate under. I think that a lot of the police officers found that they were worried about what they should do. That moment of hesitation, when you think about what you have to do, perhaps takes away that moment of edge when you have the advantage on a felon or someone whom you're about to arrest. If you're a split second slow, the results might be a complete disaster for you.

It seems to me that I read a lot more about police officers in the late 1980s and early 1990s than I read

about them today. When you go over to the area just east of here that is dedicated to the fallen officers, it's one that moves you very greatly when you see the number of police officers who have given their lives in the line of duty. Anything that we can do to make sure that that doesn't happen in our society is a benefit to society. It's certainly a benefit to the police force, but it's also a great benefit to society, because out of that you get a dedicated police force and you get one that is committed to do its best in order to create and maintain a lawful society.

Rather than moving down the road so quickly on this bill which is before us today, it seems to me that there are many areas in the world that have overseers of police forces in various levels and types, and all over the world, not always in First World nations but in Third World nations as well, which have reputable, good, honest, great police forces that are doing a wonderful job in maintaining just societies and maintaining the safety of their citizens. As we look at those other countries—I'm thinking of Europe, I think of countries in the Orient, I think of other countries around the world—it seems to me that they have systems in place that protect the public in the rare cases when an overzealous officer or someone is perceived to be overstepping the bounds of their authority, that there is some method by which that can be brought back to the norm and back to the middle, back to where it should be.

It would seem to me that if we looked at other jurisdictions and did an examination of what they were doing, we could have found something different than what we're proposing to do with this Bill 103. Personally, I don't think the situation warranted a major overhaul. In fact, I'm not sure the situation, in my opinion, warranted even a small overhaul. I think the system was working extremely well.

It would be far less expensive, far less cumbersome and far less bureaucratic to do a search around the world to see what was available or what was happening. Also, another system that could have been done is that we could have formed a pilot project somewhere in Ontario. We could have selected a city. I know that a lot of the marketing groups in Ontario select cities like Peterborough as a good balance of population that mirrors the effects of Ontario. In fact, I think it mirrors fairly closely the population of Canada, as well, for those tests. When they're marketing a new food product—I was in the food business in another life. Many of the new products that were introduced would be introduced first in Peterborough to test to see if they had any public acceptance. That was something that could have been tried with this bill to see if there was a better way to do the kinds of things that we're doing, and it wouldn't have been nearly as bureaucratic, nearly as onerous and somewhat questionable by the police forces that we are so much indebted to.

The McGuinty government is planning to spend millions of dollars in overhauling the provincial police complaints process, and they're doing this without a clear—as I mentioned before—and compelling reason.

The police forces—we're not hearing an outcry; we're not seeing editorials; we're not seeing a lot of talk about what is happening with police forces that they need this overhaul. Lord knows, I think any of us or all of us feel very safe in walking down the streets of almost every town, every village, every city in Canada or in Ontario, and that wouldn't be the case if we were very nervous about the police system. The police system is maintaining that law and order extremely well, and personally I don't see the need for a revamp of the complaints process.

This bill will also create a much larger bureaucracy. Why is it that in the periods of time when we have the Liberals in government, from 1985 to 1990 and from 2003 to now, we see a spiralling increase, an upward increase, in the size of the bureaucracy? With the addition of regional complaint offices and the consideration of third party complaints—this is another problem in this bill that I'll speak to more if I get some time in a little while, that a third party to the experience can launch a complaint.

1600

The person who was apparently abused by the police department may not want to complain about his experience. He may feel the police were justified in doing what they did. But here it is. This bill would allow a third party to come in, a disinterested third party who observed, perhaps from across the street, perhaps from the window of his house or his apartment building and saw something happen. He may not know exactly what it was that did happen, but through this process he can launch a complaint. In that, of course, you can see that every complaint has to be looked at. Every complaint has to be examined. Every complaint has to be gone into in some detail. All that involves manpower, it involves time, it involves money, and all of that time, money and manpower is coming off the streets into a bureaucracy. I can't help but think that that is not going to increase the peace and safety that our citizens feel when they're on the street or in their homes or living in Ontario.

As you take policing off the street, as you tie them up in bureaucracy, you are doing a disservice to the law-abiding citizens and you're doing, I think, a service to those who would run amok of the law of the land. I think it would be more prudent to proceed with a pilot project, as I mentioned before, before committing the entire province to this expensive and somewhat major overhaul.

The government has also declared that the purpose of the legislation is to provide confidence in and respect for the public complaints system, yet the Attorney General noted when Bill 103 was introduced that according to a 2003 Stats Canada survey, more than 80% of the public say that they have confidence in our police—that's part of the old 80-20 rule, 80% are in favour or against and 20% are in favour or against, the society is split fairly—it's a major split when it gets to 80-20.

I mean if 80% feel that they're happy with the police force and happy with the policing services that they're receiving, that's a major win for the police department, and it certainly doesn't signal that a major overhaul is

needed. The system is seen to be in very good shape. It's a very small percentage of the public that would feel that the police are a problem. The major number of Ontarians would feel that the police are doing a wonderful job in maintaining law and order.

When you're getting that speeding ticket on the 401—for which you were probably guilty—you may not be very happy about it, but I think if you stop and think and take a deep breath, you'll realize that your speeding and driving habits perhaps were putting other people in jeopardy. The day after, or the next week, you will say, "Yeah, well, I guess I deserved it. I guess I better slow down a bit."

The current system has been in effect for almost 10 years and was developed through extensive consultation and outreach with a variety of communities, including police organizations, front-line police officers. Since 1997, police services have been responsible for the intake, investigation and adjudication of complaints. The independent Ontario Civilian Commission on Police Services plays a role in reviewing police handling of complaints and hears appeals of police disciplinary hearings.

So in our current system, there's a civilian oversight to the police complaint system. I think that's the important thing. The police can't be expected to investigate their own complaints from ground zero. I think there has to be a civilian oversight to that, and if the civilian oversight is to audit the activities of the police investigative process, then I think that serves well. Again, I just don't hear an outcry amongst my constituents who would like to see this system overhauled.

If Bill 103 is passed, it will establish a new and independent police review director, the IPRD, who would be responsible for the intake and initial screening of public complaints. That's a new bureaucratic level. It would determine whether the complaint is investigated by the independent police review director, the IPRD—whether it would be investigated by them, the police service affected or whether it would be referred to another police service. Again, this is a new level of bureaucracy. Members of the public could still complain to the police service if they prefer, and third parties will now also be able to launch complaints provided they are direct witnesses to the alleged misconduct or have a direct relationship with the alleged victim. Again, they don't have to have that relationship to the alleged victim. They have to have been direct witnesses to the incident. Again, I think that's extremely controversial in that it opens up this complaint system to people who saw something but have no direct relationship to it. They may not have been close enough to hear the verbal conversation that took place between the police officer and the other person. But they may perceive something has happened.

I go back to the point where that is going to take manpower to investigate, it's going to take time, it's going to take money, and all of those three commodities are coming off the street where the public would be protected by the police officers. All of that time and money is

going into a complaints system, in a situation where the complaints system that we currently have, I'm not hearing any complaints about. So if you take these police officers off the street, if you take this money off the street, I think we're moving in the wrong direction. I think the policing money has to be on the street. That's where the bad guys are. That's where the police should be. That's where our efforts should be.

The Attorney General also claims that the new proposed system is not a return to the cumbersome pre-1997 system. However, the government is about to engage in an expensive overhaul of the complaints system without evidence that it will be effective. There's nothing in this bill that points to research, that points to studies done that say this bill will be effective; this bill will reduce the number of complaints the police have; this bill will make Ontario a better place to live in because we have a better complaints system. There's nothing there that says that. In fact, I would argue against the fact that there is anything in this bill that would make Ontario a better place. Ontario is a pretty good place now. I would say that this bill is going to take those resources off the street, take those police officers off the street. I don't know how that serves the law enforcement issue in Ontario when there are fewer resources that are going to be on the street, so I have great concern about that.

No one is opposed to civilian oversight. As I mentioned before, civilian oversight of the police complaints department is a very good thing. It should be there. It should be an audit activity. We heard a lot about auditing today in this House. An audit activity is probably a good thing. Auditing activities, whether they be through a minister's department that has obtained a high degree of controversy within the province, whether the giving out of grants to various agencies was a legitimate thing to do—the auditor is coming in to look at that. That's a good thing. How the auditor could do his job when the minister is still sitting in the ministerial chair—I don't know how that works. It's unprecedented in Ontario. I've never seen an auditor come in and audit a minister and his activities without that minister stepping aside. I think this is unprecedented in Ontario. I think it's an indication that this government doesn't really have the concept of what makes for law and order within this province. Certainly the balance would seem to be very much askew, that the minister is sitting in his ministerial chair while the auditor comes in and does an audit of his department on perhaps the wrongdoings of the minister. I hope the auditor finds that everything is in order. No one wants to see any member of this Legislature hauled down into disgrace. I hope the minister is found to have acted properly. But I'm not sure the auditor can do his job while the minister is still in his chair.

1610

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

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I listened very carefully to the commentary on Bill 103 by the member from Halton. I'm amazed at his ability to dissect this

piece of legislation, to analyze it and to expose its incredible weaknesses, so I salute the member from Halton.

I'm going to be speaking in around eight minutes' time. I'm going to do my best to be exciting in my comments, to be vibrant in the way I address this bill. I'm going to be speaking for an hour. Here we are, late on a Thursday afternoon. It's a little warm in here, a little humid. You can get a sense of the smog factor outside there, up University Avenue. Members in the chamber are not quite dozing off, but they're subdued.

Interjection.

Mr. Kormos: I'm pleased. I'm going to have some things to say about the parliamentary assistant. I'm pleased that he's here doing the heavy lifting. His minister just flits off—I didn't say "flicks off"; I said "flits off," because "flick" has acquired a totally new meaning. I'm blushing as I say it. This government has given that relatively innocent, innocuous word "flick"—like flick a piece of lint off your shirt. The minister has turned it into something vulgar and profane, downright course—base, if you will—and indeed, in the course of doing it, has diminished that great old Anglo-Saxonism that has been so useful to so many people in so many difficult and trying times as a mode of expressing so many things.

Give me eight minutes. I'll be back. Thank you kindly.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): It's a pleasure to be able to say a few words on Bill 103.

Very briefly, before I make a few comments, I think the "flick" comment came from Richard Branson—now known as Sir Richard Branson, if I'm not mistaken—who helped create Virgin airlines and so on, and is involved in all sorts of other things.

Anyway, I just wanted to say that I've had a chance to be a part of the discussions on this bill. What it does is, it creates a new public complaints process. I guess it amends the Police Services Act. What I like about it is that it creates—this is from a recommendation brought forward by Chief Justice LeSage—an independent police review director.

I know that I've had people come to my constituency office, as probably many others have, who have had a complaint against the police. Oftentimes, they don't feel comfortable going to 41 Division in my riding or 42 Division, or to the police at all. They want to deal with an independent body. They think sometimes that the MPP can do something, that he or she can get involved in the process.

I feel more comfortable with the fact that this bill establishes an independent director. He or she can investigate the complaint that a person may have and then decide whether or not the complainant could go to the police or resolve the matter locally.

We're not saying here that the police are bad; we're not saying that anyone is bad. We're creating something that I think is much-needed.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions and comments? I recognize the member for York South–Weston.

Mr. Ferreira: I was expecting one of our friends from the official opposition, but I see there's only one here. He's been left to his own devices.

Mr. Chudleigh: I said it all.

Mr. Ferreira: He said it all, and I listened quite intently to his comments. He referred at least twice during his comments to his riding of Halton—that he has not received any complaints about the complaints process. Perhaps it's a by-product of different demographics, but I can tell you that in York South–Weston, in my short time as the member of provincial Parliament, I have received numerous complaints about police conduct. They tend to come from individuals from racialized minority communities.

It's safe to say that there is little doubt that the present system is flawed. So we have the government proposing this independent complaints body. We know that the government's bill would establish an independent civilian commission to handle the complaints or, in some cases, refer them to the police.

For this complaints body to be effective, it needs adequate funding. I have grave concerns that this government will indeed provide adequate funding. We know that on justice issues that affect marginalized Ontarians, their funding record is fairly flimsy. We hear about the lack of funding for legal aid; the system is just about broke. In this House yesterday, we heard comments about SALCO, the South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario, which serves the fastest-growing minority community in the province, again not getting funding commitments beyond September. That's this government's record on funding these initiatives. I'm afraid that the funding for this particular complaints body will mirror the lack—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Further questions and comments? The Chair recognizes the member from Scarborough–Rouge River.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon (Scarborough–Rouge River): I'm really pleased to provide a few comments on this particular bill, and I share with the members of the House—

Mr. Kormos: You've got to comment on Chudleigh's speech.

Mr. Balkissoon: Can you give me a second?

Mr. Kormos: You've only got two minutes now.

Mr. Balkissoon: That's right.

Interjection: You're on the clock, Bas.

Mr. Balkissoon: Don't interrupt.

Mr. Kormos: I apologize. I'm sorry. I regret having done that.

Mr. Balkissoon: I just want to add comments to the member from Halton, the member from York South–Weston and my colleague from Scarborough Southwest.

I spent a couple of years on the Toronto Police Services Board as a board member appointed by city council, and I've got to tell you that I, as a board member, was approached by people from the public on many occasions wanting to lodge a complaint on something they saw and they couldn't do it because the system didn't allow it. In several instances, I was able to get these people in to speak with the staff sergeant or superintendent of a particular division and actually resolve the issue.

The second thing I want to tell you that this particular bill will resolve is that there have been occasions of constituents of mine who wanted to make a complaint, and when they made the complaint at the local division, they would be talked out of the complaint by the local officer investigating the complaint. On top of that, they would be talked out of it, that it was frivolous and there was no substance to the complaint and then all the records are destroyed. So if the same officer was involved in a complaint over and over that was ruled as frivolous, all those records would be missing. This will solve it.

The Acting Speaker: It's time for a response. The Chair recognizes the member from Halton.

Mr. Chudleigh: I thank the member for Niagara Centre, who of course charged the government members to be alert. Lord knows: Ontario certainly needs more "lerts." The member for York South–Weston made some very knowledgeable comments on his experience in this area. He probably has a very good point: This may be a regional issue within Ontario. It may be needed in some places in Ontario, where it's not needed in others. Again, this government is waving its bureaucratic arm across the length and breadth of this province and trying to solve all the problems in the province with one bureaucratic response that perhaps is not necessary across the province. The cost of this program could be very much reduced. So I thank the member for York South–Weston for his comments.

1620

The member for Scarborough–Rouge River must learn that when the member from Niagara Centre starts to heckle you, you just carry on. Don't respond to him, or his heckling will get much worse. He will get much worse, and you will take much longer than the minute and a half you took to introduce the other members who spoke before you.

I know the member for Niagara Centre is very anxious to start his hour leadoff on this. I am anxious, of course, to hear his comments and also interested to see if his comments mirror my own concerns on this bill or whether the member for Niagara Centre will take a different tack—he's been known to do so—but he has always been known to be at least entertaining.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member from Niagara Centre

Mr. Kormos: I've waited a long time for this. We're going back to 2005: Patrick LeSage delivers his report to the government. As a matter of fact, we can get a little more specific: It was April 22, 2005. I recall being at the press conference that Mr. LeSage gave downstairs when he released his report. I remember praising Patrick LeSage for some very hard work.

I remember urging the government to get on with it, because there were folks out there who were concerned about the effectiveness and objectiveness of the current police complaints system; there were folks out there who were concerned about access to the police complaints system—April 2005. This Attorney General didn't

introduce the bill until April 2006. Here we are in May 2007—over two years.

Do you understand what I'm saying, Parliamentary Assistant, through you, Mr. Speaker, of course—we've been chastised and hectored by the Chair for failing to deliver comments through the Speaker. Let me tell you, there have been more than a few occasions here when I wanted to drive things through the Speaker; make no mistake about it.

Here is an Attorney General—he couldn't organize a drunk-up in a brewery. He's got a comprehensive, complete report from LeSage in April 2005; LeSage dots the i's and crosses the t's for him, basically holds his hand and takes him right through it. It takes him over a year to bring the bill before the Legislature for first reading. Here we are, two years later—two years plus—and the government still can't get its act together. It's not very impressive, is it? Not very impressive at all. It's downright shameful. And this minister took his salary increase? For Pete's sake. It's incredible. Where's the gap? Where's the block? Does he have a problem with the Chair of Management Board? Is there a little personality conflict there? Does the Attorney General simply not carry clout in cabinet? He can't get his bills called. The government House leader is an amiable enough person: Mr. Bradley. You know that. The member from Peterborough is nodding his head. He knows the government House leader to be an amiable person. I say to you, I've never known Mr. Bradley, the government House leader, to carry a grudge. Was it the Premier who was less than enthusiastic about seeing this legislation become law? Was it? Is it one of the Attorney General's colleagues in cabinet who is blocking this bill? Is there personal competition? Are the potential leadership candidates already so viciously positioned that they'll do anything they have to to undermine a colleague who might pose a threat for potential leadership of the Liberal Party?

Interjections.

Mr. Kormos: Why, please. I hear, as others do, the increasingly competent French-language contributions by cabinet ministers who have been learning their lessons well. I compliment them. Private tutoring with very qualified French-language teachers, French as a second language. I hear ambitious ministers practising—not so much practising; rather, displaying, performing, their French-language skills. Clearly, like dogs marking out their turf, you have, metaphorically, cabinet members in this chamber lifting their hind legs and marking their spots in the ascension line-up. One suspects that the Attorney General has aspirations. One sees him as an ambitious politician. One sees him networking and building constituencies. By God, what could have been a more clever, downright Machiavellian political move than to introduce pit bull legislation? Think about it.

We're talking about somebody here who has a steel trap kind of political acumen and wants to wrap up a whole big constituency out there that will lend their support in the event of, let's say, a leadership race. Clearly,

the pit bull legislation was a strong marker. And hey, if you're going to ban pit bulls—and I note with regret the newspapers of this week. Do you recall the newspapers of this week reporting a savage pit bull attack on a mature woman and her little dog? What's going on? I remember as surely as I remember Mr. LeSage on April 22, 2005, releasing his report. I remember the Attorney General, in the same media room, in the same environment, with the cameras and the bright lights, and as svelte as he could be, looking straight into the cameras. We're talking about months of media training. Thousands of dollars spent on consultants so that the Attorney General could pierce that camera's lens with his glare. Do you recall what he said? See if you could recall what he said: "Pit bulls banned." Didn't he say that? You bet your boots he did. Pit bulls banned, huh? Tell that to the woman whose dog was attacked by, clearly, pit bulls that were poorly cared for, perhaps poorly bred and certainly poorly contained by their owners. So much for the pit bull ban. I guess the pit bull ban was just a lot of bull, wasn't it? Nothing more, nothing less. We said that at the time. We said, "Look, you're creating an illusion of safety, because the ban should be on dangerous dogs, badly bred dogs, badly-cared-for dogs, dogs that have been poorly or viciously trained. There's the Attorney General—"Pit bulls banned"—this Warholian bantam rooster: "Pit bulls banned."

1630

I suppose you wanted to top off a career as Attorney General by banning the Ontario Human Rights Commission. Do you remember that bill? We remember it well, only this time he was successful. The Attorney General of this province not only banned the Ontario Human Rights Commission; he dismantled it. The Attorney General abolished the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

The parliamentary assistant, interestingly enough, was sent out to do the heavy lifting on that one too. The parliamentary assistant was sabotaged. He was the victim of fragging. You know what I mean, don't you? He was the victim of fragging as his own troops shot him in the back—fragging. Long before Laurel Broten, the Minister of the Environment, ever thought of flicking, in military jargon, people knew about fragging. There he was, as capable a member of this Legislature as one could be, sent out with the commitment to hundreds of people in this province representing communities, constituencies, organizations across Ontario, promising them—the parliamentary assistant was sent out to promise them that they'd have their day in the committee. And he did it.

Look, the parliamentary assistant is a noble person. He's a person of integrity. He would fall on his own sword before he'd submit to instructions to lie. I'm proclaiming him an integrous man. I say to you once again, the parliamentary assistant would fall on his own sword before submitting to instructions to lie. He, the parliamentary assistant, believed the minister when the minister said, "Go out and tell these communities that they're going to have their day in the committee." They were

scheduled, and the advertising had gone out. Their times and dates and places had been confirmed. The parliamentary assistant took on the onerous task of facing numerous critics, but then his own troops shot him in the back. David Zimmer, member for Willowdale, parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General, succumbed to an incident of fragging during the course of public hearings around Dalton McGuinty's government's exercise in abolishing the Ontario Human Rights Commission. The government invoked closure. The clerk's office spent hours on the phone dialling people, saying, "I'm sorry, the committee's been shut down. No, I'm afraid the bill's been passed because it was a victim of a time allocation motion. The government has forbidden any further debate or discussion of the bill."

You see, we here in Canada think that those types of government edicts only occur in little Third World, despot-run dictatorships, don't we? We think that it only happens in the countries that are governed by the iron-fisted rule of tyrants, that a government could shut down discussion, forbid people to debate, and deny them the opportunity to be heard. Well, it happened right here in Ontario. It happened under this Attorney General's watch.

Yet ever faithful—ever, ever faithful. You know, I had a dog called Charlie—you know; I've mentioned him before—and God bless Joanne Bouchard, my neighbour, because she took care of Charlie while I was up here at Queen's Park. But I'd get home on a Thursday evening or a Friday morning, and Charlie would hear the truck pull into the driveway and he'd be darting out there, tail wagging—he was a beagle—just happy to see me. It only lasted 10 minutes or so and then he went back to what old beagles do, but he was faithful. Charlie, my beagle, was faithful. The parliamentary assistant has been faithful too, but I never shot Charlie and I never told him to lie.

Interjection.

Mr. Kormos: Someone should provide some assistance to the parliamentary assistant. Look, I understand why he's emotional about this. I find myself, quite frankly, tearing up observing this kind of fidelity, especially by someone who's been abused so often, someone who's been set up, someone who's had a target painted on his back.

Does the Attorney General somehow think it's clever to do these sorts of things? Does the Attorney General somehow think he's making himself taller by doing these sorts of things? Does the Attorney General somehow think he's making himself bigger by forcing these things upon colleagues? Is it a control rush that he gets? I don't know. I'm not a psychologist. I'm not a therapist. But I do know that here he is again, the parliamentary assistant, unable to explain to us why his boss, the Attorney General, sat on the LeSage report for two years now. I'm not even sure it's going to get passed now. The New Democrats are going to do our best. Here we are, the third day of debate on this bill, and I've only gotten to my lead comments.

What is the government afraid of? The government, it seems, is walking in the constant shadow of scandal. Do you know what the government's like? You remember Joe Btfsplk in Al Capp's cartoon *Li'l Abner*, with the cloud over his head? Do you remember him? This government is like Joe Btfsplk. I know Hansard will introduce the correct spelling of Joe's last name. I apologize for the mispronunciation.

1640

This government is walking around with this perpetual dark cloud over its head and it somehow thinks it can escape the stench, the reeking stink of scandal by, three weeks after the fact, calling in the Auditor General. The minister doesn't even have the decency to step aside pending the review by that Auditor General.

Is the government, in the context of Bill 103, concerned about its failure to have incorporated oversight by the office of the Ombudsman? I remember I had occasion to say this. It has been so long ago because the government has been so reluctant to call this bill. I remember the investigation conducted by Arthur Maloney, here in the city of Toronto. I was a student at the time. I used to come downtown to watch the inquiry that he was conducting, that he was counsel for, into complaints against the city of Toronto police force. Some of the evidence was outrageous. It was atrocious. It was disgusting, some of the activities that were being complained of. Eventually, of course, we acquired a city-of-Toronto-specific police complaints process. In due course, it became a province-wide police complaints process. The effort and the first instances—because the real concern by those people who feel obliged to complain about police misconduct is that their complaints are inevitably being investigated by police. The concern is that the police—because of a unique, distinct police culture—may not be capable of objectively investigating other police; so this whole concept of a civilian complaints process. The member from York South-Weston—and he'll be speaking to this bill, in due course, in his own right—talked in his community about the fear, an apprehension, the trepidation that some people have in going to a police office, a police station, to complain about the conduct of a member of that police force. What? They have to walk past that officer on the way to the desk sergeant to make the complaint? One understands the hesitation that a person in those circumstances might have when compelled to rely upon the police to investigate the police.

Of course, during the 1990s, the latter part of the 1990s, police oversight was dramatically altered. I remember that debate, being on that committee, those dramatic amendments to the Police Services Act, among other things. Here we have the LeSage report. Mr. LeSage, I've got to tell you, hasn't, at the end of the day, offended anybody. But of course when you offend nobody, you risk offending everybody. Mr. LeSage did not address, because he wasn't asked to, but his failure to address in no way, in my view, constituted an adoption or an acquiescence to the government's position.

Cover your back, Mr. Parliamentary Assistant, the Attorney General is here.

The issue, of course, as raised by our Ombudsman, André Marin—

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): Your Ombudsman.

Mr. Kormos: “Our Ombudsman,” Mr. Zimmer says. Our Ombudsman.

He’s the Ombudsman of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. He’s non-partisan, objective, fair, even-handed, the overseer of injustice, of the failure of governments and government agencies to serve the people well. We saw the Ombudsman react promptly to concerns around corruption in Ontario’s lottery and gaming industry—the government-run, government-owned lottery and gaming industry—to wit, the ticket sales.

Let me tell you this: There is one minister over on the government side who is oh, so grateful to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. He’ll never be able to express his gratitude. I mean, he’s just overjoyed. There’s a minister over there on the government side who is just ecstatic that the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration stole the spotlight, and that is the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

It’s a bizarre thing. You go outside—I know that the member for Halton has seen this—and at the end of question period the press gallery is camped outside the government lounge doors, where government members exit, unless of course they take coward’s alley. I’ll explain coward’s alley to you in just a minute. So the press gallery is camped out there—the TV cameras, the radio reporters, the newspaper reporters—for the scrums, when they question first, usually, ministers and then opposition party counterparts’ critics. I was amazed at how addictive those scrums can be for some people, because there were several days into the inquiries around the slush fund of the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration—his mishandling of those funds, his failure to account for those funds and the prospect of political back-scratching taking place—when the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal would still pause as he exited the government lounge doors, knowing full well that the press gallery is there to administer a root canal, but perversely hoping that the cameras might run for him just another 30 seconds. But of course that wasn’t to be. The Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal had his 15 minutes of fame, or notoriety—hell, Bonnie and Clyde got darn near a century now—and the focus moves on.

Mr. Ferreira: Who’s next?

Mr. Kormos: “Who’s next?” my colleague from York South–Weston interjects.

Who knows? I mean, the Premier’s office never anticipated—well, they tried to shut down the CTV investigation. Was it CTV? Yes, it was CTV or CBC.

Mr. Ferreira: CBC.

1650

Mr. Kormos: The CBC’s investigation into improprieties in the lottery and gaming system. They hired spin doctors. We were getting close, we were drilling hard,

but then, of course, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration dropped his own stink bomb, created his own stench, when we discovered that this government was not just about ripping off innocent lottery ticket consumers but was also big time into paying off political intimates with untraceable monies from the end-of-the-year slush fund. Didn’t we find that out, Speaker, huh?

Does the minister resign? No. Does the government call in the Auditor General? Yes. And there’s speculation about why the government, why the Premier chose today. Well, I say this to you: Surely the Premier’s office has heard the same scuttlebutt that we’ve heard, that the Ombudsman may well have been prepared to start investigating what happened during the course of the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration’s shovelling of money. He was signing cheques and never bothering to see who the payee was. Oh, that’s hyperbole, but I say to you metaphorically, he was signing blank cheques: “Let the president of the Liberal riding association decide how much it’s for and who it’s going to be paid to. How much do you want?” The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration’s probably suffering from carpal tunnel from all the cheque signing. Poor guy’s going to come in here—carpal tunnel is not funny; it’s not funny at all. It’s a very, very painful thing, you know that. But here the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration is risking his own carpal tunnel, never mind his soul—but we’ll stick to material things, carpal tunnel for the moment—with all of that cheque signing. It was an orgy of cheque signing. It was a flicking orgy of cheque signing.

Of course, a subtext during all of this was the \$500,000 of hard-earned taxpayers’ money spent on the Ministry of Environment’s incredibly stupid Flick Off campaign. I can’t show you the photo that I have here—the Sergeant at Arms has seen it because he’s seized it from me several times—but this photo is wallpaper on computers across the province and beyond.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: As enthralling as this wonderful speech is, I do believe we’re speaking about the bill that’s on the order paper to be discussed, and the tradition of this place is to speak to that bill. I’ve been patient trying to see how our good friend from Niagara Centre is going to weave this into the bill. I haven’t heard it yet, and I’d love to hear it.

The Acting Speaker: We are debating Bill 103, member for Niagara Centre.

Mr. Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. I say to the member from Brant, hold on to your flicking horses, we’re getting there. So I have—

Interjections.

Mr. Kormos: Hey, I didn’t write the script. Some wise guys in a downtown Toronto ad firm or wherever they are got paid half a million dollars. I’ve got the photo and I can’t—it’s about oversight. Some wise guys at some ad firm got paid half a million—again, I don’t know who wrote that cheque—to put the Minister of the Environment in front of a backdrop that has large letters spelling out “flick” and the lower left-hand corner of the L, rather than a 90-degree acute square is curved as if it

were the left-hand part of a U and the base of the L extends rightward so that it almost meets the I. So it appears to be the letter U.

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Standing order 23(b)(i) that my colleague from Brant just quoted does refer to the matter under discussion, and however entertaining this semantical diversion is, which also brings to mind the analogy of perhaps “puck,” it doesn’t address the matter under discussion, whether it be the Flick Off campaign or a promotional puck, perhaps we could discuss Bill 103.

The Acting Speaker: We are debating Bill 103, member from Niagara Centre.

Mr. Kormos: Darned right I am, Speaker. I’m debating Bill 103 as hard as I have ever debated any bill in this chamber, because we’re talking about oversight. We’re talking about a government that denies the people of Ontario oversight in so many areas, 103 included.

Here’s the Minister of the Environment standing in front of this backdrop with the huge lettering behind her spelling “flick,” f-l-i-c-k, a five-letter word, but the L and the I are designed to be a U, which turns it into a four-letter word. The minister’s head is placed right where the base of the L would intersect with the I, so that we have that huge portrait of the Minister of the Environment in front of a large tableau that spells f-u-c-k behind her head, and she’s actually got a smile on her face, whereas she should be disgusted that she was being made a party—

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I know one of the other Speakers who has been in that chair recently said that you cannot spell something that you cannot say in this House. That would be unparliamentary.

The Acting Speaker: I think that’s fair for the member to say. Member from Niagara Centre, we’re debating Bill 103.

Mr. Kormos: Okay. I appreciate that. I can say “flick.” The minister can say “flick off,” and the minister can—Sergeant at Arms, please—stand in front of a sign that appears to have her standing—look, don’t blame me. I’m only reporting the facts, for Pete’s sake. It’s incredible. I thought the government was trying to desensitize people to those course obscenities. Was it Linwood Barclay who anticipated what the catch phrase might be for the Minister of the Environment’s windmill campaign? Imagine what sort of cute commentary that kids might identify with that could be attached to a windmill campaign.

But André Marin says—and please bear with me. Unlike some of the other people here, I didn’t go to expensive schools. I come from small-town Ontario and the Latin in the church was taken away when I was but a child. *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* Get up on your point of order now, pal. All of a sudden—

Mr. Delaney: On a point of order, then, Mr. Speaker: The standing orders are explicit that the debates must be conducted in either of the two official languages recog-

nized in Ontario, and as much as I still do remember some of my church Latin, it isn’t one of those languages.

1700

The Acting Speaker: The member from Niagara Centre, we are debating Bill 103.

Mr. Kormos: “*Quis custodiet ipsos custodies*” is the title of the speech that André Marin gave, expressing concern about this government’s incapacity, it’s inability, to include ombudsman oversight in Bill 103. Surely, my friend from Mississauga West, whose mother is going to be very happy when she gets the Hansard—and I understand—would share my concern about a government that can spend half a million dollars on “Flick you” campaigns, a government that can stall and delay calling in the Auditor General until it hears rumours about the possibility that the Ombudsman—they’re only rumours. I don’t know if there’s any basis to them whatsoever. Did you hear the same rumours, Speaker? You didn’t hear them. Maybe I just heard them from somebody who had heard them from somebody else. That’s how rumours happen. That the Ombudsman was going to be conducting his own inquiry. I understand that that would motivate the Premier. That would be big-time motivation. It would be a motivator. It would motivate him more than one of those pink Mary Kay Cadillacs ever motivated anybody. That would be motivation.

The prospect of the Ombudsman—that’s the whole point. It’s not as if there’s a whole lot of paper to look at, because there is no paper. There isn’t exactly a paper trail, and that’s been a concern of opposition members. It’s a concern of opposition members that Bill 103 denies Ontarians—folks that you all represent—denies them, takes away from them, deprives them of recourse to an ombudsman should they feel that the proposed police complaints system has not treated them fairly.

And nobody’s talking—ever did, ever was, ever will—about an ombudsman function that somehow is going to be yet another level of appeal. There are, I suppose, three types of ombudsmen. First, on behalf of a constituent, I dealt with the ombudsman for Great-West Life insurance. What a fraud. It’s a joke. It’s pathetic. It’s an embarrassment. That person doesn’t deserve to call herself an ombudsman. She’s an embarrassment to the title, Great-West Life insurance, because her performance of her job of ombudsman was to refer the matter to the branch that had made the decision that I was grieving, if you will, on behalf of the constituent.

Let me tell you what happened. Can I? A constituent buys a Dodge truck down at Rose City Dodge Chrysler on Highway 58. As a matter of fact, Dennis Hull was one of the original owners. I remember going to the grand opening, on the right side, going southbound on your way to Port Colborne, just before the Toyota dealer. He goes there and he buys a Dodge pick-up truck, brand new. He buys life insurance on it. Prudent. There’s financing. The financing is done through Chrysler Finance. Everything’s all done in the same operation. The insurance policy is Great-West Life. This young man died of one of those tragic, premature heart attacks. He was only 41 or 42. He

has a three-year-old daughter, a baby. His only heir. Of course, when he dies, he dies intestate. I think you lawyers call it that, when you die without a will. Am I being accurate here? He dies without a will. A 41-year-old man doesn't expect to die.

The family is scrambling to be named the administrator. Is that what you call it when you're an executor and there's no will? The lawyers here might be able to help me. As I understand it, you've got to go to court, you've got to apply, and you've got to get a district court judge—or a Superior Court judge, they call them now—to give you the letters to act as an administrator, and that takes time. Nod if I'm correct, Mr. Zimmer. Yes, Mr. Zimmer is nodding.

In the period of time that that took place—the same dealership that sold him the truck also sold him the life insurance policy and also arranged the financing. It's through Chrysler financing, right? No payments are being made on the truck during the eight weeks or so that his sister is applying for appointment as administrator of the estate. These guys come and seize the truck. They know he died because the sister told the car dealership. She said, "My brother died and I'm scrambling to be made administrator." The car dealership said, "Don't worry. There's life insurance on the financing." They seize the truck and then sell it—you know how that works—and they give her the \$1,200 that was netted in the sale of the truck, as a seizure on a defaulted finance plan, rather than paying for the whole truck, which had a value of \$45,000. Do you see what happened? There was still money owing against it. They actually made a \$1,200 profit when they sold it. So a \$45,000 truck goes and they give her \$1,200 for the three-year-old kid.

I say that this is outrageous. Do you think it's outrageous? Everybody knows what's going on here. It's all the same player.

I see that Great-West has got an ombudsman, so I write to the ombudsman. What does the ombudsman do? The ombudsman sends the file to the department that sells these policies and says, "This is how I conduct myself as an ombudsman." You can imagine the language that I was tempted to use. Had it occurred later, after the Minister of the Environment's publicity stunt, I could have perhaps been more creative, but I was more old-fashioned, I suppose. Now, that's a stupid ombudsman. It's pathetic. As I say, she shouldn't be allowed to call herself an ombudsman. But an ombudsman can perform that court-of-last-resort role. In the retail and in the banking sector, ombudsmen often do that.

I would prefer that more, even private sector, ombudsmen function as our provincial Ombudsman does. His job, rather than so much being yet another level of appeal, is to investigate and make determinations about how the process did or didn't work for a griever, a complainant, internally as they're going through the system, because if you can't change the system, then you're just going to keep repeating the same mistakes over and over again. That's the role that the Ombudsman anticipated playing with respect to Bill 103.

It has been of incredible value to the people of this province to have an effective Ombudsman, yet the Mc-Guinty Liberal government has tried to silence, cripple, shut down and head off the Ombudsman every step of the way. What this Liberal government can't do through the front door, they'll do through the back door. They'll defund, underfund and hijack the Ombudsman process, because they don't seem to have much good to say about the Ombudsman. They don't like the Ombudsman. They don't have any interest in letting him do anything for parties who are mistreated or treated unfairly in a police complaints process.

Let's understand, it's not just the civilian complainant; it's the police officer about whom a complaint is being made as well. Why shouldn't that police officer—if she or he feels that they were treated unfairly in the police complaints process, by the process itself—be able to go to an ombudsman? What? Do you want them to spend a fortune on hiring high-priced lawyers, friends of the Attorney General, his Bay Street buddies? Should a police officer have to spend all of his or her life savings hiring a lawyer to go to—where is it you go?—divisional court, or you go to all these obscure court places that cost you a fortune at the end of the day?

1710

This government refused, this government defeated, amendments to the bill that had as their effect the inclusion of the Ombudsman in the system, because the bill specifically excludes the Ombudsman. You see, were it not for the specific exclusion in the bill, in the statute, the Ombudsman, by his very mandate, would be entitled to function in a position of oversight with respect to this body, wouldn't he? You know that. You know this case.

So the government specifically, particularly, with full knowledge of what it was doing, says, "The Ombudsman shall not be available to anybody who gets screwed over in this process."

That's not very fair or just, is it? That's why this has been a difficult road for the parliamentary assistant to travel, because he's not only an integrous person; he's a just person. As the Premier is so wont to say, "I feel his pain." The Premier wrings his hands and says, "Oh, I feel your pain." "Oh, autistic children in your families? I feel your pain," the Premier says. "Oh, more workers who have lost their jobs? Oh, I feel your pain." Perhaps ODSP people with disabilities struggling, literally struggling to stay alive—"I feel your pain."

Well, I've got a feeling that the voters of Ontario have got some pain that they propose to inflict come October, because it's not enough just to mouth the words.

Tomorrow afternoon, Jim Bradley and I are going to be at the CAW hall—Local 199 in St. Catharines—talking about the industrial job losses across Ontario. Brother Wayne Gates. CAW has lost a whole lot of sisters' and brothers' jobs, not just in the auto sector; in foundries, in steel, all sorts of them—150,000 manufacturing jobs lost in the last three years. I was down at the Steelworkers' convention in Niagara Falls two weekends ago, talking to those sisters and brothers. They were in the largest—

because they were the old rubber workers, you know, the rubber division of steel. There is one. They've suffered the biggest chunk because, of course, they tend to be auto supply, auto parts manufacturers.

That hockey puck ain't going to sustain them through the hard times. It's places like GDX down in Welland, the rubber weatherstrip for car window frames—that's what they've got to be able to build. But when the auto sector is going to hell in a handbasket and we've got governments cutting deals with places like Korea so that we can ship more of our manufacturing to Korea, when we've got a Premier on a South Asian junket with his entourage of who knows how many, at a cost of how much, talking about what? Exporting to South Asia? We're going to export to South Asia. We'll export a whole lot more of our call centre jobs when they become the jobs of last resort in a whole lot of towns, a whole lot of cities across this province. They're exporting those now.

It's funny. When I told the Minister of Infrastructure Renewal about some of the job losses down in Niagara, he talked about how that's okay, the government will retrain them to work at the casino. I said, "No, you don't get it, Minister, because just yesterday I was telling you about how the casino is laying people off. What are you going to retrain those people to do now? They already lost their jobs in the foundries and in the steel mills and in the manufacturing plants, and you trained them to be blackjack dealers. Now they're losing their jobs at casinos. What are you going to train them for now? They're not going to start performing down the road at the ballet-opera company." Think about it: 150,000 jobs in the last three years. When they've been replaced, they've been replaced by what the Liberals used to join us in calling McJobs.

So I hear the government say, "Oh, I feel your pain." Is that what it's going to say to the victim of a flaw in their police complaints process? Is that what they're going to say to a police officer who has been screwed over? "Oh, I feel your pain." To a civilian complainant? "Oh, I feel your pain." There's no rationale. Of course, the Liberal bench and the committee got its script of the Coles Notes, if you will—large print, maximum two-syllable words, illustrations as indicated, with bullspit about, "We don't need another level of appeal." What an absolute distortion of the truth. Can I say that? Tell me if I can't. Just let me know.

An absolute distortion of the truth and pure, unadulterated bullspit: that somehow including the Ombudsman would create a top-heavy model that would provide an extra level of appeal and would cause the litigation to go on forever. What a stupid, stupid, stupid thing to say—moronic—because we know that that's not the function of Ontario's Ombudsman; never has been. The Ombudsman's job is to address systemic failures and to encourage bodies, organizations to correct their own shortcomings when it comes to those areas.

Do you want to know something else? Totalitarian countries don't have ombudsmen; they don't. The role of

ombudsman originated in Sweden, right? The role of an ombudsman is unique to democratic countries. It, many say, is indeed an indicator of democracy, where the incredible power of the state that can be so crushing, so oppressive and so overwhelming, can be tested by one person through the office of an ombudsman.

Now, here's a government that talks a big game about democratic renewal, yet it won't allow people, be they complainants or respondents in their new police complaints process, to access an ombudsman, the ombudsman being a clear indicator of democracy. As I say, you know what? You go to Libya, there's no ombudsman. You go to North Korea, no ombudsman. You go to the People's Republic of China, guess what? No ombudsman. You see, totalitarian countries restrict people's access to that sort of office that, as I say, has the capacity to protect people from the overwhelming power of the state, from the tremendous and weighty power of huge, impenetrable bureaucracies. There isn't a person here who doesn't know what it means to have to deal with one of those because you do it on a daily basis on behalf of your constituents. Sometimes we have trouble in our offices getting these huge bureaucracies to yield. And we expect folks out there who don't have the resources that we have to do it on their own?

1720

The Attorney General flicked up again. There's no other way to put it. First pit bulls, then the abolition of the Human Rights Commission, and now a modest reform to the police complaints process with some restoration of civilian oversight—and not relying upon any recommendation of LeSage, let's make that clear. He never suggested for a minute that there should be no Ombudsman. He didn't comment on the issue; he wasn't asked to. So don't try to tell people that he did, directly or indirectly either, because the government wouldn't allow him to attend before the committee. Remember that? There was a motion inviting LeSage to the committee. The government voted it down.

So here we go. The Attorney General—another lost opportunity. When he enters that leadership campaign, I don't know what he's going to brag about. The person who's going to have the bragging rights is Mr. Zimmer, because he's the one who had to bear the brunt of it and do the heavy lifting and attract and suffer the scorn of the public.

The Acting Speaker: Time for questions and comments.

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I listened intently to what the member for Niagara Centre had to say and I agree with very much of it. He's much more knowledgeable in these areas of justice and the laws and the courts and access to justice than I am. I guess my question is where he left off. I know this comes out of recommendations from Justice LeSage. I know the Attorney General is a big fan of Justice LeSage, and Justice LeSage is a very honourable person. But in my 17 years here, we've not had a lot of complaints and people coming forward—at least not to justify this huge

bureaucracy and the millions of dollars you're going to spend—wanting to replace the SIU.

Now you're going to set up a new independent police review director, regional offices, all kinds of new staff and bureaucracy. I just don't know where the impetus for this is really coming from when I read constantly that the people of Ontario have great confidence in their police, when people are surveyed at well over 80%. That's more confidence than they have in their politicians, I can tell you that. The police do a good job.

In fact, there's a good quote from John Tory when he was asked about this. He called the Liberal's efforts with regard to this bill unnecessary:

“The police, in the vast majority of cases, at all times and all places, have been doing a good job,” Tory said.

“Most of the public are satisfied with the way in which these matters are resolved.” That was in the Windsor Star on April 20.

I think you've got a bigger problem. People come up to me—and we have backlogs in the courts. In Collingwood, you can't get divorced without it costing you a fortune because things are remanded and remanded and remanded. We don't have enough justices of the peace. People are very, very angry at this government for the way they've treated victims of crime and not having access to the fund. We all pay surcharges on our tickets so that victims of crime can be looked after. So I think you have bigger matters than Bill 103 to deal with, and why exactly you're doing it, I have my suspicions.

Mr. Ferreira: Mr. Chair, I know, watching the reaction on your face, that you enjoyed that exhaustive and comprehensive presentation from the member for Niagara Centre as much as I did. As a new member, I always find it a real treat to sit here and listen. The member brings a great deal of institutional memory to this place and he has this innate ability with rhetorical flourish, and I commend him very much for it.

He mentioned the delay. We know that Chief Justice LeSage came forward with his recommendations, 27 recommendations in all, back in April 2005, more than two years ago. Where was this government in the intervening 25 months? They could have advanced the recommendations that Chief Justice LeSage put forward in a fairly speedy and efficient fashion but they chose not to. We've seen other examples of this, and not just with Bill 103 but with other pieces of legislation, where all of a sudden, faced with a clock that's winding down on the term of this government—we're now five months away as of today—here they are, trying as quickly as they can to get stuff passed under the wire. Unfortunately, it's the people of Ontario who are left to suffer.

I mentioned in my earlier interjection that in my riding I have heard from a number of constituents who have been victimized by the lack of an effective, valid complaints process. That's unfortunate. This government has chosen not to act earlier, and I say they will be held to account on October 10.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): I'm very pleased to rise and speak to Bill 103. Just for the people

who are watching, I think it wouldn't hurt to talk just for a second about what Bill 103 is actually about. It's an Act to establish an Independent Police Review Director and create a new public complaints process by amending the Police Services Act. Just so that the general public that is watching it have the ability to understand what that means, it's the option, it's allowing another opportunity, if one wants to choose a different route in which one would bring forward a complaint or work through the process. What I want to talk about just for a minute is that, to me, this reinforces what the McGuinty government is about: transparency, accountability and consultation.

Interjection.

Mrs. Mitchell: I know that the member across the way wants to talk about his beagle, but I'm going to talk about Bill 103.

There was extensive consultation. My friend the member from Niagara Centre across the way, in a quote, also spoke about specifically—he called His Honour Justice LeSage's report a tremendous effort. That effort was through the consultation process, and the recommendations that are coming forward are based on that report. So when we go out and talk to the people of Ontario, we bring forward what was missing from the process. We understand that that's what they were looking for, and these are the recommendations that came forward. In no way do I want to raise any concerns. Some 80% of the Canadian public say that they have confidence in our police force, so that's a part of it. But what they were looking for was another opportunity.

Mr. Delaney: It's always a pleasure to come up with a two-minuter on my colleague from Niagara Centre, who never remembers my riding name although I never forget his. One can easily see why, because one has the opportunity in this Legislature of hearing at length, and very often, from the member for Niagara Centre, who quoted from time to time from this keynote address by André Marin, our Ontario Ombudsman, referring in Latin to the title, “Who Will Guard the Guards Themselves?” It certainly brought to my mind some of the church Latin that I learned, as did the member during, likely, his high school days. It certainly speaks ipso facto about the quality of the education that we probably both share. In many cases, in a two-minuter here, this offers the opportunity for a quid pro quo comment in which you can offer something in response to what has been said. It certainly also reminds me in fact of the motto of this place, “Audi alteram partem,” which of course means, “Listen to the other side.” When it comes to my colleague from Niagara Centre, if one defines him as being on the other side, we as members have an extensive range of opportunities to listen to and to hear from him. That also brings to mind the phrase “Caveat emptor,” which means “Buyer beware,” which one may or may not say, depending on your point of view, may apply to the dialogue from the member from Niagara Centre.

Speaker, it's been a pleasure to comment on his comments, and I thank you for the opportunity.

1730

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Niagara Centre in response.

Mr. Kormos: I'll repeat it: Mr. LeSage did some formidable work. It was the government's response to his work that was a pathetic letdown and a miserable parsing of his report.

The member for Huron–Bruce wants to know why I'm inclined from time to time to talk about my Charlie, my beagle, now dead. Why does this place make me feel compelled to talk about Charlie the beagle from time to time? I'll tell you why. Charlie never lied. Charlie never stole money. Charlie never tried to conceal and bury dishonest conduct. Charlie never said one thing to my face and another thing behind my back. Charlie never lied to the people of Ontario in the course—

Mr. Delaney: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Even in a comment, that constitutes unparliamentary language.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair cautions the member from Niagara Centre.

Mr. Kormos: Thank you. I should [*Inaudible*] a dog who was always honest and never lied, a dog who would have felt so out of place here in this chamber.

For the member for Huron–Bruce, she's probably got the whip's office slapping her wrist as we speak for using the word "accountable" today, of all days, when it took three weeks—we're sitting over here hollering for the nurse to please administer some novocaine because we're drilling and drilling and the government, notwithstanding that, only today decides, after three weeks of drilling, to be even marginally accountable.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship): I thought this discussion was about Bill 103, and I really appreciate this opportunity to talk about Bill 103.

I was listening to the member from Niagara Centre. I have to say he's a great debater when he talks about the issues, but today I don't know what he was talking about. He talked about everything other than Bill 103.

I would like to start off by recognizing Minister Bryant and my colleague David Zimmer for the all hard work they have put into this piece of legislation. I'm glad at least the member from Niagara Centre is here so he can see what this bill is all about.

This bill, if passed, will create an independent civilian body to administer the police review system in Ontario. I want to stress two words: It's "independent" and it's a "civilian" body.

The McGuinty government believes that Ontario deserves a strong and independent police review system that is fair and effective. I don't think anybody will argue that we need a fair and effective system, which is fair to both civilians and the police.

This bill is another step forward in providing Ontarians with greater openness, transparency and accountability, by creating a new system that would be fair, effective and transparent—

Mr. Kormos: Like your slush fund?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: —in the way public concerns about the police are handled.

At least, Mr. Speaker, I'm talking about Bill 103. I'm not talking about everything else that the Niagara Centre member talked about in his one-hour speech.

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Takhar: Yes, very good.

I know that my constituents in Mississauga Centre are very receptive to—

Mr. Berardinetti: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: With the greatest of respect, I can't hear the speech from the minister. It's very difficult to hear when the continuous interruptions of—my friends here to the right continue to heckle. If you could please ask them to lower their volume a little bit, I would appreciate it.

The Acting Speaker: Has the Minister of Government Services completed business with the House leader? Have you finished your business with the opposition House leader? Okay; that's good.

I want everybody in order here so we can listen to the Minister of Small Business.

Hon. Mr. Takhar: I know that my constituents in Mississauga Centre—maybe not in Niagara Centre, but Mississauga Centre—are very receptive to any measures that promote greater openness, transparency and accountability. I know these new measures will make it easier for people to have their concerns addressed and ensure that people know and understand that there is a way to hear their voices.

Our government's goal has always been to create a police review system that has the confidence and respect of both the public and the police. That's why we want to make sure that it's a transparent process and is being managed by a civilian body which is independent.

Our main objective is to improve and strengthen the way concerns about the police are dealt with. Our goal is to foster trust and respect for the system and to strengthen relationships of confidence between the police and the public. Our proposed legislation will do just that. If passed, this bill will provide the public with a significant new option for bringing forward their concerns while ensuring that there's no interference with the good work done by Ontario's police services in keeping our communities safe.

Our government is committed to being tough on the causes of crime. I know that many people in my community are concerned about crime, as are hard-working people around this province. I hear these concerns day in, day out, and I know that keeping our communities safe is our priority—and it should be the priority of all members, including the members of the third party, I hope. To combat crime in our communities, we need to work together and give our police forces the resources they need to keep our communities safe and secure. It means ensuring that our police forces have everything they need to combat crime, including organized crime and gun crime. It also means providing the public with significant new standards of police accountability that would increase the community's faith in the police and lead to

increased co-operation between the police and the public and ultimately increased public safety for all Ontarians. At the same time, it would ensure that there's no unnecessary interference with the excellent work done by Ontario's police services in keeping our communities safe.

I would also like to take a moment to recognize and thank our police forces and our police officers for their tireless and courageous efforts in keeping our communities safe and secure.

1740

When I was the Minister of Transportation, I had the privilege to work very closely with the police forces across this province. I want to tell you that our police forces play a very critical role in keeping our highways moving and keeping them safe, while at the same time keeping our communities safe as well. I'm very proud of the work that our police forces perform across the province. I had the great opportunity to work with the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services and to attend very many functions of the police forces to recognize their great efforts.

Ontarians deserve to feel safe and be safe. That is why the McGuinty government has been working to put about 1,000 more police officers on the streets of our communities. That means more police officers will be patrolling our streets.

Last January, we announced \$51 million in new funding to fight gun crime and gang violence. We have expanded the anti-guns and gangs task force, which includes several police services such as the Toronto Police Services Board, the OPP and a team of specialized crown prosecutors. We have instituted mandatory gunshot wound reporting, gun amnesty programs to get weapons off our streets, blitz inspections of gun-licensed businesses, and a strengthened witness protection program. We have called for stronger statutory measures to combat gun crime, including mandatory minimums for certain firearm offences and reverse onus on bail for those accused of a gun crime.

Our government's hard work is paying off and our communities are safer, our law enforcement agencies are stronger and Ontario is stronger as a result of the work we have done over the last three and a half years. Today we continue to make a positive step forward in keeping our communities safe and increasing the communities' faith in the police by establishing a police review system that is both equitable and effective for all. I would like to take this opportunity to ask all members of the House to support Bill 103 so that all Ontarians can benefit from having a significant new option in dealing with police complaints that would be fair and transparent.

The essence of this bill is to establish an independent civilian body, and the key words again are "independent civilian body." To me, this system will ensure a fair, equitable and effective system both for police forces and civilians. This bill will create more openness and more transparency and it will make our police forces more accountable so that people can have access to an inde-

pendent system which both the police forces and our civilians can rely on. This is what I have been hearing from my constituents in Mississauga. I think this bill is going in the right direction and we should really support this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Time for questions and comments. The Chair recognizes the member from Simcoe-Grey.

Mr. Wilson: I didn't understand why the Minister of Small Business kept taking shots at the member for Niagara Centre. He knows more about this stuff than most of the people in this House and he's got a fairly grassroots approach to it.

I thought the government would explain, because in my last questions and comments I really wanted to know the need for this legislation. I'm not aware that the Special Investigations Unit is doing a really bad job and that you have to spend up to \$9 million or maybe more—that's the guess—on a new bureaucracy that will have regional offices for police complaints. As the studies show, at least 80% of the people of Ontario have great confidence in their police forces. The SIU, I think, has been doing a good job. The deputations that I have—there are several here that I've been reading through from various police forces throughout the province—feel rather insulted by this legislation. They agree, of course, with oversight—everybody agrees with that—and they agree with complaints processes. But they do wonder why the Liberals think they're doing such a bad job. And I wonder too, because the complaints that I get are: There are not enough justices of the peace. There's not enough access to justice under your government and probably previous governments, but it seems to be getting much worse. There are not enough judges and there's certainly not enough court time, civil, family and criminal, in the courts that my constituents have access to closest to home. There just aren't the resources there at all. Legal aid is a problem and it's always a problem. The \$9 million could be well-spent in that area. You have money in a victims' fund that people seem to have a real access problem with. Victims of crime seem to be ripped off in this province and we just revictimize them. Again, someone explain to me why we're taking up such time for this when I think the current system's working.

Mr. Kormos: I want to comment very specifically on the comments made by, Harinder Takhar, the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship. Of all the days in the history of this government that he chooses to talk about the government's accountability, he picks today. After three weeks of being hammered by newspapers across Ontario about the lack of accountability by your colleague, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and his slush fund of millions of dollars, you stand up today and read this prepared text that talks about how this government's accountable? That was written six months ago. It's no longer valid. It has reached its expiry date. That can of soup is spoiled and not fit for human consumption. It has to be disposed of in an appropriate way. Of all the days that you pick, Minister, to talk about

transparency, when you've been hiding from the scrutiny of the Auditor General. Your Premier has been getting hammered and your colleague, the Minister of Citizenship, doesn't have the integrity to step aside while his ministry is under investigation by the Auditor General. But then, what should we expect? You were found guilty of a violation, of breaching the Members' Integrity Act. Breaching it. You didn't even give us a half-hearted apology, never mind demonstrate—

Hon. Mr. Takhar: I did.

Mr. Kormos: Well, then, apologize again and mean it this time. You thought that you got away with it. Rather than do the honourable thing and step aside as a minister, you simply stepped down into a non-ministry. It's pretty difficult to take from Liberals any comments about honesty, integrity, transparency or accountability when you've been slush-funding and sleazing to no end, for who knows how long.

Mr. Berardinetti: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I wanted to take this opportunity—and I can't find the exact section right now—but I wanted to point out that, as Speaker today, you have done an exceptional job of keeping this House—

Mr. Kormos: It's standing order 14.

Mr. Berardinetti: It's standing order 14, my friend from Niagara Centre tells me. That has to be quite the memory. I just wanted to say that you've done a great job of keeping this House in order this afternoon. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I listened to the wonderful analysis that was provided of Bill 103 by my good friend, the Minister of Small Business, who's doing an excellent job. He talked about small business and its impact on the economy in Hawkesbury and in Cornwall this week. I had the opportunity to be there, and he did a superb job.

But let me say, when it comes to supporting police services in the province of Ontario, I look to the Minister of Corrections and Community Safety, Monte Kwinter, who's done an outstanding job in supporting police services in Ontario, along with the Attorney General, Michael Bryant.

Applause.

1750

Mr. Leal: They deserve to be applauded for their work with police services to make sure that Ontarians are safe.

Let me get to the bill here, 103. I'd just like to say—I'd like to certainly congratulate the chief of the Peterborough Lakefield police service, Terry McLaren, a good friend of mine—he does an outstanding job—and the chair of our police services board, who's a unique Canadian, Dr. Tom Symons. Dr. Tom Symons, of course, was the first founding member of Trent University in Peterborough, received the Order of Canada and now he's volunteering his services to chair the police services board in Peterborough.

We're certainly thankful that a man of Dr. Symons's integrity would take on such a volunteer position and

provide outstanding leadership for the direction of that police services board.

Justice LeSage, who's one of the great jurists and legal scholars, not only in Ontario but throughout Canada, provided a number of recommendations for this investigative independent police review. We appreciate that this bill—Bill 103—is incorporating the recommendations that were made by Justice LeSage. I note that this bill will set the standards for an independent investigation not only to respect the integrity of our police services, but certainly those individuals who think that something may have gone askew with a police force have the opportunity to be there, have their complaint looked at and determined whether it should go forward—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. The Chair recognizes the member from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I'm pleased to provide some comments today on Bill 103, An Act to establish an Independent Police Review Director and create a new public complaints process by amending the Police Services Act.

I want to also commend all the police officers we have in my riding. It's a large riding and they do a great job on a large geographical basis.

It was mentioned about Tom Symons today—a very honourable gentleman whom I've known over the years—and his great contribution to Trent University.

The speaker before me, the member from Simcoe–Grey, mentioned access to justice. I know that many of us in our communities have had the Ontario Bar Association—we've co-hosted with them—to do town halls and to hear about the problems with access to justice. A lot of points were highlighted there. Legal aid was brought up. There are a lot of community services—mental health, crown attorneys, a lot of different community groups—that came forward and highlighted the fact that there are not enough justices of the peace out there, and that is blocking access to justice. The system is so complex.

This bill is brought forward. I know that when it was originally introduced in April of last year, our leader John Tory commented in the Windsor Star that, "The police, in the vast majority of cases, at all times and all places, have been doing a good job. Most of the public are satisfied with the way in which these matters are resolved."

So, we're just wondering if this is another level of bureaucracy. We certainly all want checks and balances, but for the majority of their part, the police do a good job.

I want to say that I have my Senators pin on, and we recognize Mike Fisher from Peterborough. Go, Sens, go.

Mr. Berardinetti: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: My apologies for interrupting; I usually don't do this. I was looking in the standing orders and I couldn't find the section regarding the Speaker, but I did want to say one thing. I was here all day today, and I don't think anybody mentioned that this Sunday is Mother's Day.

So, for all mothers out there, I wanted to say happy Mother's Day. I know my mother is at home watching,

and I wanted to wish everyone's mother a happy Mother's Day, this Sunday, May 13. I believe there is a standing order for that too.

The Acting Speaker: That is wonderful. The Chair recognizes the Minister of Small Business.

Hon. Mr. Takhar: The member from Simcoe–Grey said that I was taking a shot at the member from Niagara Centre. Actually, what I said was that the member from Niagara Centre is a great debater when he actually focuses on the issues. But again, he didn't really focus on the issues. All he wanted to talk about was—to take shots and shots and shots. That is what he wanted to do. Maybe this time he really didn't read the bill and couldn't say anything about it.

I do want to say that my colleague from Peterborough actually did speak about the bill, and also the member from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock did speak about the bill. I want to say that I agree with her: The police force in general is doing a very good job. I said that when I was the Minister of Transportation; I had the chance to work with them. They are basically responsible for keeping our roads and our highways safer. It is because of their results that for three years in a row, we have been

declared the safest region to drive, in Ontario. I really want to thank her for pointing out that the police boards are doing their job.

This bill is creating an independent civilian body. It is important for us to have an independent civilian body to address the complaints of civilians. But at the same time, we wanted to make sure that this was a fair system for the police force and also for the civilians, so their issues, if they have any complaints, can be addressed in a fair manner by an independent civilian body. If there is an independent civilian body, I think it's a step forward for this province.

I really want to congratulate Minister Bryant and also MPP David Zimmer for doing such an excellent job of bringing this bill forward. This is a great day.

I also want to take this opportunity to wish a happy Mother's Day to all the mothers who are doing such a great job.

The Acting Speaker: It being very close to 6 p.m. of the clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday, May 14, 2007, at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 1756.

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