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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 15 May 2007

Mardi 15 mai 2007

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 15 May 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 15 mai 2007

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): A few weeks ago, I met with a number of electrical contractors in my riding who want to provide training opportunities for young Ontarians to become electricians but are stopped from doing so by the McGuinty government's unfair restrictions.

The McGuinty government, in a sop to unions that contributed hundreds of thousands of dollars to their 2003 election, has refused to accept a one-to-one ratio between journeymen and electrical apprentices, thereby eliminating the number of apprentices that smaller, non-unionized companies can hire.

All other provinces and territories have accepted a one-to-one ratio, but the McGuinty government, in an unseemly quid pro quo with the unions, has claimed its implementation would be unsafe, despite the absence of any documentation to back up that claim.

This McGuinty government is using an unsupportable claim—lack of safety—to justify a politically motivated and harmful policy. As a result, many small businesses are hurt and, most importantly, many young Ontarians are losing opportunities to become members of a well-respected trade that can provide a rewarding career.

The time is long overdue for the McGuinty Liberal government to do the right thing: Join all other provinces and territories and adopt the one-to-one ratio.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The member for Davenport.

Applause.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I rise in the House today to discuss the issue of the York subway line and the third party's desire to kill the progress that the McGuinty Liberals have made for GTA and York region commuters and students—and thank you for clapping for this.

The McGuinty Liberals have recognized the need for a more efficient transit plan, and we are moving in the right direction. We know that the subway extension will provide a much-anticipated and much-needed service to

those travelling in and out of the region. As a result, we have come to the table with the funds and the plan to do so.

The NDP claims to be an advocate for the environment, but instead of providing an inexpensive, clean mode of transportation for commuters, the leader of the third party intends to keep Ontarians in their cars and away from their families.

The McGuinty Liberals believe that the York subway line will provide more opportunities for not just those in the GTA and York region, but also those in the north, through creating jobs for northern workers at the Bombardier plant. We understand that Ontarians want to see a healthy Ontario with less gridlock, clean air and ever-expanding opportunities.

FOREST FIREFIGHTING

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I rise today to draw attention to the forest fires that are raging in northwestern Ontario and threatening surrounding communities. The central line of defence against forest fires in Ontario is the Ministry of Natural Resources's fire crews. This poses a problem, however, as recently both the Environmental Commissioner, Gord Miller, and Andy Houser, the former MNR director of fish and wildlife, confirmed that the ministry is severely underfunded and understaffed. The recent Liberal budget chose to slash the MNR by \$36 million—from \$762 million last year to \$726 million this year. It now looks like this year's forest fires will be worse than last year's.

The MNR does not have the resources to properly deal with the fires that are currently blazing through northern Ontario. On site, MNR firefighting crews have been getting support from 130 firefighters from BC, and another 100 firefighters and water bombers are expected from Alberta. Newspaper headlines all point to the severity of the current situation: "Wildfires Sweeping Province's Northwest," "Lightning Threatens to Spark New Blazes" and "Northern Infernos" are just a few. Minister, rather than continuing to spin the MNR budget, please just confirm that the MNR budget was slashed by \$36 million and explain to Ontario residents how you intend to meet your mandate.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): Today I'll be bringing forth a bill limiting the interest a payday loan company can charge to 35% and also requiring them

to be regulated. The McGuinty Liberals have only asked payday loan companies to post rates, which is adding insult to injury for those who are preyed upon by these so-called businesses.

I'm delighted to welcome ACORN, an anti-poverty activist organization, and Sharon Shrieve, who's here in the members' gallery. She is the president of their west-end chapter. They've done extensive work on payday loan companies. Many of my constituents who are among the most needy, those who are on ODSP or OW, those who try to pay their rent and feed their children on minimum wage, are kept in a state of perpetual debt simply so that they might have a small advance on their pay.

"One thousand per cent interest is 1,000% wrong," wrote Carol Goar in the Toronto Star, and I absolutely agree. I urge this House to pass the Payday Loans Act, 2007, as soon as possible. Stop legalized loansharking in Ontario.

JACK BURROWS

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): On Thursday night, the Kiwanis Club of North Bay honoured the former mayor of North Bay, Jack Burrows, as the citizen of the year. Jack is without a doubt a true community leader, and over 250 people from our community came out to celebrate his contributions to the North Bay area and those of his wife of 51 years, Elaine.

Jack served on North Bay city council for 15 years, eight of those as mayor. During his time as mayor, he helped to ensure that our Canadian Forces base did not leave North Bay, and he moved our waterfront redevelopment forward—two of many lasting legacies.

Jack was the chair of the North Bay Civic Hospital board for five years and served on the board for 12. He's a long-time member of the Rotary Club, he's on the board of the Sports Hall of Fame, the WKP Kennedy gallery and the northern Ontario heritage fund.

He was born and raised in North Bay and has run his business there for over 40 years.

At the dinner on Thursday night, words such as "classy," "a man with integrity," "friendly," "wise" and "gracious" were used repeatedly in describing Jack. I had the opportunity to congratulate Jack on behalf of the province, to thank him for being so gracious to me when I was first elected and for all the work that he's done for our community.

Not one to rest on his laurels, the very next day, on Friday, Jack Burrows and a group of community leaders launched the North Bay community foundation, a foundation that will raise money locally, invest the funds and spend the interest on projects in our area. I was delighted to be at the launch of the foundation and to announce that the foundation has received Trillium funding to help it get off the ground.

Congratulations to Jack and Elaine, and thank you for all the time, energy, enthusiasm and lasting legacies you have given to the North Bay community.

1340

OTTAWA SENATORS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): Yesterday, many government members commented on Mr. Tory's visit to Ottawa. They accused the former Harris government of mistreating Ottawa. I want to bring that to the present, and I want to present a memento of the series between the Ottawa Senators and the Buffalo Sabres to my friend Jim Bradley. From time to time, Jim likes to explain or spin excuses for underperformance of the teams he supports. I want to help him out.

The Buffalo Sabres are down 3 to zip in the Stanley Cup playoffs because of—wait for it—Mike Harris, Jim Bradley's favourite excuse. If Mike Harris had not come to the assistance and rescue of the Ottawa Senators in his time as Premier when times were tough, the Ottawa Senators wouldn't be in Ottawa; they'd be in the United States. The Sabres wouldn't be facing the 20,000-plus fans who avidly support their hockey team. Canada wouldn't have a team in the playoffs.

Jim, here's a T-shirt to help you with the spin: "Blame Ottawa's success on Mike Harris."

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): When I was elected as MPP for Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh in 2003, I had the redevelopment of my riding's three hospitals as my top priority. For too long, the people of Cornwall and Winchester and points between had been promised development for the St. Joseph's Complex Continuing Care Centre, the Cornwall Community Hospital and the Winchester District Memorial Hospital that never materialized.

The citizens in my riding and I had found a good friend in Health Minister George Smitherman, who understood what those hospitals meant to our community. St. Joseph's centre is now well under construction. I had the opportunity yesterday to cut the ribbon on the first phase of the early works development at the Cornwall Community Hospital, with the rest of the project slated to start in 2008. And it was my privilege to announce yesterday that the Winchester District Memorial Hospital is going to tender, looking toward the first shovel in the ground this summer.

With these three hospital projects, a new community health centre and other health care supports, my riding is undergoing a health care renaissance that will ensure that my constituents have access to some of the finest health care facilities anywhere in Ontario. These redeveloped hospitals will serve as another attraction to businesses and families looking for a place to settle.

The McGuinty government has demonstrated that it understands the needs of eastern Ontario and is willing to act on them. I want to thank my friend the Minister of Health and all the staff, volunteers and board members of the three hospitals for the work they have done in reshap-

ing the health care landscape in Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): I rise in the House today to talk about the economic capacity of this great province of Ontario. We have a plan and it's working. We're investing in schools, in apprenticeships and job skills training, and in our colleges and universities, because a highly skilled labour force is a highly competitive labour force.

We're improving our health care system every day. This makes us a more attractive location to set up business.

We're also investing in research and innovation to ensure our place in the economy and the future. While our manufacturing sector faces stiff international competition, we will stay the course on our strategy to support projects expected to yield the greatest results for Ontario.

Unfortunately, when the leader of the third party sat at the cabinet table, job prospects in Ontario were almost non-existent. You were more likely to have your contract ripped up than renewed. He now wants to create a jobs commissioner, the same position that was cancelled in British Columbia.

We prefer to put money into proven programs that help retain and create jobs in Ontario, such as our AMIS and OASIS programs. Through AMIS, or advanced manufacturing investment strategy, we've supported eight innovative projects that will generate almost \$370 million in new investments and support the creation or retention of about 3,000 jobs.

Unlike the leader of the third party—

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

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. David Oraziotti (Sault Ste. Marie): I would like to comment on the NDP's dismal and regressive stance on the environment. As discussed in yesterday's Toronto Star column, environmental groups are now speaking out against some of the third party's environmental stances, including their contradictory position on coal—come on, make up your mind.

The leader of the third party's embarrassing display during a press conference on his climate change plan also served as further proof that the NDP are putting their partisan agenda above Ontarians' needs. It's clear that the NDP are not serious about the environment or tackling climate change; they're only interested in scoring cheap political points.

The leader of the third party continues his constant flip-flopping on coal plants and his belief that they should be shut down in the south and kept open in the north. The NDP also voted against the Energy Conservation Responsibility Act, which would put mechanisms in place to give Ontarians greater control over their energy use and cost.

Their record while in government was abysmal. They cut \$500 million out of the Ministry of the Environment budget, cancelled conservation programs that would have saved 5,200 megawatts, and pledged to enact a safe drinking water act but never did.

The McGuinty government has shown real leadership on the environment. We have passed the Clean Water Act and the Greenbelt Act and updated the parks act for the first time in 50 years. We have increased water inspection staff by 25%, implemented a deposit-return system at the LCBO and brought in hundreds of new megawatts of clean energy. That's real leadership.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PAYDAY LOANS ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LES PRÊTS SUR SALAIRE

Ms. DiNovo moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 224, An Act respecting payday loans / Projet de loi 224, Loi traitant des prêts sur salaire.

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

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): In an editorial on Wednesday, May 2, the Toronto Star wrote: "Crack Down on Payday Gouging"

"When Kim Elliott first borrowed \$250 from a payday lender after her partner lost his job, she had no idea that the couple would entangle themselves in an escalating series of loans that would ultimately cost them \$20,000 in interest and fees in less than three years....

"Queen's Park should now use the powers Ottawa has conferred"—

The Speaker: The member needs to just describe the bill.

Ms. DiNovo: Sorry, I was setting it up. What I'm trying to do in this bill is cap at 35% the interest rate charged by legalized loansharking companies, called payday loan companies. This is what Quebec has done; this is what we should do. This is what the federal government has asked us to do, and yet this government refuses to do it. All they in fact have done—

The Speaker: Thank you.

BONE MARROW AWARENESS MONTH ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LE MOIS DE LA SENSIBILISATION AU DON DE MOELLE OSSEUSE

Mr. Crozier moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 225, An Act to make the month of November Bone Marrow Awareness Month / Projet de loi 225, Loi

visant à désigner le mois de novembre Mois de la sensibilisation au don de moelle osseuse.

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. Bruce Crozier (Essex): Making the month of November Bone Marrow Awareness Month supports the work of both the Canadian Blood Services and the Katelyn Bedard Bone Marrow Association by raising awareness of the need to increase the size of the volunteer donor pool in order to better the chances of finding a matching bone marrow donor for every patient in need of a transplant.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I move that, notwithstanding any other order of the House, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 15, 2007, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Caplan has moved government notice of motion 355. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1351 to 1356.

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

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Balkissoon, Bas	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bentley, Christopher	Kular, Kuldip	Racco, Mario G.
Bountrogianni, Marie	Kwinter, Monte	Ramal, Khalil
Brownell, Jim	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Rinaldi, Lou
Cansfield, Donna H.	Levac, Dave	Ruprecht, Tony
Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Sergio, Mario
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Matthews, Deborah	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Mauro, Bill	Smitherman, George
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	Mitchell, Carol	Van Bommel, Maria
Di Cocco, Caroline	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Watson, Jim
Dombrowsky, Leona	Oraziotti, David	Wilkinson, John
Duguid, Brad	Patten, Richard	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Peters, Steve	Zimmer, David
Fonseca, Peter	Phillips, Gerry	

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Barrett, Toby	MacLeod, Lisa	Runciman, Robert W.
Chudleigh, Ted	Marchese, Rosario	Savoline, Joyce
DiNovo, Cheri	Martel, Shelley	Scott, Laurie
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norm	Tabuns, Peter
Ferreira, Paul	Munro, Julia	Tascona, Joseph N.
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John	
Klees, Frank	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 47; the nays are 22.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ELECTORAL REFORM RÉFORME ÉLECTORALE

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I'm pleased to rise today to announce that this morning I received the final report and recommendation from Ontario's Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform. This report marks the success of the most ambitious and far-reaching democratic renewal initiative in Ontario's history.

Au cours des huit derniers mois, 103 Ontariens et Ontariennes se sont réunis presque tous les deux week-ends pour se renseigner sur les systèmes électoraux, délibérer et, finalement, présenter une recommandation à la population ontarienne.

These individuals also led public consultations in their own communities across the province. They wanted all Ontarians to have a chance to voice their opinion on the way we elect our MPPs. In total, over 30 public consultation meetings were held across the province. I had the chance to attend the meeting held in Hamilton and was very impressed by the level of discourse, understanding and passion on this important topic.

I've also been impressed by the sense of commitment and enthusiasm by the members of the citizens' assembly. When I met with the assembly members two weeks ago, they told me this experience had been a privilege. They undertook their responsibility to consider this important decision on behalf of their fellow Ontarians with all due respect and seriousness.

I'm sure all members on both sides of the aisle can agree that this has truly been democracy in action; a democracy that belongs to Ontarians, not just their elected officials.

This is the McGuinty government's vision of Ontario's democracy. It's a democracy where each citizen participates in building a better society and each elected official takes responsibility for strengthening the voice of the citizens they serve.

Accepting this task did not come without its sacrifices. For some assembly members, it meant previous time away from their families, their children, spouses and friends. For others, it meant postponing holidays and vacations such as March break. It also meant long hours of travel from all across the province to get to the Toronto meetings. Work schedules and child care responsibilities had to be juggled.

I'm really proud and honoured to say that some of the assembly members are with us here today. Please show your appreciation for the work they have done.

Some of the members even continued to work through tragic personal loss and illness.

Pour tout cela et leur dur travail, je désire remercier les membres de l'Assemblée des citoyens.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to tell you that there are a number of members here today—I just thanked you again. So there we go again. Sorry.

I'd also like to acknowledge the citizens' assembly secretariat for their contribution and once again point to a number who are in the gallery today. Where's the secretariat? Wherever they are, thank you very much.

I'd like to extend a special thanks to George Thomson, chair of the citizens' assembly. His steadfast belief in the process and exceptional leadership were essential to the success of this assembly.

In the months ahead, I invite all Ontarians to participate in this unprecedented examination of our electoral system. I look forward to reading this report and reviewing its recommendation.

L'Assemblée des citoyens a proposé un autre système électoral sur lequel la population sera appelée à se prononcer. En effet, tous les citoyens de la province auront la possibilité de faire un choix en votant au référendum, qui coïncidera avec les prochaines élections provinciales, le 10 octobre 2007.

Bill 218, if passed, requires the Chief Electoral Officer, an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly, to undertake this education campaign. If this legislation is passed, Elections Ontario will deliver a neutral public education campaign to raise awareness of the referendum and to educate the public about the alternatives under consideration.

On behalf of all Ontarians and all the members of this House, once again, thank you to the citizens' assembly for all your hard work and dedication.

IMPAIRED DRIVERS

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation): I rise in the House today to speak about the Ontario Community Council on Impaired Driving's Arrive Alive—Drive Sober campaign. This campaign is a great tool to raise awareness and to remind drivers that drinking and driving do not mix. This year, the campaign is also focusing on the fact that drinking and boating is just as dangerous.

In 2006, alcohol was a factor in approximately 38% of the fatal boating incidents in Ontario. In fact, 36 people died in boating incidents that year. That's why, last year, I was pleased to see the passage of legislation that tackles drinking and boating.

In the very first boating season after the new laws were passed, 40 boat operators were charged with impaired operation of a vessel and also received an immediate 90-day administrative driver's licence suspension. So, if you're caught drinking and operating a motorized or non-motorized boat, you will be subject to the same penalties as drinking and driving. These include an immediate 12-hour suspension of your driver's licence if you register in

the "warn" range—that's .05 to .08 blood alcohol concentration, or the BAC, and a 90-day suspension of your driver's licence if you register over the .08 BAC. You'll have a one-year suspension of your driver's licence the first time you are convicted of an alcohol-related Criminal Code charge, and you will be hit with a large increase in your insurance premiums.

These programs apply to anyone convicted of operating a boat while impaired, including power boats, jet skis, dinghies, canoes and sailboats. Depending on the number of times they've been convicted of driving while impaired, a person could lose their driver's licence for life.

Ontario has some of the toughest drinking and driving laws in Canada. On top of the driver's licence suspensions I've just mentioned, we have a mandatory ignition interlock program, mandatory alcohol assessment, education or treatment and follow-up, and a vehicle can be impounded if a person is caught driving while their driver's licence is under suspension for a Criminal Code driving-related offence.

Our government wants to make our laws even tougher. Last month, I introduced legislation in this House to protect Ontarians from drinking drivers. If passed, this legislation would increase roadside driver's licence suspensions for drunk drivers, allowing the courts to take vehicles away from repeated drinking and driving offenders and establish an early ignition interlock program for Criminal Code offenders.

With this proposed legislation, the McGuinty government is delivering on its commitment to ensure that Ontario builds upon its successful record as a leader in road safety by keeping our communities safe and by keeping our families safe. But we need more than legislation; keeping people's feet to the fire on this issue is critical. That's why I was so pleased to note that Phil McNeely, my parliamentary assistant, was with the council this morning to help launch their campaign and their passport to safety—a long advocate of ensuring that we have safety on our roads.

This passport, which is nice and small and folds neatly anywhere, has some great tips for having fun responsibly. As well, it also has a clear reminder of the costs of drinking and driving. The council's message is simple: Drunk drivers have no place on Ontario's roads or Ontario's waterways.

Before I conclude, I would especially like to thank our police and fire and paramedics for the hard work that they do in keeping Ontarians safe on our roads. We will continue to raise public awareness among young people and among all drivers on this issue. Let's work together to convince people to make responsible choices this summer, be it on land or on water.

AMATEUR SPORT

LE SPORT AMATEUR

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): I had the pleasure today of hosting a reception honouring

the achievements of Team Ontario and its first-place win at the 2007 Canada Winter Games in Whitehorse, Yukon.

I'd like to draw to the attention, in the members' galleries on both sides, athletes, coaches, managers and mission staff who did this province very proud and won the Canada Winter Games flag. Please give a warm welcome to our athletes and our coaches. Stand up.

1410

I was especially pleased that parents, friends and supporters of our Team Ontario members also joined the reception to celebrate the achievement of these fine ambassadors for sport and healthy living. We just have a fraction of the number of individuals who were able to join us. We had about 150 athletes in the Macdonald Block earlier today, out of about 300 from all of Team Ontario. I was pleased that a number of MPPs from all parties were able to attend, including Premier McGuinty, who came by to wish the young people the very best. I was also pleased that they were joined by many coaches and managers and supporters of Team Ontario.

L'année 2007 était la huitième année où Équipe Ontario rapportait le drapeau des Jeux d'hiver du Canada, une réalisation extraordinaire, d'autant plus extraordinaire avec un grand total de 112 médailles, dont 37 médailles d'or, 35 d'argent et 40 de bronze, sans compter la réalisation d'exploits personnels pour beaucoup d'athlètes.

Tous les Ontariens sont fiers de ces réalisations. Les membres d'Équipe Ontario sont des modèles qui inspirent les Ontariens et Ontariennes, peu importe leur âge et leurs aptitudes, à être physiquement actifs et à pratiquer des sports.

Mr. Speaker, 2007 was the eighth time that Team Ontario has brought home the Canada Winter Games flag, an outstanding achievement this year, with a total of 37 gold medals, 35 silver medals and 40 bronze medals, for an amazing 112 medals in all and many new personal bests.

All Ontarians are proud of these achievements. Team Ontario members are role models and inspire Ontarians of all ages and abilities to be physically active and to participate in sport. These athletes are shining examples of youth reaching their full potential. All of them are balancing school, work and athletic excellence.

Just this morning I received an e-mail from a father of an athlete who left yesterday for Amsterdam to represent Canada as part of our national women's rugby team. He wrote, "I am reminded that I have been remiss in not writing to the minister to thank the government" of Ontario "for the Quest for Gold program. It has made a real difference in helping her to participate." He also passed along his best wishes and sincere thanks to our Premier and the finance minister.

I also want to congratulate Team Ontario's chef de mission, Blair McIntosh from the Sport Alliance of Ontario, and an employee of the Ministry of Health Promotion, Anita Comella, the assistant chef de mission, for a job well done. The Ontario mission was presented with the Claude Hardy Award, which recognizes the

talent and dedication of a mission team at a given Canada Games. Congratulations to those very fine individuals and all of the volunteers.

Le gouvernement McGuinty, par le biais du ministère de la Promotion de la santé, accorde une grande importance aux sports amateurs, car nous reconnaissons le rôle important du sport dans nos collectivités et ses bienfaits pour la santé physique et mentale des gens.

Cette année, un certain nombre de programmes et services de financement offriront un appui de 23,5 \$ millions au sport amateur.

The government, through the Ministry of Health Promotion, is committed to amateur athletics because we recognize the significant role that sport plays in our communities and the contribution it makes to people's physical and mental health. This year, the number of funding programs and services we will provide to amateur sport includes \$23.5 million in financial assistance.

We marked a notable achievement just this past February. I had the pleasure of announcing an impressive and substantial milestone for Ontario's athlete funding. In 2006-07, funding for the Quest for Gold program was close to \$10 million. This represents the single largest funding announcement in support of athletes in Ontario sport history. Approximately \$7 million of the Quest for Gold funding was provided directly to Ontario athletes through the Ontario athlete assistance program. This means that more than 950 of Ontario's amateur athletes received between \$3,500 and \$8,000 to cover living, training and post-secondary tuition costs from the program. The balance of the funding was directed to enhance coaching and training and competitive opportunities.

I am equally excited about the fact that Minister Sorbara, on behalf of Premier McGuinty, announced an additional \$10 million for the Quest for Gold program for the next fiscal year. This investment sends a signal to the athletic community that we are in the business of supporting amateur sport. We'll continue to work with our provincial and multisport organizations. I thank Jim Bradley—not the Jim Bradley we know, but Jim Bradley the president of the Sport Alliance of Ontario—and Doug Rosser, the chair of the Sport Alliance of Ontario, for the work they do to help our ministry to develop our athletes from playground to podium and provide resources and training opportunities for coaches and sport leaders.

We want to make physical activity fun and accessible for all. I'm proud of the action this government is taking to improve participation in amateur sports throughout the province of Ontario, but we certainly recognize that there is much more work to be done.

In conclusion, these athletes, coaches and managers have done all of Ontario proud. I'm particularly proud I have Ms. Kreviazuk, a member my riding, here today. She has a famous cousin, Chantal Kreviazuk, but today she is the famous Kreviazuk because she went out and won a gold medal for Ottawa from the riding of Ottawa West-Nepean.

At an early age, these young athletes and their supporters dedicated themselves to the pursuit of high-level

physical performance and excellence. They are here today in the Legislative Assembly as role models for all Ontarians.

I want to sincerely thank you for taking time out of your schedules. Thank you to the mission staff and thank you to the parents, as Premier McGuinty said earlier today. They wouldn't be able to succeed without the financial, emotional and passionate support of the parents and family members. We're very, very proud of you. Thank you for being here, and continued success. Merci beaucoup.

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

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): First of all, on behalf of John Tory and the Progressive Conservative caucus of Ontario, I'd like to congratulate the Team Ontario athletes. I'm particularly proud that I had 11 representatives on those teams from the area I represent, Lanark–Carleton. In particular, I would like to congratulate both Jennifer Dunev and Jennifer Klowak, who are both bronze and silver medal winners in fencing. I want to tell them that I will be calling them tomorrow to use their skills in the upcoming provincial campaign.

I want to thank all of the athletes and their parents for their dedication.

ELECTORAL REFORM

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): Next, I want to briefly respond to the minister responsible for democratic renewal. It's somewhat illustrative that many members of the citizens' assembly who were here for the minister's statement have left at this particular time. That is a show of exactly how this process has gone from start to finish, and that has been that it's a Liberal government process from the beginning, through the legislation to the end.

The ability of the Legislature to alter this process, to have input into this process, has been limited at best. Look at the last three pieces of legislation for democratic renewal. One bill, former Bill 62, was pulled by the government and put into schedule 11 of the budget bill, buried way, way back in the—what has democratic renewal got to do with the budget bill? Nothing, yet it's hidden in there.

Debate on Bill 155, which sets out the referendum rule: guillotined by the government, limiting debate in the Legislature on a democratic renewal forum. What's going to happen to Bill 218, another one dealing with our election process? It was time-allocated, guillotined in terms of debate in this Legislature.

We congratulate all the members of the citizens' assembly for what they did for the government of Ontario. We know they worked hard to come up with their proposals. But they should know that this is a Liberal government initiative. The question they are going to put to the people of Ontario will not be approved by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario; it will be approved by the Liberal cabinet only. We find that distasteful and it puts great question into the whole process.

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IMPAIRED DRIVERS

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): It's my privilege to respond to the Minister of Transportation on behalf of the opposition and our leader, John Tory. We would like to pay tribute to the members of the community who have worked hard to prevent impaired driving and to commend the Ontario Community Council on Impaired Driving for their leadership and programs they have delivered to reduce—or eliminate, indeed—impaired driving in Ontario. Through its Arrive Alive program, there is an increased awareness in death and injury caused by impaired driving.

Impaired driving, people should know, is Canada's number one criminal cause of death. On average, over four Canadians each day are killed.

Unfortunately, the McGuinty government has cut the funding to OCCID, along with that of the Ontario Safety League, which they have continued to argue—it is about time they finally recognized the member from Oak Ridges, Frank Klees, for the work he has done on Bill 203, which is being debated in this House as we speak, to make our roadways safer in Ontario, and also to recognize the good work done by the member from Simcoe North, Garfield Dunlop, on his initiative on ignition interlock, which again is part of the defence against impaired driving.

It's very clear, in response to the minister, that preventing impaired driving is a community responsibility. It takes police, parents and all civil-minded people to work together to get this right. Finally, after some time, they have recognized the work done by the previous Minister of Transportation, Frank Klees.

AMATEUR SPORT

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): In the little time I have left I also want to pay respect to the citizens of the 2007 Canada Winter Games from my riding, great youth role models: Tyler Cuma, Colin Fish, Jerome Gabriel, Caitlyn Hellingman, Andrea Madgett, Kyle Matuk, Robert Nelson, Robert Scott, and Tara Watchorn. Thank you for your leadership and youth in action program.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): On behalf of New Democrats, I congratulate the Team Ontario athletes for their outstanding performance and victories at the 2007 Canada Winter Games in Whitehorse.

I'm sorry to see that some of the athletes were ushered out before the opposition had a chance to make their comments, so I hope that the Hansards will be sent to them because we did want all of them to hear what we had to say.

We are thrilled to see you here; we are very glad that many more of you were also here earlier on to be publicly acknowledged in a very formal way: the athletes, coaches, managers and supporters.

To our youth athletes who are here, I want you to know that we are very proud of your ability, your talents,

your dedication and your commitment—most of all for your incredible energy to balance your work, school and athletic abilities all at the same time. I'm not sure how all of you do that.

Secondly, to the coaches and managers who serve as mentors to these young athletes, we thank you for your tremendous work in inspiring these athletes to be the best they can be and to still have fun.

Finally, last but not least, to the parents who sacrifice a great deal of time and money to support your sons and daughters: There isn't a more important job that you could do as parents to help your child realize their goals, and we thank you for that very important work that you do.

We say to all of the athletes who are still here, we know that we will hear many great things about all of you in the future and we look forward to that. Thank you for being here today.

ELECTORAL REFORM

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): In response to the minister for democratic renewal, I had the opportunity this morning to be at Hart House and to meet 60 or so of the members of the citizens' assembly, 60 out of the 104 who actually participated.

I want to preface all of my remarks by thanking them from the bottom of our hearts for what they did over all these weekends, what they did over all of this period of time—the time they spent away from their families, the time that they spent studying and working, the time that they spent trying to come up with a new system, perhaps a better system, for the people of the province of Ontario.

I am mindful about what I saw on page 16 of the report. I have had a chance to read it in its fullness, not once but twice. The people came from all over the country: 66 from Ontario, 11 from other provinces and a remarkable 27 from outside of Canada, where they were born. They speak many languages; they have many, many occupations, but they came together as one group, and they came together to make a difference. They came together, in the end, perhaps, to challenge the orthodoxy of an institution which has, remarkably and justifiably, served Ontarians and Canadians well throughout our entire history, but in fact an institution that is now 750-plus years old and which perhaps is in need of change. There is no doubt that they have served us well, but time and expectations change and so did the attitudes of these 104 people.

The minister has said in her speech, "I look forward to reading the citizens' assembly's report and reviewing its recommendations." I don't know, maybe I'm a faster reader, but I've already had a chance to do that and I'd just like to say that the opportunity today is upon us.

I had an opportunity to meet Catherine Baquero, who was the representative from Beaches–East York. In fact, it was my first opportunity to meet her. She was a delightful young citizen. I had an opportunity to hear George Thomson, as the chair, outline the process. I had

an opportunity to meet the secretariat and the people who worked so hard, and I had the an opportunity to read the 27-page report.

The recommendations are found near the end of the report, I believe on page 25 or thereabouts, and there are 10. The fundamental one, of course, is the institution of a mixed member proportional system, and there are 10 sub-recommendations which will take us to that recommendation, and perhaps—and I hope—a better system. The citizens are to be commended.

But in the 49 seconds I have left, I have to ask about the government and their commitment. We have three bills before us. We have a question which has yet to be decided and which is the sole prerogative of the minister and not of this Legislature—the only Legislature in Canada that has not had an opportunity to debate the question. No amount of money has been apportioned. The citizens recommended some \$13 million; there is no budgeted amount. And last but not least, there is the 60% threshold, which in our view is unconscionable. Some of the citizens today told me that the 60% was perhaps too high a threshold to actually see change.

I commend them for giving us voter choice, fair election results and local representation in their recommendations.

VISITOR

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: One of our pages, Sridaya, has her mother, Sandhya Srivatsan, here in the Legislature. I would like to welcome her because the page is very proud of her.

ORAL QUESTIONS

YEAR-END GRANTS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier and it concerns the McGuinty government's year-end spending. The Minister of Finance provided us with a list last Thursday that shows that over the last two years, the Premier's government has spent nearly \$4 billion in a last-minute mad rush: \$2.4 billion in 2005-06 and \$1.4 billion in 2006-07. This past December, the Auditor General slapped the McGuinty government's wrists for this practice, but the government continues to do it.

My question for the Premier is this: So we can all see just how fast this money was rushed out the door, and knowing the government has an obligation under the standing orders to publish these treasury orders eventually in any event, will the Premier make public the treasury board orders or other spending orders authorizing this mad rush, year-end spending?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'll refer this to the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Let me just tell my friend what he already knows, that all expenditures of the government occurring any time during the year become part of the public accounts of the province of Ontario, and those are published every year within 180 days of the presentation of the budget. That's a new provision, part of our program of transparency, and indeed, the expenditures for 2005-06 were published in last year's public accounts. But let me tell him that every single one of those expenditures supports the programs of this government, whether it's in the area of education, post-secondary education, community and social services, energy, government services or any other ministry.

Mr. Tory: As is the custom, that was not an answer to the question. We all know that the public accounts ultimately contain all of the expenditures of the government, six months later. We also know, however, that many of these expenditures made in a big rush at the end of the year were authorized by treasury board or other authorizations. All we're asking is, why don't you show us those so we can see how fast you spent the money, when you spent it and so on?

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The Auditor General, in his report this past December, said, "In many cases, normal accountability and control provisions were reduced or eliminated to ensure the transfers would qualify for immediate expensing prior to the ... fiscal year-end." He also went on to say, "We continue to have concerns specifically regarding the relaxing of normal controls shortly before the fiscal year-end for unplanned transfers the government makes to its service delivery partners."

This is taxpayers' money. The McGuinty government spends it in a mad rush, and all we have right now to show for it is that you're telling us to wait six or eight months. We want to know how mad the rush was. If you don't have anything to hide, if the minister doesn't, why don't you make those treasury board orders public right now?

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: I'm absolutely fascinated by the way in which the leader of the official opposition frames a question to which he already knows the answer, because he has actually spent quite a bit of time here. He knows that all treasury board orders are gazetted. The Ontario Gazette is a public document. Those become available to every member of the House, to every political party, to every citizen. He knows that.

He should know as well that year-end expenditures for 2006-07 represented, in the main, a flow through of federal revenues for public housing and social housing around the province. He also knows, because I read it in my budget, that the year-end spending also provided some \$400 million in infrastructure assistance to colleges and universities. If he wants to go on, I could go through this list all afternoon. I am very proud of those investments.

Mr. Tory: What I also know is that the McGuinty government will not publish those treasury board orders

in the Ontario Gazette until months and months from now, well after the election, because they don't want anybody to see these details of how they rushed the taxpayers' money out the door—no controls, no formal process. To quote the Premier, "Just like that"—taxpayers' money.

So if there is nothing to hide, then I ask you this question: Last year, on March 23, you spent \$3.5 million a minute. On March 30, you spent \$1.5 million a minute in those cabinet meetings. The Auditor General said this kind of practice of rushing taxpayers' money out the door should stop, but you didn't stop; you kept doing it. All we're asking is: How big a slushy did you pour yourself with the taxpayers' money? If there's nothing to hide, then we ask the minister to make those treasury board orders public now—not six months or nine months from now—so the people can see what care you did or did not take with their money.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: I would just put it back to my friend, the Leader of the Opposition, whether he thinks in those year-end expenditures, and I just want to get the figure correct here, that the \$2 million that went to Bethel House in his riding—he himself asked for his name to be included on the press release because these funds were very much needed for that hospital.

I would just put it to you very simply: The good news is that in the last three months of the last fiscal year, the province saw additional revenues. Most of that went to reduce the deficits that we inherited from them. Some \$1.4 million went to the priorities established by this government, and we're very proud of those expenditures.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. New question, the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: My question is again for the Premier and again it concerns the government's year-end spending practices.

Methinks the minister doth protest a bit too much. We're just asking—by the way, I've never asked once to have my name on any of your press releases; I don't think I would want to. But having said that, we have \$4 billion in year-end spending from this government spread out over two years. The Auditor General, that officer of this Legislature, raised concerns about this last December, and the Premier said in response to that report, "We are implementing every single recommendation of the Auditor General." That's on December 5, and yet a few months later you guys are at it again, blowing money out the door like there's no tomorrow. The Premier confirmed on April 27, when he said the money went "out the door"—no application form, no formal process—"just like that," millions of dollars. If the Premier took proper care and if there's nothing to hide, why won't the Premier make public those treasury board orders now so we can see exactly what he did with the taxpayers' money?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I know the Minister of Finance has provided a great deal of information on this.

The leader of the official opposition would have us believe that we should be providing more co-operation to the Auditor General and that he has a good deal of respect. Yet, when we broadened the powers available to the Auditor General and said that he should be able to look at universities, schools, hospitals and government agencies like children's aid societies, he and his party voted against that very measure. When we said that the Auditor General should have the authority to vet all government advertising, they voted against that particular measure. When we said that the Auditor General should be given the responsibility to review public finances before an election in order to determine whether a government could ever again hide a deficit, they voted against that measure.

Clearly, we're all for ensuring that the Auditor General can do his job—

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr. Tory: I'll simply add to that list: When we on this side of the House—the New Democrats and ourselves—asked 286 questions for the Auditor General to be brought in to examine the spending done in this disgraceful slush fund scandal, it took three weeks for the Premier to finally agree to bring him in.

On December 6, 2006, the Premier said, "We have to be very careful when it comes to how we deal with taxpayer money." He made reference that day to more transparency and accountability. Then, weeks later, we see the slush machine working overtime, with 1.4 billion taxpayer dollars out the door in a mad rush.

The Premier claims this money just fell into his lap. He said that he and his finance minister knew about it just at the last minute, which is an incredible admission of bad management—they knew about \$1 billion in extra money belonging to the taxpayers at the last minute.

I ask again, will the Premier make available to the taxpayers, to the media, to us and to the public the treasury board orders and other orders for this past year so we can see just how mad the rush was to blow taxpayers' money out the door at the last minute?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I think it's important to take a look at some of the year-end expenditures and investments that are now opposed by the leader of the official opposition.

We invested \$670 million in a new subway expansion. We invested \$82 million in Viva transit in York region. We invested \$2.5 million in Durham transit; this is going to benefit the members from Whitby–Ajax, Oshawa and Durham. I would think they would be in support of that particular investment.

We've invested in sports centres as well. Port Colborne, for example, is going to build a new twin-pad hockey arena, pool, track and skate park as the result of a \$3-million investment. I know the member opposite is very much going to support that investment we're making in Port Colborne.

When it comes to Brampton, there's the AcceleRide program. We've invested an additional \$95 million through year-end expenditures.

I think those are important, worthwhile objectives. If the leader of the official opposition is saying he does not support those, then he should stand up and say so.

Mr. Tory: What the Leader of the Opposition will stand up and say is this: Surely you don't expect anybody to believe that you just found out about having this extra money, as you call it, from the taxpayers at the last minute. It's an incredible admission of bad management if you really expect anybody to believe that. And surely you don't also expect the taxpayers to believe you just came up with these ideas to support these worthy projects at the end of the year.

The point we're making is this: When it is the taxpayers' money, we believe you have an obligation to spend every cent with as much care, as much responsibility, as much scrutiny and as much accountability as you would any other day of the year, and we don't think that is being done.

All we've asked is that you help us by making available documents that, as the minister says, will be made available in due course anyway, months after the election, to show us just how much care was or was not taken in rushing this money out the door.

Why will the Premier not agree to make those documents available right now? Is there something being hidden here?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I know that Ontarians are entitled to know where the money went, but apparently the leader of the official opposition is unhappy with these kinds of investments.

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Let me list a few more: \$392 million into affordable housing; \$390 million into our colleges and universities; \$35 million into the new Niagara Falls convention centre; \$28 million into the Ottawa Congress Centre; \$50 million into the MaRS Discovery District.

When it comes to fixing connecting links to highways, \$775,000 went into Barrie, \$92,000 went into Renfrew, \$85,000 went into Pembroke, \$941,000 into Durham, \$420,000 into Wellington and \$410,000 into Timmins. Those, once again, I would argue, are eminently worthwhile, are in keeping with the greater public interest and are supported by the people of Ontario. I think the leader of the official opposition should just come out and say that he does not support these kinds of investments on behalf of Ontarians.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Premier, under your government, Ontario has now lost 175,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs. What has become very clear is that your government is prepared to do virtually nothing in the face of this job loss.

My question is this: Can the Premier tell working families across Ontario why he has done virtually nothing to stop this hemorrhaging of good jobs when it took you only eight days to raise your own pay by \$40,000 a year?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Obviously, I take issue with the entire premise of the leader of the NDP's question. I would argue that no government in the history of this province has been more activist when it comes to helping business, industry and labour cope with the difficult and challenging transition they've got to go through in order to be more productive and more competitive in a globalized economy.

Whether you're talking about our \$500-million investment in the auto sector, which has leveraged \$7 billion and 7,000 new jobs; whether you're talking about the close to \$1 billion that we've invested in the forestry sector to help strengthen that particular part of our economy, which is so important to northern Ontario but especially northwestern Ontario; whether you're talking about the money that we're investing in the agriculture sector—again, close to \$1 billion—we have done much, I would argue, by way of investment in and support for Ontario industry, Ontario workers, Ontario families and Ontario communities.

Mr. Hampton: It's amazing that the Premier would mention the forest sector. Everyone in northern Ontario knows that the only thing you've done there is destroy tens of thousands of jobs. But now the McGuinty government has its sights set on another industry. Diamond mining was set to become a major source of jobs and economic activity in northern Ontario, especially for First Nations communities. Once again, the McGuinty government has demonstrated how out of touch it is on this issue by almost tripling the diamond mining royalty and putting the big freeze on that part of the mining industry.

My question is this: Premier, First Nations leaders came here to Queen's Park to ask you to rethink your diamond royalty policy. Are you going to listen to those First Nation leaders?

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

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Just to remind my friend that this Premier has not only visited the mine but visited with those First Nations communities.

This is the first time I have ever heard a leader of the NDP or anyone from the NDP argue against a fair level of taxation for resources that are coming out of this soil. The mining royalty represents a fair royalty on net profits that arise from the new mine in the north of this province.

He should know that the royalty that applies is the very same royalty that applies to all diamond mining in Canada, notably those mines across the northern part of this country in the territories—one royalty which applies to diamond mining wherever it takes place in Canada.

Mr. Hampton: The Minister of Finance leaves out the fact that there's only one other jurisdiction in Canada that has a diamond mine: the Northwest Territories.

But that is beside the issue. The First Nations leadership that came here represents some of the lowest-income communities in this province. Attawapiskat First Nation is one of those. It has a sky-high unemployment rate. In many cases, three and four families are living in three-

bedroom bungalows because they can't afford housing. Yes, the Premier was very happy to go have his picture taken at the mine and in the community and then come back to Toronto and say, "Now we're going to triple the mining rate." It's the First Nations leadership. De Beers can look after itself. These are some of the lowest-income communities in the province, and they say you're taking their economic future away from them. Are you going to listen to them or are you going to take their economic future away? Which is it?

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: I'm surprised and disappointed at the outrageous scaremongering tactics of my friend the leader of the NDP, as if somehow this royalty, which is a fair royalty applied anywhere in Canada, will somehow reduce new employment opportunities for aboriginal peoples in the north. In fact, the revenue that we raise from this royalty is the revenue that we are reinvesting in the northern part of the province and with those communities. In addition—

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): Go visit those communities.

The Speaker: I will not warn the member for Timmins–James Bay again. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: I know that De Beers, a very successful international mining company that mines diamonds all over the world, has lobbied just about everyone they can to get a lower tax rate. I just want to say publicly in this House that we have committed to De Beers that in this royalty, which is a royalty on net profit, to the extent that they are investing in aboriginal communities, the royalty will be less and be reduced and support—

The Speaker: New question.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I name the member for Timmins–James Bay, Mr. Bisson.

Mr. Bisson was escorted from the chamber.

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

Mr. Hampton: My question is to the Premier, because the Premier was only too happy to go to Attawapiskat First Nation and to go to this mine. What the First Nations are saying is this: They have an impact benefit agreement negotiated with De Beers. The First Nation's concern is that now that you've come in and tripled the mining royalty, you're going to deprive the First Nation of some of the revenue that they would have gotten through their impact benefit agreement. I want to ask the Premier this: Do you think it's fair that you should be taking money away from some of the lowest-income

First Nations people in Ontario in order to make your own pocketbook look better?

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

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: Let me just explain once again to my friend that the royalty on diamond mining in Ontario represents a royalty on net profit. As the net profit of De Beers grows, the royalty will grow from about 6% to 13%. It is a net profit royalty. We are now, as I said earlier, negotiating with De Beers to determine what can be deducted as an expense. And I'll tell my friends once again, including my friend from Timmins—James Bay, who has just left us, that part of that discussion involves specific investments by De Beers in the native community, which will be an expense that can be deducted from profit and therefore reduce the ultimate level of the royalty.

Mr. Hampton: The Premier and his Minister of Finance can talk all about their backroom discussions with De Beers. This is about the First Nations: First Nations that have a terrible situation with youth suicide; First Nations that have unbelievable unemployment rates; First Nations where people are looking for a future. And for the first time, they were saying, "Some of our people have an opportunity to get a job. Some of us have an opportunity to start a business." What they see is the McGuinty government coming in and scooping up the revenue, which has a direct and an indirect impact on them. I'm simply saying that you can tell the media all you want about your discussions with De Beers. What about the aboriginal people, the First Nations people, who wanted a job and wanted a future, and see that you're taking that away from them? What about them?

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: The diamonds in the north part of this province belong to the people of this province, including those communities that my friend thinks he's arguing on behalf of. There's no doubt that De Beers—a very successful international company—would like to have a much lower tax rate, but there's an interest in those resources that belongs to all the people of this province. I want to tell my friend that the way in which those native communities, who are going to benefit tremendously from this initiative, are being used to further the interests of De Beers gives me great disappointment, and I am sorry to see the leader of the third party participate in it.

Mr. Hampton: We've heard a lot of hot air from the finance minister. I want to quote some of those First Nation leaders. Mushkegowuk Grand Chief Stan Louttit: "Northern Ontario generally is benefiting from this mine. We need to continue doing that. This tax hike jeopardizes future development. What's going to happen...? Are we going to continue wallowing in Third World conditions...?" Or the chief of Attawapiskat, Mike Carpenter: "We weren't aware of this. We were never consulted, so it came as a surprise to us. We've already negotiated an impact benefit agreement with De Beers. We don't know how this tax hike is going to affect us." This is not De Beers speaking; these are First Nation leaders speaking,

First Nations who are struggling with 85% and 90% unemployment rates.

My question to the Premier: You are happy, Premier, to go to the First Nations and smile for the cameras. Are you now going to listen to these First Nation leaders and their plight for jobs and a chance at economic activity?

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: I'm aware of the fact that the owners of this company have made some suggestions that it is going to be First Nations communities that are going to suffer as a result of this tax, and I regret that, because it is not true.

Three things you need to know, sir: First of all, this level of taxation is the same royalty rate as applies to the other major diamond mines in Canada in the Northwest Territories. Second, you need to know that 13 million people in Ontario have an ownership interest in those diamonds. The third thing you need to know is that our negotiations with De Beers are designed to ensure that the benefit of that mine is shared most particularly with the aboriginal communities in that part of the province. In all three areas, we are going to be successful.

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, and it does not refer to the year-end slush fund. In defending his indefensible actions relating to the trust fund, though, the minister repeatedly referred to two agreements signed in 2005, the Ontario-Canada labour market agreement and the Ontario-Canada immigration agreement, under which some \$300 million was transferred from the federal government to the provincial government to provide very specific services, many of which the minister was responsible for delivering. I would like to know from the minister if in fact RFPs were issued for the provision of those services that he oversaw, and I would like him to clarify if he would table those RFPs with the House.

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I think the member doesn't understand the basic premise of the Canada-Ontario immigration agreement. The basic premise is that, rather than the federal money flowing into the treasury of Ontario and then providing services, the agreement specifically says that the federal programs that are already in place will be enhanced so that the money goes directly into expanding programs and services that for 20 years Ontario newcomers were being shortchanged on. So the money flows directly to the service providers and the programs that the federal government is already running and expanding in Ontario.

Mr. Klees: Perhaps the minister should read the agreement that he himself signed in November 2005, because that agreement makes very specific references to the services that the province is responsible for delivering, and section 7.2, which is headed "Accountability," if the minister has not read it, refers specifically to two things that the minister has responsibility to do: one is to share information on program investments and results with respect to the respective settlement and language

programs on a fiscal-year basis; and second, that that information be made public as to accountability and reporting.

What I will ask the minister to do now is to tell us whether he has complied with section 7.2 of the agreement that he wrote—and if he has, where is the tabling of that report?

Hon. Mr. Colle: This is incredible coming from that member, who sat in this chamber as a minister for nine years and never once raised the issue of the shortchanging of newcomers in Ontario—never raised it once. I ask him to stand up on his feet and tell me one time that he raised the fact that Ontario newcomers were being shortchanged and tell me what his government did to ensure that shortchanging had to end. We're proud that we stood up for newcomers and got the resources in Ontario. They never even mentioned it once when they were in government.

ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURIES

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): My question is to the Minister of Health. Adam Crabtree of Hamilton has an acquired brain injury. After receiving three months of hospital treatment, Adam was discharged from Chedoke's acquired brain injury program. On April 17, he was transferred to St. Joseph's Villa, a long-term-care home in Hamilton. Adam is 20 years old. Minister, do you think it's appropriate for 20-year-old Adam to be placed in a long-term-care home?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I know that the matter at hand is one that the local community care access centre and the local health integration network have been involved in, in helping to ensure that the individual receives a good deal of quality care. There are numerous younger people across the province of Ontario who are finding that the level of care offered in a long-term-care home is the appropriate one. I have one of these individuals in my family, from the member for Lanark-Carleton's riding—if I've got the riding right—and I can attest to a very high quality of care for that individual, who similarly is of a very young age. But if the honourable member has more that she would like to inquire about with respect to the nature of the care that's being provided, I'd be very happy to follow up.

1500

Ms. Martel: Adam's in a long-term-care home because there were no community services for him, and he's not the only one in that position. Ken Vandelight has an acquired brain injury. He's been at the Elizabeth Centre long-term-care home in Val Caron in my riding since October 2006. He's 27. After three months in Chedoke's ABI program, Travis Bailey of Hamilton was also destined for a long-term-care home, but his parents intervened. He lives at home with his parents but without all of the brain injury services that he needs. He is 23.

The Ontario Brain Injury Association says this is a major crisis that your ministry has been aware of since 2005; that 449 brain injury survivors are waiting up to 14

years for proper ABI services. Minister, what are you going to do today for young people like Adam, Ken and Travis so they're not forced into a long-term-care home?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: First off is to acknowledge that from time to time, the level of care that is appropriate will be found for our residents' long-term care. And I do say that I believe, based on what I've seen, that for some this is appropriate. Of course, we depend on clinicians to be able to give the appropriate advice.

I can tell the honourable member that, standing in very sharp contrast to the record she performed while her party was in office, we've made very substantial increases in the resources available to support people with ABI. As people continue to acquire brain injuries, one would assume of course that it's necessary to continue to make funding enhancements to support more people in the community, and I would be very happy to look into these particular cases that the honourable member brings forward.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): My question is to the Minister of Energy. Since day one, this government has been committed to bringing more clean and renewable power on line than any government before us. We understand the importance of giving Ontario homes and businesses the power they need when they need it without compromising the environment.

While we have been clear when it comes to the need to combat climate change and smog, it's unfortunate that the member from Kenora-Rainy River hasn't. Even Jack Gibbons of the Ontario Clean Air Alliance says, "We're surprised that Hampton hasn't taken a very strong leadership role on climate change and the coal phase-out." When asked about the NDP's position on coal, Mark Winfield of the Pembina Institute says, "There are moments when that could be clearer."

Minister, can you reassure this House that the government will remain steadfast in its commitment to closing our coal plants and bring more clean and renewable energy on line to ensure that Ontario has the sustainable energy—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The question's been asked. Minister?

Laughter.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): The members of the third party laugh, but when they're in northern Ontario, they say, "Keep the coal plants open," and when they're in southern Ontario, they say "Close the coal plants." The Pembina Institute and the Ontario Clean Air Alliance have all said what's abundantly clear, and that is that the NDP is anything but clear on climate change.

Emissions are down 32% in our coal plants, even though the New Democrats opposed those measures. I'd also remind my colleague who asked the question that it was the New Democrats who cancelled the Conawapa project, which would have brought clean, green, renewable hydroelectric power—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mrs. Mitchell: Minister, I can't stress the importance of our commitment—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I need to be able to hear the member for Huron–Bruce.

Mrs. Mitchell: Minister, I can't stress the importance of our commitment to clean, renewable, affordable and reliable power enough. We must also be committed to conservation. It must play a key role in keeping our energy system affordable and reliable.

It was a proud day when the Energy Conservation Responsibility Act was given royal assent, the first of its kind in Canada. It was unfortunate, however, that the NDP, including the member from Kenora–Rainy River, voted against it.

Through conservation, we can all work to reduce peak demand during the winter and summer months, and we should be exploring every opportunity to do it. While the NDP chooses to play politics with conservation, this government owes it to Ontarians to move forward aggressively on conservation. Minister, what is our government doing to ensure that Ontarians have the tools they need to help Ontario build a culture of conservation?

Laughter.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Again the NDP laugh about this.

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): Yes, they are; they're laughing.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: They're laughing. Let's just look at the record. This summer, five new province-wide conservation programs will come online that every Ontario resident can participate in. Let's compare that to what happened in the 1990s during the government that Mr. Hampton was part of.

Power saver month, which encouraged customers to purchase more energy-efficient products at local retailers with reduced prices, was cancelled. The refrigerator cashback program, which we are putting back into place province-wide this summer—the New Democrats cancelled it. Energy-efficient lighting, incentives for renovation retrofit—was it the Tories that cancelled that? No, it was the New Democrats. They try to be all things to all people. They've got no record—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): To the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration: I'm not sure that the minister fully understands the agreement that he signed on November 21, 2005. I have it here, and I can deliver it to him if he likes. But it does make very specific reference to funding that is transferred from the federal government to the Ontario government. It specifically speaks to the kinds of services that are to be delivered, and it talks about settlement services, language training, immigrant and labour market integration—the same kinds of services the minister has been telling us he has been providing.

My question is very straightforward: In funding the agencies that are delivering these services, has he issued RFPs so that we know the services that are being provided are being done so in the most efficient and cost-effective way?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I think the member from Oak Ridges is confused. Let me tell him again. The programs that have been provided by the federal government for a number of years were programs that were underfunded. The immigrant who came to Ontario was getting \$800, on average, from the federal government—programs like LINC for languages or ISAP for settlement services or host programs. These programs were underfunded because if an immigrant went to Quebec, they would get about \$3,400 to \$3,800. So when the agreement was signed, it meant that the Ontario programs would start to reach those Quebec levels. They're finally doing that. They're slow—maybe that's what the member should be talking about—because the government in Ottawa isn't funding as fast as it said it would in the agreement. Maybe that's what he should be raising rather than the fact that the Ontario taxpayers have been funding this for years by themselves.

Mr. Klees: I would then like to redirect the minister's attention to the agreement that he signed under section 7.2, which speaks about accountability. Under that section, he is required as the minister to file annually a report that deals with the services being provided and the accountability issues. If he's saying it's slow, we all need to know about that.

My question to the minister is very straightforward: Has he filed, as required, his annual accountability report under the terms of this agreement, and if so, where is it?

1510

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, this just demonstrates how out of touch that member has been. We said emphatically to the previous Liberal government, we've said it to this government, that that agreement had to be signed quickly because the underservicing was doing great damage to our newcomer communities. We finally signed the agreement, and that money started to flow into the programs. We in Ontario have been doing this by ourselves for too long. We provide our own ESL programs, \$50 million a year; we provide great programs for internationally trained doctors; we provide bridge training programs for nurses and dietitians. We've been doing this by ourselves.

Now the member stands up and says, "Who's accounting?" He should be asking for the accounting of the feds—the past government or this government: Why hasn't the money ever been invested here? At least we're thankful we're finally seeing the money where it should be in Ontario. Thank God for that.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, in the Halton area, parents and educators are forced to raise

money from the community to purchase reading materials for students with special needs. It seems to me that the minister has subcontracted her responsibilities to parents by forcing them to raise funds for school essentials. The question is this: Does the minister find it acceptable that parents and teachers raise funds to purchase reading materials for students with special needs?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): It's very interesting that the party opposite has not once acknowledged that the funding that has gone into the publicly funded education system under this government is beyond imagining, given what the previous government did: \$2 billion out of education; \$3.5 billion into education in the province.

As I have said previously in this House, the issue of fundraising is one that I take very seriously. I understand that it's an issue that we have to pay attention to. Fundraising is much more than just the dollars and cents that communities raise for projects. It is about community cohesion. It is about community-building. It's something that has been around for a very, very long time—under that member's watch as a school trustee as well. It is the responsibility of school boards to make sure that resources are allocated equitably. We've put more money into education to deal with the basics.

Mr. Marchese: The minister is absolutely right: The lack of funding is beyond imagining. Minister, ponder the following: In Huron–Bruce, parents have to fundraise to buy math books. In Hamilton, Ancaster High School is forced to fundraise to purchase computers and technical equipment. St. Sofia school in Mississauga raises funds to purchase books and gym equipment.

The minister may find this question oversimplified, but parents demand a simple answer. Does the minister believe it is okay for parents to be forced to raise funds for math books, computers and gym equipment?

Hon. Ms. Wynne: Does the member opposite believe that it was appropriate, when he was in office in 1991, for people in Toronto to be raising money for computers? The member opposite—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. We're wasting time. Order. Minister?

Hon. Ms. Wynne: The member opposite claims that there has been no money for the things that parents are fundraising for. In fact, we have put in \$32 million for school libraries. That's \$6,600 for every school library. There are 7,600 new support staff under this government, including librarians, including library technicians. The member opposite has claimed publicly that there's only \$25 million that has been spent on repairs in our schools. That is ridiculous. Boards have had access to \$4 billion under Good Places to Learn.

The member opposite finds it impossible to look at what's happening in publicly funded education and understand that we are rebuilding where the previous government tore down. He should be supporting us at every step of the way if he believes in publicly funded education.

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION

Mr. Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay–Atikokan): My question is for the Minister of Education. When we announced more changes to the funding formula, specifically the First Nations, Metis and Inuit education supplement, the leader of the third party stood in his place and said, "The McGuinty government boasts that it is going to provide \$177,000 in funding for aboriginal education for the Lakehead District School Board this year. However, when you look at the big numbers, the ... board is now receiving ... less ... funding from the government as compared to two years ago."

This is the same leader whose party ignores the fact that we have made an additional investment of \$3.5 billion in our public schools, won't mention the fact that class sizes increased under his party's mandate, won't bring up the fact that the NDP promised to increase provincial funding of education but didn't, and won't talk about the social contract or how they legislated striking teachers back to work three times.

Minister, can you please clarify for my constituents and this House the investments we've made in this particular board?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): What the member for Kenora–Rainy River should have said is that it's about time an Ontario government stood up to the challenge of funding education for aboriginal students in our provincially funded schools. In the Lakehead District School Board, there are almost 3,000 fewer students than in 2003. That's a 23% decrease in students. But even with declining enrolment, even in the face of declining enrolment, we have invested in the Lakehead District School Board. We put \$3.1 million more into the Lakehead District School Board. That's \$68,000 per school, a 33% increase over what the board had. So in the face of declining enrolment, we've recognized that the board needs support. They've got bricks and mortar and residual costs, and we have invested in them. We're increasing funding so that boards across the province, including in Kenora–Rainy River, can run their schools.

Mr. Mauro: Minister, I'm certain that my constituents now understand the connection between our investments in publicly funded education and the results of those investments, like smaller class sizes and higher test scores.

I understand that in our continued refinements and changes to the funding formula, we introduced the First Nations, Metis and Inuit education supplement. This grant is extremely beneficial to northern Ontario schools, as many of our First Nations, Metis and Inuit reside in the north. It is also a change to the formula that the leader of the third party dismisses as "tinkering around the edges" of the funding formula.

Minister, can you please inform this House as to why this is an important change and how it will benefit our students in the north?

Hon. Ms. Wynne: I don't think we can overstate the importance of this new grant to aboriginal students across

the province. It's really shocking to me that the members opposite would take that tack.

I want to quote from the Daily Miner and News, which stated, "Pride streamed across the faces of Keewatin-Patricia District School Board members and administration April 10 upon reporting their hard work in a province-wide initiative." It's that pride that was confronting us when we introduced this new grant.

The advocate for the province-wide initiative was none other than Ms. Janet Wilkinson, the director of education for the Keewatin-Patricia District School Board. She has been advocating for this exact change. In fact, here's what she said: "I am so proud of what this government has done by acknowledging for the first time that education for aboriginal students has to be recognized. There is recognition for the first time in the funding model for aboriginal students, and the projects being supported will generate new approaches to ensuring aboriginal students have equal opportunity."

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

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

My question is for the Minister of Energy. Energy stakeholders, business leaders and citizens across this province are expressing grave concern that we won't have an adequate supply of energy this summer. They tell me that last year you caught a break. It was a much cooler summer, and we had adequate rainfall. But with forecasters calling for a hot, dry summer this year, and very little in the way of spring freshet, and your failure to bring new, adequate supply online, our supply is tenuous. Can the minister assure this House and the people of Ontario that as a result of his mismanagement, we won't see rolling blackouts this summer in the province?

1520

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): This is a very serious matter that this government has taken a number of steps on. I would point out that the Independent Electricity System Operator's report projects our ability to meet our power needs this summer as being very good, something that did not happen when the member opposite's party was in. In addition, the IESO will be releasing a further report in June. We are now in the process of making sure all routine maintenance on our various nuclear reactors, coal plants and so on is being looked after.

That does not preclude that we could run into trouble this summer in the event of some kind of unanticipated situation. It's a serious matter. I remind the member opposite that last summer, everyone had the same blessings. Alberta, California and New York had voltage reductions; Ontario did not. And last year, for the first time in almost a generation, Ontario was a net exporter of power.

Mr. Yakabuski: Minister, as they say to me, we're one bad break away from a blackout. I would like to bring to your attention—which the minister has not let the House know—the delays with regard to the Sithe

Goreway project in Brampton, which you guaranteed would be online and offering interim power this summer. We now know that that project has been further delayed and will not be available this summer. That's 875 megawatts. From time to time we hear an announcement here and an announcement there about a megawatt there or a megawatt there, or 10 megawatts here, all going long into the future. But you assured us last year that this project would be online to supply the needs of the western GTA. We know now that it won't be online. Minister, what have you got as a contingency when your plan is shown to have failed?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Actually, in terms of the IESO's planning forecast, they didn't take that plant into consideration, so the 3,300 megawatts that's online doesn't include that.

I will agree with the member on one statement: We are one bad break away from a problem, and that's another Tory government. That's the bad break that could happen. Under that member's watch, this province lost a net equivalent of 1,800 megawatts of power. That's the equivalent of Niagara Falls running dry. And all the while they had secret slush funds for former Tory staffers, \$400,000—it's like a rogue's gallery of old Tories: Paul Rhodes, for one. A whole bunch of them all got money. They hid it from public view. They wanted to privatize the sector—and in fact the member is right; it was Sithe Goreway that agreed to have power online this summer, and it's they who haven't met their undertaking, not the government. This government has set back on track the power system that that party single-handedly destroyed in just eight short years.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): My question is for the Minister of Government Services. The most vulnerable in our community, including those on your \$8 minimum wage and low-income families, are barely getting by and have limited access to reasonable financial services. They find themselves as repeat customers of payday loan sharks who charge criminal rates. The CBC cited one woman whose \$500 loan took five years to retire, paying an additional \$9,500 in interest and other fees.

With federal Bill C-26, Ontario now has the capacity to regulate the industry. The bill I've introduced actually sets an interest rate limit of 35%, to end the criminal rates that you would rather see just advertised with posters on the windows of loan sharks. Minister, will you stop these payday loan companies and support my bill to license and cap interest rates at 35%?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): The member, I think, should know that we advocated the right move, which was that the federal government should have been responsible for regulating this industry. The consumer groups advocated that as well, as you know.

It was, I guess, two weeks ago that the federal government passed legislation saying they're not going to do

that. What we then did was to move—and we're the first province to do this—to ensure that the consumer at least knows exactly what is happening in terms of interest rates. The second thing we did was, we're now asking for advice on how we should proceed going forward with payday lending. I look forward to that advice. I've yet to see the member's bill, but I look forward to seeing the bill. Over the next few weeks we will be getting input from the public on exactly how, long-term, we should be responding to payday loans. But, as I said, I would have preferred that the federal government act; they didn't, and we're moving forward now.

Ms. DiNovo: My question is to the minister. Discussion papers, reports, Ernst and Young, ACORN, Statistics Canada and the financial industry have already given you all the information you know. You've been doing nothing since your government first brought up the issue in 2005. Carol Goar said it best in the *Toronto Star*. She said, "1,000% interest 1,000% wrong." When will you actually work to do something to stop this criminal gouging of our most vulnerable citizens? When will you work to cap the interest rates, as Quebec has done and as other provinces have moved to do, at 35%?

Hon. Mr. Phillips: Again, I'm looking forward to the public having some input in this. I would just say to the member that one of the challenges is that there is competing advice. I have, from the NDP, Mr. Kormos's private member's bill, which is very different than your private member's bill and proposes a very different approach. So you can appreciate that as we are getting advice, we do have competing advice. Until today, I had Mr. Kormos's bill, which took a different approach than your bill. But I look forward to examining your bill, his bill and other advice even though they may conflict with each other, and we will go forward in a way that represents the best possible interest for the public.

FOREST FIREFIGHTING

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. We're all familiar with the challenges that the MNR is facing with the current forest fire situation. I note that last week the member for Kenora–Rainy River wrote a letter about the forest fire situation. This letter was nothing more than fear-mongering. I quote: "Given the serious understaffing that exists in MNR district and area offices across the north, how does the McGuinty government plan to protect northern Ontario forests, industries and communities from potentially devastating forest fires this season?"

Minister, can you please explain to this House the current forest fire situation and, more importantly, why the comments made by the leader of the third party are so irresponsible and nothing more than the politics of fear?

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): I was very disturbed by the fear-mongering that was put on by the leader of the third party last week. We've got a very challenging fire season ahead. But as a former Minister of

Natural Resources, the leader of the third party should understand that there's a limited capacity when it comes to firefighting in the province of Ontario. We have 700 firefighters who are actively going there, and 160 of them are on standby. We have already responses in with our agreements from BC and Wisconsin, from Alberta and the Northwest Territories. We're on top of this. It's a challenging year, but we've got the capacity to do it.

Ms. Smith: Thank you, Minister, for those assurances for the people of northern Ontario and all of Ontario. The leader of the third party's fear-mongering tactics are not acceptable. His letter went on to state that "as a result of repeated cutbacks by the McGuinty government, MNR district and area offices are severely understaffed and under-resourced across northern Ontario."

Today in this House the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka also chimed in with his point of view. I want to point out to you that within this House there are members of former governments and former ministers who, when given the chance to show leadership on these issues, chose reckless cuts over making investments and protecting our resources for future generations.

I have seen first-hand that the McGuinty government is taking action and that we've made some headway in correcting these problems. Can you share with this House the measures our government has taken to improve your ministry?

1530

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: Over the term of our office, we have increased the budget of the Ministry of Natural Resources by 23%, 6.45% this year alone. That's an extra \$44 million we've got to put into capacity, unlike the leader of the third party, who cut \$144 million from the MNR budget when he was minister. So we're acting here, we're building up the ministry, unlike that member, who cut down the MNR years ago.

VISITORS

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: One of the great, great chief justices, really, in the history of the Commonwealth, a great Canadian, our former Chief Justice of the Superior Court, the Honourable Patrick LeSage, is in the members' gallery.

We're having a vote today on Bill 103. Without the Honourable Patrick LeSage, Bill 103 would never have happened. I know all members of this House and the public owe the Honourable Patrick LeSage a great debt of gratitude. We thank you, sir.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): Another quick point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to welcome the students of Rick Hansen Secondary School and their teacher Angelo Kontos to this question period.

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I recognize my colleague from Trinity–Spadina in trumping my point of order to say to the gang that I hope you enjoyed the show.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would just like to remind the members that the OLIP reception is today. All of the people who have worked here so very hard this year—our interns—would like to see you very much. Show up at 5:30. I hope all members can attend.

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I want to remind the members as well that there will be a reception in the Legislature for the independent insurance brokers of Ontario, of which I was a member for three short years, and I'm pleased now that I'm here rather than there.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): That is not a point of order. It is time for petitions.

PETITIONS

MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION OFFICE

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I present a petition about reopening the Grimsby MTO office. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Grimsby is a growing community with an increasing demand for government services; and

“Whereas people want and deserve to have a real person providing friendly and knowledgeable assistance to citizens rather than a computer terminal; and

“Whereas the Dalton McGuinty government doubled fees for drivers' licences, meaning Grimsby residents are paying more but could be receiving less in services;

“We, the undersigned, request as follows:

“That the McGuinty government immediately seek to find a permanent operator for the Grimsby MTO office to provide in-person, friendly customer service to the people of Grimsby; and

“Furthermore, that the McGuinty government should accelerate this process and reopen the MTO office without any further delay.”

Beneath the signatures of Lynn and Hilbert Vanderplaat, I assign my signature.

DISABLED PERSONS PARKING PERMIT PROGRAM

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): I'm presenting a petition to the Legislature of Ontario on behalf of the member for Algoma–Manitoulin.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there currently exist problems of exposure to theft and the weather when displaying a disabled person parking permit on a motorcycle while parked in a disabled parking space;

“We, the undersigned, petition our members of Parliament to promote the development of a special, fixed permit as proposed by the Bikers Rights Organization,

for use by disabled persons who ride or are passengers on motorcycles, even if that requires an amendment to the Highway Traffic Act.”

I put my signature to this petition as well.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): These petitions are titled Rural Ontario Needs Transit Support Too. There are 1,075 names from the Dunnville area, gathered by Dianne Scott from Dunnville.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas public transit services in the communities of Haldimand and Norfolk counties have declined to the point of virtual nonexistence;

“Whereas people in these communities require bus service just as much as those in urban areas to access medical services, get to appointments at nearby towns and visit family;

“Whereas communities in Haldimand and Norfolk counties have received no substantial money to support any form of public transit from the provincial government;

“Whereas the McGuinty government has allocated a two-cents-a-litre gas tax initiative to support public transportation in urban areas of the province; and

“Whereas despite paying into the province's two-cents-a-litre gas tax initiative, residents of rural municipalities like Haldimand and Norfolk counties are effectively shut out of this growing source of cash support for transit;

“We, the undersigned, ask the Ontario government to investigate the establishment of connecting public transit links between Haldimand county and Norfolk county communities and outlying municipalities, as well as to establish a mechanism to ensure rural municipalities receive the full benefit of the gas tax transit initiative.”

I agree with these sentiments, and I affix my signature to these petitions.

SOCIAL SERVICES FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and I'd like to thank Catholic Family Services of Peel for having sent it in. It's entitled Fairness for Families in the 905 Belt. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the population of the Greater Toronto region will increase by an estimated four million more people in the next generation, with the bulk of that growth coming in the 905 belt of fast-growing cities located north, east and west of Metro Toronto; and

“Whereas these cities are already large and dynamic population units, with big-city issues and big-city needs, requiring big-city resources to implement big-city solutions to social issues and human services needs;

“Whereas the 2007-08 Ontario budget proposes aggressive and badly needed increases in operating funding to build and strengthen capacity in develop-

mental and social services agencies and to invest in helping the young, the weak, the needy and the vulnerable; and

“Whereas the social and human services sectors in the 905 belt have historically received per capita funding far below that of other regions despite facing far greater growth in the populations they serve, and this per capita funding gap has increased in the last four years;

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

“That the 2007-08 Ontario budget implementing measures to strengthen Ontario’s families be passed without delay, and that the first priority for the allocation of new funding in meeting the government of Ontario’s commitment to fairness for families flow to the social services agencies serving cities within the 905 belt, and that funding for programs to serve the 905 belt be allocated to established or growing agencies located within the 905 belt.”

I think this perfectly encapsulates a very commonly held sentiment in the 905 belt, and I’ll ask page Sridaya to carry it.

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): “Petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

DISABLED PERSONS PARKING PERMIT PROGRAM

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): On behalf of the member from Manitoulin.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there currently exist problems of exposure to theft and the weather when displaying a disabled person parking permit on a motorcycle while parked in a disabled parking space;

“We, the undersigned, petition our members of Parliament to promote the development of a special, fixed permit as proposed by the Bikers Rights Organization, for use by disabled persons who ride or are passengers on

motorcycles, even if that requires an amendment to the Highway Traffic Act.”

I sign my name to this petition in support of such an action.

1540

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

I support this petition and affix my name to it, and send it down with page Doug.

DISABLED PERSONS PARKING PERMIT PROGRAM

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward–Hastings): I’m presenting this petition on behalf of the member for Algoma–Manitoulin.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there currently exist problems of exposure to theft and the weather when displaying a disabled person parking permit on a motorcycle while parked in a disabled parking space;

“We, the undersigned, petition our members of Parliament to promote the development of a special, fixed permit as proposed by the Bikers Rights Organization, for use by disabled persons who ride or are passengers on motorcycles, even if that requires an amendment to the Highway Traffic Act.”

I’m pleased to add my signature to this petition.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford): I’m very pleased to rise today and present a petition to the Legislature which reads as follows:

“Whereas the price of gas is reaching historic price levels; and

“Whereas provincial and federal governments have done nothing to protect consumers from high gas prices; and

“Whereas provincial tax on gas is 14 cents per litre and federal tax is 10 cents per litre, plus 6% GST; and

“Whereas these taxes have a detrimental impact on the economy and are unfair to commuters who rely on vehicles to travel to work; and

“Whereas the province has the power to set the price of gas and has taken responsibility for energy prices in other areas, such as hydro and natural gas; and

“Whereas we call on the province to remove the 14.7-cents-per-litre gas tax and on the federal government to eliminate the 10-cent gas tax, plus 6% GST, which amounts to 30% or more;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and urge the Premier to take action and to also persuade the federal government to remove its gas taxes.”

I support the petition and affix my signature.

PARENTING EDUCATION

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads:

“Whereas effective parenting practices do not come instinctively and parenting is our most crucial social role, parenting and human development courses need to be taught to all secondary school students. Parenting education will: reduce teen pregnancies; reduce the rate of costly fetal alcohol spectrum disorders and increase the number of healthy pregnancies; reduce the number of costly social problems related to ineffective parenting practices; and improve the ‘social fabric’ of Ontario to create a more civil society. Parenting education for students is considered to be socially valuable by a majority of adults of voting age and should be included as a mandatory credit course within the Ontario curriculum;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the requirements for the Ontario secondary school diploma to include one senior-level ... credit course in parenting education ... as a compulsory credit.”

I agree with the petition and will affix my signature thereto, and pass it to Julie.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

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

“Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) is a registered charity and private police force autonomously enforcing federal, provincial and municipal animal laws under the provincial animal act without any type of provincial oversight or accountability mechanism in place; and

“Whereas, in 2006, resigned OSPCA director and treasurer Garnet Lasby stated, ‘Government, not the

humane society, should be in charge of enforcing laws to protect animals and to prosecute offenders’; and

“Whereas, in 1989, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) formally requested the province step in to remove police powers from the OSPCA; and

“Whereas, in 2006, the Ontario Farm Animal Council (OFAC) stated, ‘The number of questions and complaints from the farm community about specific cases and the current enforcement system continues to increase’; and

“Whereas the Animal Care Review Board, a tribunal staffed by volunteers, is the only OSPCA appeals mechanism available outside the court system; and

“Whereas the OSPCA recently received \$1.8 million from the province and is lobbying for additional long-term stable funding;

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

“(1) That the Legislative Assembly direct the provincial government to ensure that members of the Animal Care Review Board tribunal are adequately trained in accepted provincial livestock practices and have some legal training to rule competently on issues brought before them;

“(2) That the Legislative Assembly direct the provincial government to investigate the resignation of 29 OSPCA directors (including the chair and the treasurer) who in May 2006 urged ‘the province to step in and investigate insane abuse and animal cruelty charges’; and

“(3) That the Legislative Assembly direct the provincial government to appoint an ombudsman to investigate allegations of abuses of police powers against the OSPCA.”

I present this petition on behalf of many concerned citizens who have signed it from my constituency.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry–Prescott–Russell): I have a petition from the people of Pendleton and Curran.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we, the concerned citizens of Pendleton, oppose construction of an ethanol plant/biodigester 500 metres from the village;

“Whereas concerns about ecological disasters with the usage of two pipelines five kilometres each, containing manure, commercial greases and fats piped over two waterways and then to be spread over the lands;

“Whereas water consumption and protection when utilizing approximately 16 million litres per year, elevated nitrate levels and land erosion;

“Whereas health and safety concerns, putting a slow-burning gas tank (biodigester) right beside a highly explosive tank (ethanol plant), non-existent fire resources in case of such disaster, adverse effects of gases permeating the air downwind to the village;

“Whereas economic development concerns for our three campgrounds, golf course, restaurant, recreational trail;

“Whereas social development concerns for our two churches and school affiliation to Pope John Paul II;

“Whereas increased financial concerns, as we will all need a water filtration system....

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

“That the provincial government introduce legislation requiring that all construction of mega hog operations, biodigesters and ethanol plants be restricted to a proximity of a minimum of three kilometres of any village.”

I do support this petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INDEPENDENT POLICE REVIEW ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR L'EXAMEN INDÉPENDANT DE LA POLICE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 10, 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. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to the order of the House dated May 14, 2007, I am now required to put the question.

On April 3, 2007, Mr. Zimmer moved 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. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1549 to 1559.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be counted by the table.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Hoy, Pat	Peters, Steve
Balkissoon, Bas	Hudak, Tim	Phillips, Gerry
Barrett, Toby	Jeffrey, Linda	Prue, Michael
Bentley, Christopher	Klees, Frank	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bradley, James J.	Kormos, Peter	Racco, Mario G.
Broten, Laurel C.	Kular, Kuldeep	Ramal, Khalil
Brownell, Jim	Kwinter, Monte	Ramsay, David
Bryant, Michael	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Rinaldi, Lou
Caplan, David	Levac, Dave	Runciman, Robert W.
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	MacLeod, Lisa	Ruprecht, Tony
Chan, Michael	Marchese, Rosario	Sandals, Liz

Chudleigh, Ted	Martel, Shelley	Scott, Laurie
Crozier, Bruce	Matthews, Deborah	Sergio, Mario
Delaney, Bob	Mauro, Bill	Smith, Monique
Dhillon, Vic	McNeely, Phil	Smitherman, George
Di Cocco, Caroline	Meilleur, Madeleine	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Miller, Norm	Sterling, Norman W.
Duncan, Dwight	Milloy, John	Tascona, Joseph N.
Dunlop, Garfield	Mitchell, Carol	Tory, John
Elliott, Christine	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Van Bommel, Maria
Ferreira, Paul	Munro, Julia	Wilkinson, John
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	O'Toole, John	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Fonseca, Peter	Oraziotti, David	Yakubuski, John
Gerretsen, John	Parsons, Ernie	Zimmer, David
Hardeman, Ernie	Patten, Richard	

The Acting Speaker: I'm required to ask if anyone's opposed to the motion.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 74; the nays are 0.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

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

LONG-TERM CARE HOMES ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LES FOYERS DE SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 29, 2007, on the motion for third reading of Bill 140, An Act respecting long-term care homes / Projet de loi 140, Loi concernant les foyers de soins de longue durée.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When the House last debated Bill 140 at third reading, the member for Nickel Belt had the floor. I'm pleased to recognize the member for Nickel Belt.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Speaker, before I begin my remarks, I want to introduce some of my friends who are up in the public gallery today: Lawrence Walter, the government relations officer for the Ontario Nurses' Association; Shalom Schachter, interest arbitration and long-term-care regulation league for the Ontario Nurses' Association; and in the members' gallery I've got Sharleen Stewart, international Canadian vice-president, Service Employees International Union, Local 1.0n, Cathy Carroll, secretary-treasurer, SEIU, Local 1.0n, and Emanuel Carvalho, SEIU.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Could I ask the House to come to order so that I can hear the member from Nickel Belt. There are quite a number of private conversations going on.

The member for Nickel Belt.

Ms. Martel: Thank you, Speaker. When I was last speaking to this bill on March 29, 2007, I had just gone through the concerns the New Democrats have with the fact that at that time, as we spoke, there still was not a standard in place for care hours per resident per day in Ontario. Here we are, a number of weeks later, and there still isn't a standard with respect to the hands-on care that residents in Ontario long-term-care homes can receive every day. That's one of a number of reasons that we are not supporting this bill.

The second reason is the fact that the government has refused to put into the bill Ombudsman oversight for long-term care. Since as long ago as April 22, 2005, there has been a move among seniors' organizations in particular to have the current Ombudsman have oversight of long-term care. I want to read into the record a letter that was sent to Ministers Smitherman and Bradley from the seniors' advisory committee on long-term care. This is a committee, I should point out, of seniors' organizations that was appointed by this government to give advice and counsel to the government on issues affecting seniors. They said as follows:

"At its March 22, 2005, meeting, a motion was passed by we, the members of the seniors' advisory committee on long-term care in support of the government appointing a seniors' ombudsman for long-term-care home residents and people receiving home care services."

Some members also supported expanding the mandate of the seniors' ombudsman to include all provincially funded programs serving seniors: "This approach will contribute significantly to the health and well-being of older Ontarians; in fact, all Ontarians. Moreover, we believe that establishing the seniors' ombudsman aligns with the government's vision of ensuring seniors live safely and with dignity and receive the appropriate care where they choose to live." That was March 22, 2005.

On February 17, 2006, the Royal Canadian Legion, Ontario command, wrote to Premier McGuinty and said the following:

"I am writing on behalf of the Royal Canadian Legion, Ontario command, to request the expansion of the mandate of the Ombudsman of Ontario to include long-term-care issues. We are supported in this request by our provincial veterans services and seniors committee, our officers, our membership and many of your colleagues in the Ontario Legislature.

"To our chagrin, Minister Smitherman, who once supported the notion, is now suggesting that those who are not comfortable or satisfied with government mechanisms to resolve an issue may direct their issues to community-based channels that exist. None of these community-based groups has the teeth of an ombudsman and we do not even recommend a separate ombudsman. A mere expansion of the jurisdiction and mandate of the office of the Ontario ombudsman is what is needed."

The Legion felt very strongly that, in a meeting that they had with the Minister of Health in 2005, it was communicated to them that the minister was in fact going to establish an ombudsman provision for long-term care. That was why, when the bill was finally introduced in October 2006, they were very disappointed with the fact that there is no provision in the bill for an independent ombudsman or for the mandate of the current Ombudsman to be extended. So they put out a press release dated October 5, 2006, and said the following:

"The announcements made by the Minister of Health, George Smitherman, fall far short of protecting our seniors by not announcing an ombudsman to oversee long-term-care homes and investigate complaints of care.

The Legion has received many letters of support from members of the Legislature, including many Liberal MPPs, for the creation of an ombudsman for long-term care. At a meeting in March 2005, the minister asked the Legion to be patient and wait for this legislation"—long-term-care legislation—"to be introduced. He indicated that his government would have a solution and create an ombudsman to oversee long-term-care homes and investigate complaints of care." Regrettably, that promise was not kept and nowhere in Bill 140 is there a provision for oversight, and the government of course didn't accept my amendment for that same oversight.

Let me tell you what some others who came to the committee had to say about an ombudsman. This is from the presentation made by the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario. The recommendation is the following:

"Create an independent elder health ombudsman's office to receive and process complaints, both from long-term-care residents and from other seniors."

Here's the submission from the Canadian auto-workers: "We join in urging the committee to reconsider the decision to not provide for an ombudsman for residents under this proposed bill, but rather only provide for the possibility of an adviser to the minister and assistant to residents and their families. An ombudsman office is commonplace in the United States as an integral component of their broad regulatory regime for the nursing home industry, and an independent seniors' advocate or ombudsperson office would be a welcome reform for Ontario that fosters integration in service delivery."

The government tried to peddle its proposal in the bill of an office of the long-term-care resident and family adviser as the office that would respond to complaints from those folks who really wanted an independent ombudsman. As hard as they tried to peddle that office as the solution, and the response to those many organizations who wanted ombudsman's oversight, it's clear that they didn't get very far in that spin. Let me read into the record from a number of organizations again that are not satisfied with what the government has offered up and that indeed want an independent person to deal with long-term care. This goes back to the seniors' advisory committee, that same committee that's supposed to give advice to the government on seniors' issues. The government is supposed to listen to that advice.

1610

Let me go back to their August 18, 2005, letter. They said: "Representing more than one million seniors, the members of SACLTC support having a seniors ombudsman to advocate for long-term-care-home residents and to resolve consumer complaints about home care provided within Ontario communities. We feel the current system, which relies solely on government staff, is simply not responsive enough to ensure seniors' rights are protected in an objective and fair fashion. We recommend the ombudsman be independent of any ministerial control or influence and would have the power to investigate concerns and, within reasonable constraints,

direct the government to take remedial action when all other avenues" have been exhausted.

Here's what the Legion said in its letter to Dalton McGuinty about the need for independence: "Our experience as advocates for veterans has led us to conclude that some cases are never resolved through existing channels. And although we support resolutions of problems at the lowest level possible, some residents and their families never receive resolution to valid complaints. Families are often handicapped in pursuing their complaint about the care of a loved one by lack of access or the cost of access to relevant files which would allow them to validate their concerns. At the end of the day, there is no one with the investigative reach of the Ombudsman when all other efforts to resolve the problems have failed."

Here are some the presentations that we got through the committee hearings about this government's proposal for an office, which of course is not independent of the government. This is from the MS Society of Canada:

"While the creation of the Office of the long-Term-Care-Homes Residential Family Adviser appears to be useful and helpful, as is the strengthening of 'whistle-blower' protections, an ombudsman for long-term care should be created or the existing Ombudsman's responsibilities should be expanded to include long-term care."

Let me read one more into the record. This comes from the Ontario Coalition of Senior Citizens' Organizations. They say the following:

"We have been advocating for years for the establishment of a complaints office with an arm's-length relationship to the ministry. We, and many other citizens' organizations, have called for an ombuds-like office which could investigate and act on complaints as well as reports of witnessed or suspected abuse or neglect. The establishment of such an office could, if its existence were widely publicized, come to be seen as a safe venue for both residents and potential whistle-blowers to address. The ministry needs to recognize that the fear factor operates for staff as well as residents, especially when the bill ultimately leaves their safety from retaliation to the Ontario Labour Relations Board. Our recommendation remains. It is as follows: Establish an ombuds-like office for all senior care, community or residential, to which residents, family and staff can feel safe in reporting."

It was as a result of what we heard during the hearings and the result of hearing clearly from people that this office of long-term care that the government was putting forward was just not going to cut it in terms of an independent venue for complaints that I put forward the following motion on behalf of New Democrats under section 35.1 of Bill 140:

"35.1 The Ombudsman may exercise any functions with respect to the long-term-care-home sector in Ontario that he or she may exercise with respect to any matter to which the Ombudsman Act applies."

Clearly, our amendment would have expanded the mandate of the current Ombudsman to cover long-term care. Regrettably, on a recorded vote the government voted that down, voted down the opportunity for the

Ombudsman to have oversight into long-term care. It seems to be a common theme of this government. I don't know what they have to fear from the Ombudsman, because they did the same thing in Bill 103, which we just passed. The government wrote in a specific restriction to ensure that the Ombudsman didn't have oversight of the police complaints process. Here, the government voted down oversight of the Ombudsman of long-term care.

Last week, dealing with another health bill, Bill 171, I put forward an amendment to that bill to say that the Ombudsman should have oversight of hospitals. That was voted down.

My colleague Ms. Horwath, when the government was dealing with Bill 210, put in an NDP amendment to have the Ombudsman have oversight of children's services. That was voted down by the Liberals as well. I don't know what the Liberals are afraid of when it comes to the Ombudsman.

Clearly, many organizations who came before the committee said that independence was absolutely required and that this government's proposal for an office that would still report to the Ministry of Health just doesn't cut it, just is not appropriate and just will not do the job of dealing with individual complaints when there's no resolution—or systemic problems in long-term care.

That's probably why I received a copy of this letter that was addressed to Mr. Bradley, the minister responsible for seniors. It's dated February 20, 2007, after the clause-by-clause was over and after the Liberals had voted down an NDP amendment to establish oversight of the Ombudsman in long-term care.

It says as follows to Minister Bradley: "Ontario Command was pleased to be asked to sit on the advisory committee on long-term care, and we were honoured to participate with the many seniors' organizations that have so effectively represented seniors' issues across the province. Indeed, a lot of our advocacy is focused on the needs of veterans and seniors in long-term care, so this committee seemed to be a good fit with our priorities.

"Regrettably, we have come to the conclusion that the committee has little bearing on the policy and legislative decisions of the government. It is therefore with considerable disappointment that we have decided to withdraw from the advisory committee on long-term care. We are no longer comfortable sitting on this committee when its recommendations are ignored.

"The committee has made it abundantly clear that seniors need an ombudsman for seniors' issues and specifically for long-term care. Despite the recommendations of the advisory committee and many others for an ombudsman, the government chose to create a position within Bill 140 that lacks the independence, the transparency and the powers of an ombudsman. We do not believe that the Office of the Long-Term Care Homes Resident and Family Adviser is equivalent to an ombudsman, and we cannot support this position as an acceptable replacement for an ombudsman.

“We see little value to our sitting on an advisory committee when the advice that is offered by the committee is ignored. We believe that the failure of the government to accept the advice given by the advisory committee discredits not just the Legion but the other groups that offer their time and expertise on this committee. Ontario Command therefore regrettably tenders its resignation from the seniors’ secretariat advisory committee on long-term care.”

It was very clear from the committee hearings that many people, not just the Ontario Command—although they certainly have been advocating for Ombudsman oversight for a long time—many other organizations and individuals who came to the committee made it clear that what was required was an independent body for the investigation of complaints, for dealing with systemic challenges in long-term care and for advocacy. The government ignored what the public had to say about that and instead went with an office that is tied directly to the Ministry of Health, is not independent at all and will do very little, if anything, to resolve the ongoing concerns that are out there about where families can go, where residents can go, where workers can go when they need their complaints dealt with in a timely fashion.

I regret very much that the government was not prepared to extend the current Ombudsman’s role to include oversight over long-term care.

The third reason that we are not able to support this bill has to do with the fixed-term licences that the government proposes in this bill. Through the bill, the government is tying the licences of homes directly to their structural compliance. If a home can’t meet or refuses to meet or doesn’t meet the government’s standards with respect to capital upgrades, then the operating licence can be pulled. The NDP recommended voting against fixed licences and, instead, if there was a problem with respect to a particular home, have the government, through an individual licence, deal with anybody who is noncompliant and apply terms and conditions to that individual operator’s licence.

We also pointed out that any of the structural upgrades to B and C beds were going to require a capital improvement program of the government. The government failed to deliver that in the budget. As we stand here today, there still is not an upgrade program in the province so that long-term-care homes can bring their B and C beds into compliance. We have serious concerns with that failure to have a program and with the fact that there is a fixed licence scheme that is in place. I want to read into the record some of the comments I made when I voted against the sections around fixed-term licences in the committee.

We heard, during the course of the public hearings, some very direct concerns from operators. Let me start with that. I’m talking about some direct questions that were raised with operators, particularly operators of small homes in rural areas and of not-for-profit homes. Those are the folks I want to focus on because the reality is, the chains will always be able to manage no matter

what. I’m not worried about the chain operations when I look at this particular section.

We clearly heard from small operators and from small not-for-profits that already financial institutions that they have a relationship with are raising concerns about what is proposed in this bill. This is in January. The nature of the concern is that these homes are now going to be a risk. It’s leading those very same financial institutions to suggest that because of the risk, they would be increasing their borrowing rates or putting other terms and conditions on mortgages or new mortgages. That, of course, will increase the cost of borrowing. The only folks who are going to benefit from that are the banks.

I’m not interested in a scheme that increases the benefits to the banks. We can argue about whether or not the position being put forward by the financial institutions is legitimate. The reality is that we heard during the course of the hearings from people who said that this was already happening. We have to acknowledge that; we have to respond to it.

1620

Secondly, I look at why the government is putting forward fixed licences. I can only assume the government wants to do this because they’re trying to ensure there’s a redevelopment of B and C beds in Ontario. I’d ask the government to consider a more historical perspective around redevelopment. If you look at the experience of the renewal of D beds, 14,000 out of the 16,000 did rebuild within the time frame that was set out by the former Conservative government, without any licence tied to structure. So 14,000 out of 16,000, from my perspective, is quite a significant number of operators who complied. Granted, they complied because there was a capital funding project that was available, but I think that this government, in whatever it does, is going to have to acknowledge that and respond. Without any kind of capital program in place, like the Conservatives had in the last mandate, I don’t think we’re going to see any redevelopment. There will be a number of smaller homes, not-for-profit, even for-profit, that will not be able to manage the financial costs associated with redevelopment.

The final point I want to make is that if the government has specific concerns about specific homes, they could deal with those under section 99, which talks about conditions of the licence. Subsection 99(1) says, “(1) A licence is subject to the conditions, if any, that are provided for in the regulations.” As I read that, I see that if the government has some specific concerns about specific homes that they think won’t comply, even in an environment where there is a capital redevelopment program, then deal with those specific homes by attaching something to their own licence. Don’t cover the waterfront with everybody in the way that it is being covered now with respect to the fixed licence.

My final point is that I think it was clear with the D beds and the government’s capital program that homes and operators did step up to the plate and did make the structural changes that were required. I think that if this

government had a redevelopment program, the same scenario would follow: Those operators with B and C beds would also step up to the plate. You're not going to have 35,000 B and C beds recreated overnight into two-bed wards. But the D beds weren't altered overnight either. Clearly, any kind of structural plan, financial plan to aid in the restructuring of these beds will have to be carried out over a period of time, and the government can hopefully fix a set number of beds that it would like to see renovated, redone or upgraded each fiscal year.

I come down on the side of not having a licence with a fixed term because I think to tie a licence to the age and structure of a home is just going to cause all kinds of grief for smaller for-profit and not-for-profit homes in a way that they don't need to have problems caused. If the government was out there with a capital program, the experience that we have historically seen—and it is a most recent experience—is that operators will comply, will come forward and the redevelopment work will be done.

Some of us thought that during the budget the government was actually going to announce a capital development program for B and C beds, but there was nothing. As we stand here today in mid-May, there is still nothing with respect to a redevelopment program for B and C beds in the province, some 35,000 of them.

I can tell you, having listened to the presentations that were made during the course of the public hearings, if the government doesn't come forward with a redevelopment plan and continues to tie licences to structural compliance, you will absolutely see many small, rural for-profit and not-for-profit homes close. They will not have the financial ability to redevelop and be in compliance; they will not. We heard that very clearly during the course of the public hearings. We heard very clearly during the course of the public hearings that financial institutions were already telling small homes that they were going to increase the cost of borrowing because they see them to be a risk now as a result of this fixed-licence scheme. We heard that during the course of the public hearings. Yet the government has done nothing to respond to that, and the only people who are going to make money through this whole scheme are the banks, because they're the ones that are going to charge the extra premium because now they consider smaller homes a risk.

They're going to make the money, and too many smaller homes will not be able to have the money in place to actually do the redevelopment that is required. It will serve no one by having any number of smaller homes shut down in rural areas across this province. I don't know why the government didn't respond in a positive way, because they heard again and again from small operators who said this was a very serious problem for them.

The fourth concern I want to raise has to do with the lack of this government's commitment to the not-for-profits and the municipal sector in long-term care. The best argument that I can make in this regard has to do

with a submission that was put forward to us by the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario on January 16, 2007. I want to read some of this into the record. The title is "Supporting Not-For-Profit Delivery."

"In Ontario, the trend has been toward increasing for-profit delivery of long-term care. Over 65% of the 12,000 new beds awarded in Ontario went to for-profit agencies, raising the share of for-profit beds to 52% from 48%. There is considerable evidence on the differences between for-profit and not-for-profit delivery in the long-term-care sector.

"Canadian evidence found that staffing levels were higher in not-for-profit facilities than in for-profit facilities, and health outcomes were better in not-for-profit facilities. As one set of researchers concluded, differences in staffing were likely to result in the observed differences in health outcomes.

"A review of North American nursing homes studies for 1990 to 2002 similarly concluded that for-profit homes appeared to deliver poorer quality care in a number of process and outcome areas. These results are consistent with the literature on for-profit and not-for-profit delivery.

"A systemic review and meta-analysis of all available peer-reviewed literature on for-profit versus not-for-profit health care delivery has served to eliminate all reasonable doubt about the evidence. The first two papers produced by this review showed that people were more likely to die in for-profit than not-for-profit hospitals on hemodialysis units. The third article concluded that for-profit hospitals charged significantly more than not-for-profit hospitals—19% more.

"Research has come to the same conclusion about health plans. A study of plans enrolling American medicare beneficiaries found that not-for-profit plans delivered higher quality care in all four clinical services assessed.

"As written, the bill does very little to support not-for-profit provision of long-term care. RNAO calls for four steps to enhance this dimension of the bill:

"(1) Amend the preamble to include a commitment to upholding the principles and conditions of the Canada Health Act and to promoting and supporting not-for-profit provision of long-term care.

"(2) Strengthen part VII by incorporating in section 95 a governing principle of supporting not-for-profit ownership of long-term-care homes so as to meet the commitment to promote not-for-profit care.

"(3) Strengthen part VII by including a right of first refusal for not-for-profit homes in the granting of any new beds. This would cover any provisions for competitive bidding under section 113 and any undertaking to issue a licence under section 98.

"(4) Amend section 113 to ensure that any competitive process should not disadvantage the establishment of not-for-profit homes or reduce the number or share of not-for-profit beds in Ontario."

As a result of that very compelling evidence that was put forward by RNAO, and the fact that RNAO itself

identified that the bill, Bill 140, did very little to support not-for-profit provision, I put forward a number of amendments that responded directly to the recommendations that were made by the RNAO in their submission. Let me tell you what happened.

With respect to including in the preamble a commitment to upholding the principles and conditions of the Canada Health Act and promoting not-for-profit provision of long-term care, the best that the Liberals could do was to put in a principle that said they were promoting not-for-profit provision. There was no mention at all in the preamble about committing to the principles and the conditions of the Canada Health Act; nowhere does it appear in the preamble, despite what RNAO said. The government chose to vote down my amendment which talked about upholding the principles of the Canada Health Act and support for not-for-profit care, and the only change that the government made was a provision in the preamble about support for not-for-profit care.

What's interesting is that the preamble sets out the principle, but the body of the bill sets out those real provisions that would affect not-for-profit care. If the government were really interested in supporting not-for-profit care, there would have been some further changes in the legislation that actually put that in place—not just some spin in the preamble about how we care about the not-for-profit sector, but some actual provisions in the bill that would clearly indicate the government's commitment to not-for-profit care.

1630

Let me tell you what the government voted down in that regard. I put forward an amendment, just like the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario suggested, that said as follows:

“First refusal for non-profits

“(2) The minister shall give a right of first refusal to not-for-profit operators or municipal or county governments when establishing new long-term-care beds.”

Right of first refusal to the not-for-profits—the Liberals voted that amendment down. This would have been concrete evidence that they actually supported the not-for-profit sector, that it wasn't just spin in the preamble and that they actually meant what they said. When I moved a motion that said that for any new beds that are going to be considered, the not-for-profit sector will get the right of first refusal, the government voted that down. What does that say to you about this government's commitment to not-for-profit long-term care? I think it speaks volumes about the lack of commitment of this government to not-for-profit long-term-care beds.

Here's the second amendment that I put forward, again based on the recommendations given to us by the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario:

“I move that section 113 of the bill be struck out and the following substituted:

“First refusal for non-profits

“113(1) A competitive process may be applied after not-for-profit providers are given the first right of refusal for new licences.

“Restrictions on competitive process

“(2) The competitive process shall not be operated in such a manner as to disadvantage the establishment of non-profit or municipal long-term-care homes or have a detrimental effect on the number of non-profit and municipal long-term-care homes relative to for-profit homes in the area or in Ontario.”

It's very close to recommendation 3 that was made by RNAO to make sure that there would be no disadvantage to the not-for-profit sector if there was a competitive process in place for new beds. Did the government agree with my amendment that was put forward on behalf of RNAO? No, the government did not. The government voted down that amendment too. So a second area in the bill where there would have been some concrete evidence that the government was prepared to put not-for-profits first was voted down by the government members.

All we're left with is the government trying to spin in the preamble that they really are committed to not-for-profit delivery of long-term care. When it came to the government actually putting concrete measures into Bill 140 to give effect to the preamble, to make it clear that the government was in support and would use mechanisms and measures in Bill 140 to ensure that not-for-profits had the right of first refusal, or if there was a competitive process, not-for-profits would not be disadvantaged, when the government had the opportunity to put those measures in place, the government voted down the NDP amendments that would have done so.

What are we left with? We're left with a bill that in the preamble gives the government's spin that they care about not-for-profits and are committed to not-for-profit delivery of long-term care, but the rest of the bill, the body of the bill that puts into effect measures around the provision of long-term care and who gets new long-term-care beds, is silent on support.

The government had an opportunity to listen to RNAO. The government had an opportunity to put in place some measures that would give concrete effect to the spin in the preamble that they care about not-for-profits, and the government refused to do that. I think that speaks volumes, clearly speaks volumes, about the lack of commitment by the Liberal government to not-for-profit long-term care and not-for-profit long-term-care beds.

In conclusion, let me say this: I appreciated very much those people who came out to the public hearings. Many people over the more than four days that we sat came out to public hearings. ONA was very good to come out. SEIU was very good to come out. A number of other trade unions and their workers came out. We heard from a number of municipal operators and for-profit and not-for-profit operators as well.

The concerns that I raised here on third readings were similar to concerns that I raised on second reading, and those concerns have not been addressed. As we stand here today, in Ontario there is not in place a minimum standard of care for any resident in any long-term-care home anywhere in the province Ontario. The government

promised in the last election that it was going to reinstate a minimum standard of 2.25 hours. That didn't appear in Bill 140. All that appears is a very weak provision that says that, "In the regulations, we'll develop a standard of care. We don't know when, we don't know what it will be, and we don't know if it's ever going to come to fruition. Maybe we'll keep our fingers crossed." That is not good enough for residents and their families, who believed the Liberals when they promised in the last election that they were going to do something in this regard.

We disagree fundamentally with the fact that there is no independent ombudsman for long-term care. We heard over and over again why that was necessary and why the government's proposal for an office that essentially is run by the Ministry of Health is not going to work to respond to people's concerns. We remain very concerned about the fixed licences and very concerned that when the government had an opportunity to really show clear evidence of support for not-for-profits, the government refused to do that in Bill 140.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure you and other members of the House join with me in welcoming Shelley back. We haven't had a good Shelley rant in a while, and it was great to see you in fine form this afternoon.

I too want to thank those stakeholder groups who joined us today, the representatives from the SEIU and our nursing organizations. We appreciate your fortitude in coming out again for another day of discussion on Bill 140. I also want to join with Shelley—the member for Nickel Belt; sorry, Speaker—in thanking all those who came out to our hearings in Sudbury and London and Kingston and Toronto. We certainly heard a great deal from a variety of stakeholders, and we appreciated all of those people taking the time.

We have done a great deal of consultation with our various stakeholders over the last four years since we came into office, starting with the review that I did on long-term care back in 2004, where I met with over 100 stakeholders, different groups and organizations. We also issued the white paper, of course, leading up to the drafting of the legislation, and we had over 750 responses to that. We appreciated all the input we had moving into the drafting phase.

Again, during the committee hearings, we got some constructive criticism. We had two days of clause-by-clause hearings, during which time we reviewed hundreds of amendments, and I think the legislation is the better for it, having adopted many of those amendments and coming forward with a stronger piece of legislation here in third reading today.

If passed, our legislation will, of course, entrench in legislation the bill of rights that so many of our residents benefit from. It promotes zero tolerance of abuse and neglect. It provides whistle-blower protection for our staff, which is so important so that they feel secure in reporting any concerns that they have. It will require, in

legislation, that we have a registered nurse on site 24/7, and it incorporates a requirement that we use minimal restraints in our homes.

Ms. Martel raised a number of concerns which I will try to address over the afternoon. There was some fearmongering there, and I will address that as well in a subsequent opportunity. But I think this is a great piece of legislation, and it's moving the entire long-term-care sector forward in a very constructive and positive way.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I wanted to get on the record a resolution I received from the municipality of Magnetawan on Bill 140. It was passed at the April 25, 2007, meeting, and it says:

"Whereas the council of the municipality of Magnetawan recognizes the need to provide long-term health care; and

"Whereas, with the current underfunding, municipal levies have continually increased to assist Eastholme, our home for the aged; and

"Whereas current funding is not sufficient to cover inflation on existing costs such as wages and benefits or utilities or cover the increased complex-care needs of the home's residents to meet ministry standards; and

"Whereas with the passing of Bill 140 in respect of a new Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2006, there are concerns that more of the home's limited resources will be spent on the new administrative requirements of standards, compliance and documentation, leading to less money getting to the bedsides of residents; and

"Whereas any possible increase to the accommodation subsidy each year is currently not a reliable source of funding; and

"Whereas the province has not lived up to its commitment to increase funding for nursing care by \$6,000 per resident; and

"Whereas the 2007 provincial budget did not provide any permanent additional operating funding for long-term-care homes; and

"Whereas the province has not addressed the lack of funding opportunities for boards of management operating district homes for the aged which have unincorporated townships within their jurisdiction;

"Now therefore the council of the corporation of the municipality of Magnetawan requests that the province provide increased subsidies to ensure adequate care of residents in long-term-care homes."

That was passed at the council meeting of Magnetawan on April 25. It shows the concerns they have with the government not keeping its promise to increase funding by \$6,000 per resident of long-term-care homes, as was promised in the 2003 election. They are passing this resolution, obviously, because they would like to see the government keep that promise.

1640

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): It was during just my second week here in this place that the member for Nickel Belt began her interjection on third reading of Bill 140. I must say the six-week intermission was well worth the wait, listening to her and the second

half of her hour this afternoon. Her first half-hour—and I want to refresh the memory of members of the House—was spent primarily, in fact just about all of it, on the minimum standard of care provision.

Today, I know the member for Nickel Belt devoted most of her time to the need for ombudsman oversight of long-term-care facilities, but I want to go back to her initial half-hour. One of the things she raised at the time—and perhaps she can tell us if she has yet to receive an answer. She had put in a freedom-of-information request because, as we have heard, this government claims that it would be unhelpful or a bad idea for us to once again have in Ontario a minimum standard of care. Seeing as how we received submissions from a fairly substantial list of organizations saying the exact opposite, the member for Nickel Belt asked, in her freedom-of-information request, for a list of the organizations, the witnesses, who agreed with the government. That was back—I hope I have the date right—on October 4. The last update we received was on March 29. Here we are in the middle of May, with the clock on this House rapidly ticking down, and I am wondering if the member for Nickel Belt has received a response to her very thoughtful query of the government.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It's a pleasure to join the debate today, having heard from some other members of this House on this important issue.

I think, when you look at long-term care, you can't help but see perhaps yourself in the home someday. You sort of look at it through that lens: "I may be in that room or in that facility someday." Certainly you can look at your friends and your families who are maybe utilizing this service today. I don't think you can ignore the fact that we're all headed down that road ourselves and that this may be where we end up one day. If only for reasons of enlightened self-interest, you would want to make sure we're doing all we can do in that regard.

I think all members from all parties would agree that what we would like to see for ourselves and for our loved ones, relatives, is a place where there is dignity, where the health care standard is good, where the diet is good, where the food is of high quality, where the staffing levels are high, where there is proper training and where they're staffed well. So if you look at any piece of legislation, from time to time a responsible approach might be to review that legislation and see if you can't make it better, see if you can't improve upon things.

This has been a responsible approach, I believe. It has been a long process. It has dealt with some very important issues and there has been a variety of opinions expressed on these issues. It's time to move on. The bill, if passed, with the amendments that are presented as well, would establish staffing and care standards, which I believe were supported by the New Democratic Party. I'm not sure if they were supported by the official opposition. We would be extending the licences and the licence period, fixed licences.

Third reading is being presented with amendments that I think make this a bill that is worthy of passage at

this point in time. So I would ask all members to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Nickel Belt.

Ms. Martel: I want to thank the members from Nipissing, Parry Sound–Muskoka, York South–Weston and Oakville for their comments. I didn't put the member for York South–Weston up to this, but I'm glad he raised it, because I was going to do it in my two-minute response. On October 4, I did put in a freedom-of-information request asking the Ministry of Health to give me the list of names of individuals and organizations who told the government during its consultations on long-term care that a minimum standard of care was not appropriate, not on. This came as a result of comments that were made by the minister on October 4, when the bill was introduced, and he said, "Consultations for the legislation led the government to believe minimum hours of care was a bad idea."

Speaker, do you know that it was two days ago—two days ago—that I finally got a response from the Ministry of Health, and the one and only group that said they were not interested in a minimum standard of care was the Ontario Long-Term Care Association. Through all the consultations, from the hundreds of people the government heard from, the Ontario Long-Term Care Association was the only organization that said they didn't believe in minimum standards of care. I have had that discussion before with Karen Sullivan, and we agreed to disagree on that point, but that was the only group. Everybody else came and said that standards were imperative.

That's what the government promised in the last election, that they were going to reinstate 2.25 hours of hands-on care per resident per day. The government promised they were going to provide an additional \$6,000 per resident in long-term-care homes as well.

We stand here today and there isn't a standard of care in place. There's a provision in the bill that says maybe by regulation, at some point, at some time, there will be some standard. We don't know when, how, where, or what it will be, despite the government's promise. We stand here today and know that in the last budget only a minimum amount was given to long-term care. Only about \$2,300 of the \$6,000 that was promised has actually been provided to residents in long-term care.

What do we need? We need the government to keep its promise and provide an additional \$6,000 per resident, we need a minimum standard of care that should be at least 3.5 hours of care per day, we need an independent ombudsman, we need a redevelopment program, and we need support for not-for-profit long-term care. We don't have those things in this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph–Wellington): I'm delighted to rise in support of Bill 140, our bill on long-term care. Actually, I'd like to begin by thanking my colleague

from Nipissing, Monique Smith, who's done wonderful work on this file over several years and I'm sure is very pleased to see we've finally gotten to third reading.

Just to bring viewers up to date, the Long-Term Care Homes Act, Bill 140, went through second reading when the House was sitting last fall. Then it went through extensive public hearings during January and I think early February. In fact, it travelled to a number of cities around the province for public hearings, and there were also public hearings here in Toronto. I know I was certainly fortunate to be included in the one day when they were here in Toronto and to have the opportunity to participate in the public hearings. Of course, now the bill has been amended and it is being reported back and we are working on third reading debate.

I think it may be useful to review some of the changes that were made when the bill was at clause-by-clause, when it was at committee.

One of the things that we did indeed hear from most of the groups was that there was interest in seeing the reinstatement of a standard of care for long-term care. You will recall, Speaker, that when the previous government was here, the Conservative government, the standards of care which were in place at that time had been removed, and there has been a lot of discussion since then about whether we should reinstate those. In fact, we have done just that. We have introduced into Bill 140 the power to make a regulation that will allow us to define the standards of care that are required in long-term-care homes.

You may ask, why didn't we just put some number right in the bill? Why didn't we legislate it? Well, in the first place, requirements change over time. As the acuity of residents in long-term care goes up or down, you may want to adjust that standard of care. But more importantly—and this was certainly true the day I was listening to delegations here in Toronto—the various different groups that were presenting to us, number one, didn't agree on how to define care; that is, they didn't agree on whether it should be nursing care, whether it should be care from just registered nurses, whether it should be registered practical nurses, which forms of care should be included in the standard, which forms of care should be excluded from the standard. And then there was substantial disagreement on the amount of care that would be provided.

1650

So while this may seem like an easy issue—just put it in the bill—in fact there is still significant discussion going on about how that issue should be defined. Once we have concluded those consultations, presuming, we hope, that the bill will be passed, then the regulations will be brought in, and there will be a regulation defining the standards of care required in long-term-care homes.

However, I think it really is worth noting that we, as a government, have not waited to have legislative standards of care. We have gone ahead and provided additional funding for long-term-care homes. Since 2004, we have provided the funding for 4,900 new direct care

staff in long-term-care homes; of those, 1,100 are nurses. In fact, just very recently we announced \$57.7 million. That money, almost \$60 million in additional funding to long-term-care homes, will be used to hire an additional 1,200 registered practical nurses in long-term-care homes.

So I certainly wouldn't want viewers to think that nothing has been done about improving the standard of long-term care. We have been doing that very actively each and every year that we have been here in office. We have been continually improving the standard of long-term care.

One of the things we're doing in Bill 140 is introducing the concept of a fixed-term licence. The term of the licence can range up to 25 years, depending on the age of the home. Some of the amendments that we brought into place for those older homes will extend the licence term.

Let me assure listeners that in fact with these longer-term licences, if a home fails to meet the standards, if a home fails to comply with the licensing requirements, then that licence may be revoked. That's a change from the way it used to be. There used to be a one-year licence but automatic renewal. The longer-term licences will enable us to actually keep track more closely of whether homes are complying with the requirements.

One of the things we have already introduced is unannounced inspections. What used to happen was that there was an annual inspection of each home, but it was set up well in advance. You know what happens when you set up an inspection well in advance: Everything gets scrubbed, spit-and-polished, and everybody is on their best behaviour because they know the inspector is coming. It's not really a very good read. So one of the things we did early on as a result of the work of my colleague from Nipissing is that we introduced unannounced inspections so that when we do an inspection we're getting a view of what really goes on in the home, not what goes on when they know the inspector is coming.

So we will have the capability to revoke licences. The other thing we are introducing in this bill is the ability to do long-term planning for beds. It's interesting, if you go back and look at the Auditor General's report on long-term care in 2002, the Auditor General noted that the government of the day did not have any planning tool in place that allowed it to look at communities and say, "This community is underserved in terms of beds; this community is over-served and in fact has beds going vacant." Bill 140 will allow us to put a planning process in place. We have actually already announced, if memory serves me, about 1,600 beds. Some of those are new beds; some of those are going to be rebuilt beds. So we are working at increasing capacity.

We were very fortunate in the Guelph area that there are 300 new beds being introduced. I know one of the most frequent complaints in my constituency office over the last three years has been from folks who call and say, "I have an elderly parent, and I would really like to have them placed in a bed in Guelph, but the nearest bed is an

hour or more drive away. There just is no bed available that's possible for my parent to go into." Particularly where there are elderly couples, there are some really heartbreaking stories, when you find perhaps the elderly husband is an hour away from Guelph; the elderly wife is unable to drive, which means she's unable to visit. There really are some very sad stories.

Again, as I say, I'm delighted that we are getting 300 new beds in Guelph, and this will enable us to do that sort of planning throughout the province to make sure that we're balancing the demand for beds with the supply of beds. For me, that is good news.

I spent some time when Bill 140 was under discussion—I guess it was perhaps in January—in one of the long-term-care homes in Guelph, St. Joseph's long-term care, a very good long-term care. I actually spent some time serving meals and talking to the staff and talking to the folks who live there. One of the things that I heard from the staff, both the front-line staff and the administrative staff at St. Joe's, and from other long-term cares in my area, was a concern that Bill 140 was going to introduce very onerous requirements for paperwork. One of the things that happened with the amendments is that we have reduced that requirement for paperwork as it appeared in the original bill. One of the things that I heard from staff at St. Joe's and other homes was that they were going to submit a tremendous amount of paperwork to the Ministry of Health, and they really didn't think it was all necessary. We have amended the bill to reduce the amount of paperwork that has to be submitted to the Ministry of Health.

Another thing that I heard, this time not so much from the administration of the home but from the workers who are on the floor working with patients, was that they were very concerned that they were going to be required to have to do very extensive charting on each and every one of the residents. They were very concerned that they would be spending so much time doing the charting required by Bill 140 that they would have less time to spend with the residents, obviously not the intended outcome. So Bill 140 has been amended to make the charting requirements less onerous. Obviously, we do need to keep accurate records of what is happening in the lives of residents of long-term-care homes, but we also want to make sure that the requirements on the staff are not so onerous that they can't get on with providing good care.

We also heard concerns that while it is a good thing that we have training for volunteers in long-term-care homes, again, we need to be careful that we're not requiring such onerous training that we create a disincentive for people to volunteer. Again, we have amended the act to, yes, require training for volunteers, but make sure that it is reasonable training and that we will still be able to recruit good volunteers and have them on the floors helping the staff and working with the residents.

So, I will certainly be supporting this bill. Along with those things like the whistle-blower legislation and the complaints procedures, those things that were in the

original bill, I think we've made some good changes. I'm very confident that this legislation will serve the residents and the workers in our long-term-care homes very well in the future if it is passed.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Miller: I'm pleased to add some comments on the speech by the member from Guelph–Wellington on Bill 140. The member from Guelph–Wellington was talking about additional funding the government has put into the long-term-care area. The only thing I would like to point out, of course, is that in the election, they promised \$6,000 per resident of long-term-care homes, and I believe the number is somewhere around \$2,000 on what has actually been delivered. So they have not fulfilled the promise made in the 2003 election campaign. I've heard from people involved with long-term-care homes in my riding that they're actually worse off now than they were four years ago. In fact, I was talking to Belvedere Heights and met with the CEO, Bev Preuss, and a representative of the board a month or so ago, and she was pointing out how their acuity rating, I believe it's called, was such that they were receiving less money. I've also heard from municipalities in the area of Parry Sound. I heard from the mayor of Seguin township, Dave Conn, who's very concerned that the amount the municipalities were going to have to pay toward Belvedere Heights was going up 50% this year.

1700

There are some real challenges out there, and there's a number of municipalities in the Parry Sound area that support Belvedere Heights. They're putting more money in, and the long-term-care home is struggling to meet its needs. They do a good job, but it certainly was expressed to me that they're facing some real challenges and that they need some more help. It's really just a matter of the government keeping one more promise and funding what they said they were going to do in the 2003 election, and that is \$6,000 per client.

Mr. Ferreira: I'm pleased to rise in response to the presentation from the member for Guelph–Wellington. My colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka talked about promises made in 2003 by this government—another one, and I want to quote directly from the Ontario Liberal plan for change regarding their commitments at the time for long-term-care homes. It reads, "Ensure residents get more personal care, including a minimum 2.25 hours of daily nursing care." That was in 2003. Here we are in 2007, and this government comes forward with Bill 140 respecting long-term-care homes, and you would expect that that promise would be upheld. In fact, it is not being upheld, and I want to ask the member for Guelph–Wellington why that is, why her government isn't keeping their promises.

I suppose it's a pattern of habitual promise-breaking on the part of this government, but this is one where constituents of mine—and I should add that one fifth of my constituents are seniors—have come to me and said repeatedly, "We have to improve the conditions, the quality of care that residents of long-term-care homes

receive.” I will say that having a minimum standard of care would help to improve those conditions.

Back when we were in government, we brought in the 2.25 hours of minimum standards of care. We are now advocating for an increase, but we don't have any legislated in this province right now because the official opposition, when they were the government, did away with that. The present government promised they would rectify that situation. They haven't delivered. Perhaps the member from Guelph–Wellington could explain to us why that is.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): I had a different tack that I was going to take after the member from Guelph–Wellington and thank her for outlining some of the things that have happened in the long-term-care homes situation, but the two previous speakers have kind of forced me to go down this road.

But the first thing I want to do is thank the member from Nipissing for all the hard work she's done in the portfolio and the dedication and heart that she's put into this.

I happen to have a riding that was spotlighted by W5.

Interjections.

Mr. Levac: What's unfortunate about the cackling that's going on on the other side is that they don't want to be reminded of their record, so I'm just going to have to do that. If you want to talk about this—do you know what the bottom line is here? We're all culpable to make sure that our seniors are taken care of, and the decades and decades of neglect for different reasons by different people is deplorable. So let's work together to try to get this thing corrected.

If you want to talk about stuff you've done and not done, I've done and you've done, you can play that game all you want. Let's work together to try to make these long-term-care homes exactly that. So let's talk about it.

Let's talk about the heckling on the other side. These are the guys in the opposition who during their time in tenure announced, on Canada Day, a 15% increase in copayments to our residents—on Canada Day. Then, if the NDP wants to say they're not guilty of anything, let's say this: They did the cut of \$29.3 million in 1994-95 to the Ontario drug benefit plan.

Let's stop playing this game. Let's talk about working together to try to make sure that our seniors are cared for. For Pete's sake, if we spend all our time in here going back and forth about who did what, who is not doing what, seniors are going to get left behind. If this is a bad piece of legislation, make it better. For Pete's sake, if you're not going to talk about what we can do for our seniors, then don't bother standing up, playing the party line as if everyone is saintly around here. The seniors in my riding deserve better, and I want to give them that.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): I appreciate the passion of the previous speaker and it all sounds nice, but the reality is that when you're sitting in the opposition, you have a responsibility as well to point out weaknesses and problems and failed promises that have been made to the electorate. As one of my col-

leagues in the third party mentioned, this current government, when in opposition and when running to be the government, made significant promises with respect to long-term-care facilities which they have failed to meet. That's a reality, and I think we have an obligation to remind them of that on each and every occasion.

I have to say—and I've been in this place for some time—in speaking to people who are involved in the long-term-care sector, I have never witnessed such concern about the future as I have in the past year or so. People are coming to me, talking to me about the problems they have meeting the demands and challenges that are being thrust upon them.

The closure of some of these institutions—and we heard a question asked in the House today, where an individual with a brain injury was now going into a long-term-care facility. We have institutions being closed and this is putting ever-increasing demands on long-term-care facilities and they do not have the expertise, they do not have the staff, they do not have the funding to meet those additional challenges which have been forced upon them by government policy.

I would make no apologies whatsoever. We can be as passionate as we possibly can be. We all want to do the best, but the reality is that the Liberal Party is in power, they made significant promises in terms of upgrading and improving this sector, and they have not met all of those promises. Some of them, Mr. Speaker, as you well know, are very, very significant.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Guelph–Wellington has two minutes to reply.

Mrs. Sandals: I'd like to thank the members for Parry Sound–Muskoka, Leeds–Grenville, York South–Weston and Brant for their comments.

I'm delighted that the member for York South–Weston has raised the issue of the campaign commitment that we made to reinstate the standard of 2.25 hours—the NDP standard of 2.25 hours—of care which the Conservative government did away with. In fact, as we've already mentioned, the bill has been amended to allow us to have regulations which will in fact embed a minimum standard of care.

However, I think it is worth noting, as the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka mentioned, that the level of acuity has gone up in our homes. As I mentioned, we want the standard in regulation because things change. In fact, we have met the standard of 2.25. Not only have we met it, we have significantly exceeded that standard. The latest statistics show us that across the province the current level of care provided in long-term-care homes is now at 2.86 hours of care per resident. So I am delighted to report that we have indeed met that promise we made in the campaign. Perhaps, when you make accusations about promises broken, you might actually find out what the true state is.

As I said before, I am delighted to support Bill 140. I do believe that this government has significantly improved long-term care and, with this bill, we will continue to do that.

1710

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

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

I'm pleased to join the third reading debate here on Bill 140. I think I have to first respond to the comments made by the member for Brant. I thought that was a wonderful dissertation, but I haven't heard him stand up and criticize the bill. So we're supposed to stand here and believe that everything about this bill is perfect because it was presented by the Liberals. Everything that we did in the past was the root of the problems in long-term care. He wants to appear to be somewhat magnanimous, that we should be working all together for the good of seniors in this province. That is the laudable goal, but as my colleague from Leeds–Grenville pointed out, it is our job to point out problems and inefficiencies and inequities in this piece of legislation and/or any other.

So I think for the member from Brant to get up and go on that bit of a tirade is quite remarkable and certainly doesn't add to the quality of this debate. If he wants to talk about a fair assessment, then where's his fair assessment on this bill? Where's his fair assessment of the problems in this bill? Stand up and criticize your government for the problems that they've created with this bill—the most controversial bill I've seen in my time in this Legislature.

I had the opportunity to go on the committee hearings this past winter. It was just unbelievable, the opposition to this piece of legislation. That wasn't coming from members of the NDP or members of the Tories. That was coming from stakeholders and concerned citizens and groups throughout the province of Ontario.

What took them so long to get this thing back to the House? From March 29, and here it is May 15, for the second day of third reading because they were so skittish about this bill. So what have they done? I predicted this would happen. They're waiting for the 11th hour and they're going to invoke time allocation on this bill so that there's not time for a wholesome debate that is so necessary for a piece of legislation that is so controversial and has created such a firestorm throughout the province that all of these different groups, particularly the people representing nursing home operators, across the province of Ontario have raised so many valid issues. They're stifling debate in this Legislature because, as we now know, the government is prepared to table a time allocation motion on this piece of legislation.

Now, that is unfortunate. The debate certainly hasn't been given a fair airing in this House or across the province in the hearings because so many of the things that were proposed have not been acted upon. There have been some amendments, but not substantive enough to make this bill—a bad bill—good. They've made a bad bill better, but it is still not good. Most of the problems that were there are still there.

It goes back to, again, their promises in the election of 2003. They simply rolled those out, holus-bolus, without any regard for their ability to carry them out, or the cost that was going to be associated with them. Yet they

raised taxes in this province to unprecedented levels, they've had spending increase in this province by \$22 billion a year since they took office, but they haven't been able to follow through with their promise to give \$6,000 more per resident in our long-term-care homes. In fact, they've done about a third of that. At that rate, they'd need 12 years—three terms—to get \$6,000, and by that time they'd need about another \$20,000 just to keep up with the cost. That might be a slight exaggeration, but you know the point I'm trying to make.

They want to talk about the previous government. The previous government made funding available to redevelop 20,000 D class beds in the province of Ontario. This government has done nothing to upgrade the B and the C beds, which is so necessary. I heard the member speaking earlier—I think it was the member from Oakville in one of the hits—about the dignity that is necessary to be given to our elderly people in long-term-care centres. You're not going to be able to give them that dignity if they're going to be forever confined to B and C beds, with ward-washroom-type facilities, whereas some people will be in A class beds which meet the new, current standards. We've done away with the D beds—the previous government did—but there needs to be redevelopment of the B and C beds so that those seniors who are among our most vulnerable have the opportunity to spend those declining years and their final years in an environment that does give them the dignity that is necessary.

That dignity won't come just by way of redeveloping beds or giving them a better room, so to speak. It also is in the care that is given to them. When I've been in the long-term-care centres in my riding, I have been so absolutely impressed by the commitment of those people working with our elderly in those long-term-care centres. But do you know what? You can only do so much. I know the minister or the parliamentary assistant was talking today about ensuring that there will be a registered practical nurse on 24/7 in these homes. That's great, but what I hear when I talk to a lot of people in homes is that what they really need for the residents is more personal support workers. If you're not getting the basic care—if you're not ill, the first priority is basic care, and sometimes the best care we can give somebody is maybe just a little bit of our time, maybe a little bit of our own compassion, maybe a smile or a nod or an acknowledgement or something. But when you're running helter-skelter throughout that long-term-care centre, trying to fill out paperwork and making sure that the forms are done so that some bigwig from the ministry doesn't come and slap you on the wrist and tell you that you're not compliant, you don't have time to give that personal touch to that worker.

You have to remember that not everybody in one of these homes has a great, broad personal support network. Maybe they're not in a community where they have family, or maybe they don't have family. Maybe they were without children themselves and their siblings have all passed on. They're pretty alone in that environment

sometimes. Sometimes the only people they really have as family are the other residents of that long-term-care centre who unfortunately may be in the same boat as themselves. They can have some comradeship and time together in some of the common areas. The interaction with people other than residents themselves could be a lot more if we actually had some time to spend with those people.

I understand that, yes, the basic care of course has to be the priority, but the environment in those homes has changed a great deal. I remember when Valley Manor opened in Barry's Bay, my hometown. The condition of the people who went into those homes was so vastly different from that of the people who go into those homes today. They didn't require the level of care. In fact, I always say that many of those people who went into Valley Manor pulled up in their cars, hoisted out their suitcases and went into their new home. While that may happen in some cases today, it's pretty rare. Because of the higher age of the people who are going into those homes, the less mobile they are, therefore the level of care that is required to assist them is that much higher. I know that some of those residents—and I refer to Valley Manor because it's the one I know best—had an activities director and they had all kinds of things these folks would do to amuse themselves during the day, and this and that, and they were actually physically active. As I travel through the long-term-care homes today, most of them are not physically active; in fact, some of them are physically unable. So, with that goes a greater requirement to be able to assist them, and that is something this government has not addressed, because they have broken their promise, as they are wont to do on so many issues. They have broken their promise to put forth the necessary funding for us to be able to give that level of care.

1720

This bill, unfortunately even with amendments, is still about pitting those people who provide the care in our homes against the general public who may not have a close relative or anybody in that home and don't understand the work that goes on there, trying to create this vision that this government is somehow the committed protector of those who are in those homes. But, as I have drawn the analogy so many times before, you can't get the job done if you don't have the tools. It doesn't matter how good your team is.

The Ottawa Senators—even though I'm a Leafs fan—I guess for many is Canada's team right now because they're on the verge of going to the Stanley Cup finals. We certainly, as much as a Leafs' fan can, wish them well. As good as that hockey team is—

Mr. Ferreira: Who do you cheer for, John?

Mr. Yakabuski: The Leafs.

Mr. Ferreira: Good man.

Mr. Yakabuski: —they won't have a hope in hell, as they say; they won't have a chance if we give all the left-handed players right-handed sticks and give the right-handed players left-handed sticks, or we tell them, "Lookit, the skates didn't show up. We've got some

really good ones from the 1960s. In fact, they're the super-duper Bobby Hull model, CCM, but go out and beat those Anaheim Mighty Ducks or those Detroit Red Wings. Come on, get out there and do it. Do it for Canada." You know what the result is going to be. It's going to be a disaster.

That's what we've asked our people in long-term-care centres to do. We say, "Here are all these new regulations, because we've got to make sure"—this is the government now—"we've convinced all those people out there, who better than George Smitherman and the Liberals to look after your vulnerable relatives as they get older? Who better to do it? We're going to make sure that nobody is better taken care of than—so we're going to pass this law, and we're going to pass regulation after regulation. And when you read those regulations, you're going to say, 'My goodness gracious, they're laying down the law. They are going to be tough.'"

However, George Smitherman or Monique Smith or anybody else over there ain't going to be in those long-term-care centres looking after your grandmother. But those people who are looking after your grandmother or your mother or your sister or your brother, or maybe even your son or daughter, because we have people in our long-term-care centres who are not old but they're in need of continuous assistance because of various conditions, those people are the ones being denied the tools to do the job, and the government insists on pitting them against the public. This government could be called the party of wedges, because that's what it loves to do: drive those wedges between people and groups. This is a perfect example of it.

Where are we going to be years down the road if we don't redevelop B and C beds that are needed? Our party is committed to do just that. Is there anybody out there who thinks, "Well, by Jove, in 15 years we're going to have fewer people who need long-term-care centres than we do today"? Is there anybody out there? I don't think so. We know that that need is going to grow greatly over the next generation. In fact, some of the people in this House within the next generation could be in a long-term-care centre.

So we already have problems. Some of our hospitals' acute care beds are being occupied by people who should be in a long-term-care centre. But we can't get them into a long-term-care centre because we don't have a bed for them in the long-term-care centre. The answer, for this government, is to bring in a piece of legislation that makes it harder for them to do their jobs without giving them the resources to do so.

There is no argument that there is a need for legislation to ensure that those people who reside in long-term-care centres are priority, they are protected and their welfare is paramount. However, that has to be in conjunction with the resources necessary to achieve that goal. It matters little to set good goals if you don't make a successful outcome possible. And that's what this bill sets us up to do. They give good goals, and that's the wedge on this that this government likes to drive in, be-

cause you can't argue about the goal of trying to bring better conditions and better services and more care to our seniors in long-term-care centres. No one can argue that. But only a fool would believe that you can do that if you don't also accompany it with the resources that are necessary. The resources that are necessary are the people to carry out those goals and, like everything else, people require investment.

Those people in our long-term-care centres are good investments. I've had the chance to work with them in the long-term-care homes, and those have been some of the best experiences I've had in my tenure as an MPP, when I can work alongside those people, work alongside them in an Alzheimer's ward and see the commitment, the compassion, the competence and the care that they display on a daily basis. Then they ask me, "How are we supposed to do this? This is what I love to do, but how am I supposed to continue doing this, burning myself out doing something I love? I'll do it for as long as I can, but I'm one human being given this task. I'm not getting the support I need from the province of Ontario." So then you look at them and you kind of throw up your hands and you have no argument, because you've seen it first-hand. You've witnessed the efforts.

I was working with one particular personal support worker in one of the long-term-care centres and I have to admit that I can't think of her name off the top of my head. But she was 62 years old. That's what I remember. I just couldn't believe the job she did. It was just unbelievable. But how much longer is she going to be doing it? Not much longer. I talked to some of the administrative staff there, and she was considered to be just gold, one of the best they have or have ever had. She's not going to be working there much longer because, life being what it is, at some point, if we live long enough, we all retire. She was just amazing. She was doing the switchover in the middle of the afternoon to make sure they all got ready for the supper meal, and all of them needing help with the lifts and this and that. I was exhausted just watching her, how she carried out that job, and with such joy—the smile on her face—and the residents of the centre clearly feeling that they were cared for by someone who not only did her job well but who really loved the people she was working for.

1730

I'm almost out of time; I can't believe it. This bill is designed to pit those kinds of people against the voting public, which this government loves to wedge us against. I'll have a chance in my two minutes.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Ferreira: You wait your turn there, Ernie.

I'm pleased to offer a couple of minutes of response to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. He managed to weave in some talk of the hockey playoffs, and I commend him for that. I guess that helped him, if I may, rag the puck for 20 minutes, and I thank him for that.

One of the things that he did not touch upon—and I realize he wasn't in this House during that period, but he

didn't talk about his government's sorry record when they were in power here for eight years. I want to go back to the minimum standards of care. They took that away. They removed the 2.25 hours that were in place, that were implemented by the government from 1990 to 1995—it happened to be an NDP government. But that government, the Harris-Eves government, took away the minimum standards of care. I would like to ask him why that was done at the time and how he thinks that has benefited in any way the residents of long-term-care facilities in this province, because, as we have heard—and I'm going to get my 20 minutes very shortly—a number of different stakeholders and patients' groups and families of patients have called quite clearly for a minimum standard of care in this province. In fact, what they have proposed is three and a half hours per day per patient. We don't see that in this legislation. We hear talk of government measures that point to 2.86, or whatever figure was quoted earlier, but we do not see the re-establishment of minimum standards of care that were stripped away by the official opposition when they were in government. What we've seen is a continuation of that flawed decision that's been perpetrated upon the people of Ontario by this government today. I look forward to response on that.

Ms. Smith: It's my pleasure again to have the opportunity to speak to some of the comments that have been made today, not just by the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, but by other members in this House. I too have had the privilege of visiting over 45 homes across the province in my tenure as parliamentary assistant for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, and I have certainly seen first-hand the incredible work that's being done by our front-line workers.

I actually almost agree with the member from the third party about his view of the previous government's work—almost. Certainly what they did in long-term care in the entire health care field was nothing short of scandalous, and what they propose to do with their proposed cuts of \$2.6 billion from health care leaves much for us to wonder about as we move forward.

I do want to address some of the concerns that were raised earlier about the potential closure of homes. This legislation in no way closes homes. In fact, through our licensing scheme that we've set out in the legislation, it is allowing us the opportunity to plan and to ensure that we have the appropriate levels of long-term care across the province, something the previous government certainly did not have, and it was noted by the Auditor General in his 2002 report that the government did not have a systemic plan to determine where beds were most needed. There was a wide variety of levels of care across the province.

In the redevelopment program which they're so very proud of, they instituted beds in areas that were already over-bedded and did not provide new beds in areas that were under-bedded, thereby only exacerbating a problem that already existed, which was truly unfortunate. What our new licensing scheme will allow us to do is to give us

the time to plan, to ensure that we are redeveloping the beds that do exist in our smaller communities that are much needed and will continue to exist and to ensure that we're adding new beds where they are most needed. This is a planning tool, one that is much needed, one that was requested by the Auditor General in 2002, one that the previous government was unable to institute that we have now and that will benefit the entire sector.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I commend the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for his review of Bill 140 and what it will do to the long-term-care facilities in our province, contrary to what the government is purporting to do, which is to help seniors in their years of need. This bill doesn't do that. In fact, one of the areas where it's very, shall we say, short on meeting the goal is in the upgrading of the facilities, to make sure that all residents in these facilities have the same level of care that other people have. As the Speaker will know, we have A homes, B homes and C homes, and we used to have D homes. In fact, there may still be some around. But they all need to be upgraded. This government does absolutely nothing in this bill to facilitate that upgrading.

The member spoke about the quality of the people who work within the facilities as second to none in the world. These people work their hearts out to provide high-quality service for seniors, but they can't do it in the facilities that presently exist, to give the kind of service that these people are entitled to. Yet this government, after promising to do that, does nothing of the sort.

There were a number of things they promised to do for seniors: to provide \$6,000 more funding per resident; to put an Ombudsman in place so that the services could be monitored as we went along. None of these things are in the bill. Why is this bill before us in this form when in fact it doesn't meet any of the promises that they made to the seniors of this province? That's the question we need to ask the government: Why would we have a bill to deal with seniors' issues in this province when it does absolutely nothing to meet the challenges that the seniors said exist and that this government promised to fix?

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I'm pleased to respond to the comments made by the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. He speaks to Bill 140 with passion, with eloquence and with a clear understanding of the issues that are out there in communities like his, like mine, across this province, where seniors are being ignored and abandoned, where they're being treated with disdain and disregard by this government, and all the more sadly because, make no mistake about it, this government made some pretty significant promises about how it was going to improve the lot of seniors in Ontario four years ago, when it got elected, in 2003.

I want folks here to know that, like the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, whether I'm at the Wellingland market on Saturday morning or over at the Hungarian Hall, as I was on Mothers' Day, or up at Rice Road Greenhouses or up at the Thorold market or the St. Cath-

arines market, like I was last Saturday, the one single thing—

Interjection: What about the Legion?

Mr. Kormos: —or any number of Legion halls down where I come from—the one single thing that's brought to our attention by seniors, most of whom—all of whom, darn it; let's cut the fluff—have worked incredibly hard. Many of them are vets or the spouses of vets. They come and they say that even the most modest bit of assistance—not the insults, not the 50-cent, 60-cent, 70-cent increase in a monthly pension cheque. These are people who have already paid their dues.

John Yakabuski, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, speaks about seniors with a passion and a heartfelt concern for the future of seniors in his communities and across this province. I say that people would be well advised to take heed of what he's had to say to them today.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. Yakabuski: I appreciate the comments from the members from York South–Weston, Nipissing, Oxford and Niagara Centre. Clearly my colleagues in the third party agree that this bill not only fails to address the true issues in long-term care, but it has many flaws. So many of them stem from the problems that this government created for itself by making promises that it either had no ability to keep or no intention of keeping. That's something I hope the electorate here in Ontario will give great consideration to as we approach the date of October 10.

1740

When the member from Nipissing compares our record on long-term care to this government's record, there is nothing to compare with this bill and what it is doing to long-term-care centres and their ability to provide help to seniors. You go to the last government, where they redeveloped 20,000 beds—there's no such thing in this bill, nothing in the new budget, absolutely nothing to deal with the impending crisis in long-term care. Rather than dealing with the problems that we know we're going to encounter in the future in long-term care with regard to the numbers and the sheer size of the challenge, it is more interested in playing politics and pitting one group against another, and using the most vulnerable people in our province—our seniors in long-term-care centres—as pawns for their political gain. That's the kind of thing that this government has been doing for four years, and it will continue to do that until October 10 when I hope the people of Ontario will have the final verdict on the job that this government has done.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Ferreira: I'm delighted to be our party's second speaker on Bill 140, An Act respecting long-term care homes. As my friend from Niagara Centre points out, it looks like we will have one more session of debate on this bill and we may not hear from many more of my colleagues here in the third party, the NDP caucus.

Earlier this afternoon, we heard the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke use a hockey analogy. I'm going to use a baseball one at the outset of my comments. I'm actually pinch-hitting this afternoon. My friend from Timmins–James Bay unfortunately couldn't stay with us for his turn this afternoon. I will try my very best to hit one out of the park, but if it happens to be just a single or a double, I ask the viewers at home for their indulgence as I work my way through Bill 140.

Interjection.

Mr. Ferreira: I hear a comment from the member for St. Catharines, who I know is an avid baseball fan. Thank you for that.

I want to also acknowledge three of our friends here from SEIU who have remained in the House to watch the debate this afternoon. I appreciate their vigilance and the good work they are doing on behalf of their members. In fact, one of my very first meetings as an MPP was with the president of an SEIU local, who happens to live in my riding. She came to me to talk about her local and her membership's concerns with this bill, and I will talk about those.

During my short time as the member for York South–Weston, I've also had the opportunity to visit a number of long-term-care facilities in my riding, where I have had the chance to speak to some of the caregivers, the workers, the patients and their family members. We've talked about this legislation. I've appreciated their feedback, whether it's at the Harold and Grace Baker Centre or at Leisureworld, also in my riding. The folks at Leisureworld gave me the opportunity to present my very first petition in this House specifically on this very topic. That was signed at the time by nearly 200 residents, family, staff and volunteers. I want to quote the preamble to that petition so we can think clearly about what this is all about. It goes as follows:

"The issues facing residents in Ontario's long-term-care homes are well known: Staff run off their feet, a double standard of privacy between new and older homes, a lack of appropriate funding for food. These and similar stories have been told in the media, the Legislature and during the public hearings on the new Long-Term Care Homes Act. The government also acknowledges that more needs to be done. Providing more time for resident care, eliminating three- and four-bed ward rooms and enhancing meal menus, however, requires government to move from acknowledgment to action."

That was the preamble to their very well-thought-out petition which has been presented not just by me, but by dozens of members of this House. That last line, "acknowledgment to action," is what we have wanted from this government on the issue of long-term-care homes. It's based on their own set of promises. I quoted one of those promises earlier and it aroused a great deal of passion from the member for Brant, who got up and said that we all care deeply about improving living conditions and the situation of seniors in this province. I agree with him and I think we all in this House agree with his comments. We all want to work to improve the

conditions for residents of long-term-care facilities in this province.

But again, and I want to go back, it was his government that made the promise, among many, on the minimum standards of care. I want to quote it again for the benefit of the members on the government side because this is what they will have to answer to when they hit the hustings later this year to seek re-election. This was the promise: "Ensure residents get more personal care, including a minimum 2.25 hours of daily nursing care...."

That isn't part of this legislation. This legislation does not include a minimum standard of care. It's not there. And yet that was the promise that this government made. Also, I want to say again that it was the standard that existed in this province when our party formed the government. As we know, it was done away with by the Progressive Conservatives when they were in government for eight years.

We asked for that. We provided a number of amendments to that effect following second reading, when we went through the committee process, and each and every one of our amendments was turned back by this government. They said no.

On the issue of minimum standards of care, it was the health minister who suggested, in a newspaper article that appeared in the Timmins Daily Press, "Consultations for the legislation led the government to believe minimum hours of care was a bad idea." If I were to ask our friends here from SEIU if they thought that minimum standards of care was a bad idea, I think I know what their answer would be. They'd say, "Quite the opposite, Mr. Ferreira. In fact, it is a very good idea and it is what we need. We need minimum standards of care to be brought back into force here in Ontario."

It's not just our friends from SEIU who have said this to us and to the government. At committee hearings, we heard from an extensive list of stakeholders who said, "Bring back a minimum standard of care," and many of them agreed that that new standard should be 3.5 hours per resident per day.

Here's just a sampling. The Ontario Nurses' Association said, "Provide a per resident guaranteed minimum level of RN care to conduct assessments." I'm afraid the member for Oxford is gone, but here's what the Oxford county council said: "Commit to additional funding to ensure that the average long-term-care home is able to provide a minimum staffing level of three hours of on-site nursing and personal care per resident per day."

It goes on. The comments at committee of the Ontario Health Coalition, which worked with CUPE and a number of other local and regional health councils, were: "Amend the bill to require cabinet to set a minimum staffing standard in the regulations. The regulations should require the minimum care standard of 3.5 hours of hands-on nursing and personal care per day."

The member for Guelph–Wellington would probably be interested in this from the Guelph Wellington Health Coalition. Here's what they said at committee: "The Ontario Health Coalition is advocating 3.5 hours of care per resident to become the standard minimum hours of

care by all providers. This is not the optimum but it is necessary for maintaining clinical and management standards.”

1750

A couple more—and I have a number of them. In fact, it's a lengthy list, but here's somebody who works in the system, a woman by the name of Wendy Hawthorne, a personal support worker from Ottawa. She said quite succinctly, “Set a standard of 3.5 hours for personal and nursing care.”

Then, lastly, from an operator: Maxville Manor, at committee, said to define a minimum of service and fund it adequately. This government has not defined a minimum—they have not put that into the legislation—and they are not funding the system adequately.

Earlier, at the outset of my comments, I referenced the preamble to a petition that I had read into this House several weeks back. That same petition asked for this government to invest additional monies into long-term-care homes in this province, and I want to quote those figures. They asked for an increase in the operating funding by \$290 million this year and \$214 million in 2008. They also asked for the provision of \$9.5 million to begin implementing a capital renewal and retrofit program for older homes—again, calling for significant investment, and the government hasn't delivered. It wasn't in that document they presented here in this House in late March, and certainly that level of commitment of investment is not found in the legislation that we are debating here today.

I've got a few more minutes left here before I get cut off. I want to pay tribute to the many, many workers who do their utmost to look after our seniors. One of those came to my very first town hall meeting in the riding of York South–Weston. One of the things I committed to when I was elected was to hold monthly town hall meetings, which had not been done by my predecessors. On my very first one, a constituent, a woman by the name of Daphne Richards, came to that town hall with her husband. What I do at these town hall meetings is, I bring my constituents up to date on different pieces of legislation before the House and what I and my party are doing on those pieces of legislation. We got to talking about Bill 140, about long-term care. Daphne Richards, whom I had known from before, rose to speak about her

own experiences. She has been a caregiver in a long-term-care home for the better part of 25 years now. She is run off her feet each and every day. She is overworked. As much as she would like to, she simply cannot provide the level of care to each and every one of her patients that she would like to, yet she is an absolutely exceptional caregiver. I got that from no one less than Jack Layton, leader of the federal New Democrats, because Daphne Richards looked after his dad in the last few months of his life when he suffered from Alzheimer's and was himself in a long-term-care facility. It was Daphne Richards who provided excellent, compassionate care to Mr. Layton's father.

But as Daphne spoke at that town hall meeting, she talked about the conditions she works in. They are not ideal. They are a detriment to her and her well-being, but also to the well-being of the patients she looks after, because there are not enough hours in her working day to be able to do all she needs to do, and that's a shame. It's also why we need to legislate minimum standards of care, not the 2.25 as existed previously, not 2.86, as I believe was the figure that was quoted by one of the members on the government side earlier this afternoon, but 3.5, which, as I mentioned earlier, was the figure that was repeated often during the committee hearings.

I see you're watching the clock, Mr. Speaker, and I'm quickly running out of time here.

There's the member from St. Catharines applauding me yet again. I thank him very much for his applause.

Our party will be voting against this piece of legislation, because we think—

Interjections: No.

Mr. Ferreira: Yes, dear friends on the government side, because we think that Ontarians deserve better, that we can do better, not just on the issue of minimum standards of care, but on a host of other issues where this piece of legislation is deficient.

I'll continue; I'm keeping a close eye on you. Oh, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll finish off tomorrow night.

The Acting Speaker: It being close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned.

The House adjourned at 1755.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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Algoma–Manitoulin	Brown, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (L) Speaker / Président	Haliburton–Victoria–Brock	Scott, Laurie (PC)
Ancaster–Dundas– Flamborough–Aldershot	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC) Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Hamilton East / Hamilton-Est	Horwath, Andrea (ND)
Beaches–East York / Beaches–York-Est	Prue, Michael (ND)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Hon. / L'hon. Marie (L) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, ministre responsable for democratic renewal / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique
Bramalea–Gore–Malton– Springdale	Kular, Kuldip (L)	Hamilton West / Hamilton-Ouest	Marsales, Judy (L)
Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Hastings–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Brampton West–Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest–Mississauga	Dhillon, Vic (L)	Huron–Bruce	Mitchell, Carol (L)
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kenora–Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Burlington	Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Milloy, John (L)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Chatham–Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Lanark–Carleton	Sterling, Norman W. (PC)
Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, deputy government House leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement	Leeds–Grenville	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (L) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Matthews, Deborah (L)
Dufferin–Peel– Wellington–Grey	Tory, John (PC) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	London West / London-Ouest	Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (L) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Durham	O'Toole, John (PC)	London–Fanshawe	Ramal, Khalil (L)
Eglinton–Lawrence	Colle, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (L) Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration	Markham	Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L) Minister of Revenue / ministre du Revenu
Elgin–Middlesex–London	Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (L) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L) Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship / ministre des Petites Entreprises et de l'Entrepreneuriat
Erie–Lincoln Essex	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Mississauga East / Mississauga-Est	Fonseca, Peter (L)
	Crozier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Peterson, Tim (Ind.)
Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (L) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	Mississauga West / Mississauga-Ouest	Delaney, Bob (L)
Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Nepean–Carleton	MacLeod, Lisa (PC)
Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (L) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Niagara Falls	Craiton, Kim (L)
Guelph–Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)	Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Nipissing	Smith, Monique M. (L)

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)	Stormont–Dundas– Charlottenburgh	Brownell, Jim (L)
Oak Ridges	Klees, Frank (PC)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Thornhill	Racco, Mario G. (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Mauro, Bill (L)
Ottawa Centre / Ottawa–Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Thunder Bay–Superior	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa South / Ottawa–Sud	McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Council, Minister of Research and Innovation / premier ministre et président du Conseil, ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation	North / Thunder Bay–Superior– Nord	
Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa–Ouest–Nepean	Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L) Minister of Health Promotion / ministre de la Promotion de la santé	Timiskaming–Cochrane	Ramsay, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Ottawa–Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Ottawa–Vanier	Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	Toronto Centre–Rosedale / Toronto–Centre–Rosedale	Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L) Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / vice-premier ministre, ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Toronto–Danforth	Tabuns, Peter (ND)
Parkdale–High Park	DiNovo, Cheri (ND)	Trinity–Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Parry Sound–Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Vaughan–King–Aurora	Sorbara, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (L) Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre des Finances, président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Perth–Middlesex	Wilkinson, John (L)	Waterloo–Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Peterborough	Leal, Jeff (L)	Whitby–Ajax	Elliott, Christine (PC)
Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge	Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Willowdale	Zimmer, David (L)
Prince Edward–Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Windsor West / Windsor–Ouest	Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L) Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Yakabuski, John (PC)	Windsor–St. Clair	Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L) Minister of Energy / ministre de l'Énergie
Sarnia–Lambton	Di Cocco, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (L) Minister of Culture / ministre de la Culture	York Centre / York–Centre	Kwinter, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (L) Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Sault Ste. Marie	Oraziotti, David (L)	York North / York–Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
Scarborough Centre / Scarborough–Centre	Duguid, Brad (L)	York South–Weston / York–Sud–Weston	Ferreira, Paul (ND)
Scarborough East / Scarborough–Est	Chambers, Hon. / L'hon. Mary Anne V. (L) Minister of Children and Youth Services / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse	York West / York–Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)		
Scarborough–Agincourt	Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L) Minister of Government Services / ministre des Services gouvernementaux		
Scarborough–Rouge River	Balkissoon, Bas (L)		
Simcoe North / Simcoe–Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)		
Simcoe–Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
St. Catharines	Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L) Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, government House leader / ministre du Tourisme, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées, leader parlementaire du gouvernement		
St. Paul's	Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L) Attorney General / procureur général		
Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)		

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

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

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