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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 11 December 2007

Mardi 11 décembre 2007

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 11 December 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 11 décembre 2007

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

ANNUAL REPORT, AUDITOR GENERAL

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table the 2007 annual report of the Auditor General of Ontario.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Sylvia Jones: On September 7, the Minister of Health made an announcement promising to allocate health care dollars according to population size. The GTA/905 Healthcare Alliance has been educating all members of the Legislature about this unfairness for more than four years. Despite the Premier's commitment three days before the provincial election, there was no mention of solving the funding inequity for high-growth communities in last week's throne speech.

Currently, Ontario's hospitals are not funded on the basis of the population of the community they serve. As a result, there are significant and growing gaps in per capita funding for hospital services in high-growth regions, including my own riding of Dufferin-Caledon. In my community, the per capita funding for hospital care in the Central West LHIN, which includes Headwaters Health Care Centre, is \$280 lower than the provincial average. This means that Headwaters is expected to provide the same level of health care with fewer resources. As a result, residents wait longer for hospital care or have to seek care outside our community, away from the support of family and friends. This is unfair and unacceptable.

Residents living in high-growth communities deserve the same quality and access to health care as the rest of the province. The promise was made; the time for action is now. The government must provide high-growth communities with the funding they need.

MAYOR OF SUDBURY

LE MAIRE DE SUDBURY

M^{me} France Gélinas: Today in Sudbury there will be a big celebration at the Steelworkers Hall in honour of John Rodriguez's first anniversary as mayor of the city of

Greater Sudbury. Mayor Rodriguez has demonstrated that with the right leadership, a lot can happen in a year.

Il a débuté avec la décision de hisser le drapeau franco-ontarien à l'hôtel de ville.

Along with city council, he then proceeded with a progressive strategy: City council adopted a fair wage policy for municipal construction contracts; former NDP Finance Minister Floyd Laughren's report on the needs of outlying communities started to be implemented; progress was made on plans to eliminate long-distance telephone charges within the city and to purchase local Hydro One assets; council adopted the Housing First strategy, which is making a huge difference in the lives of homeless people in Sudbury and Nickel Belt; council passed a motion requesting this government to increase the minimum wage to \$10 an hour now; and, most recently, councillors passed a motion in support of not-for-profit daycare, recognizing that our children should not be exploited for money by big box child care companies.

Although I will not be there tonight to celebrate with you, Mayor Rodriguez, enjoy your celebration. Vous avez eu une bonne première année. Amusez-vous; vous le méritez bien. Encore une fois, je m'excuse de ne pas pouvoir être là avec vous.

GREAT WOLF LODGE

Mr. Kim Craitor: Each year, the Niagara Falls Chamber of Commerce holds an event to celebrate businesses that have proven outstanding business achievement, community partnership, community leadership and economic impact in our community. This year, they recognized the great impact the Great Wolf Lodge has had on Niagara Falls.

During the construction of Great Wolf Lodge, 300 to 350 construction workers were on the job; most were local. The total cost of construction from start to finish was \$130 million. Great Wolf Lodge has poured so much concrete that it would equal 32 miles of highway. The steel used in construction would equal 120 miles if it was laid down end to end. Great Wolf Lodge cleans and purifies more water in one day than the city of Niagara Falls. The lodge had 507 employees when it opened in 2006, and now has 614 employees, which speaks well to the health of our tourist economy. Last year, Great Wolf Lodge paid \$2.3 million in taxes to the city of Niagara Falls.

I would ask this assembly to join with me in congratulating the management and staff at Great Wolf Lodge for their recognition by the Niagara Falls Chamber

of Commerce for their outstanding business achievement and continuing contributions, not only to my riding of Niagara Falls but to the province of Ontario.

Finally, I'm pleased to see that we have in the members' gallery today the regional chair, Peter Partington. Welcome, Peter.

TOBACCO GROWERS

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yesterday, 400 tobacco farmers, landowners and Six Nations residents gathered outside the Onondaga Longhouse at Six Nations. Over 100 bales of tobacco were transferred from farm pickup trucks into a tractor-trailer at Six Nations. This represented close to \$1 million in tobacco tax revenue that neither this provincial government nor the federal government will ever see again.

Whether one approves of civil disobedience or not, in this case, the desperate times for farmers triggered a desperate measure. This is a threat to government. Government, for some time now, has had no control over 25% of the tobacco trade, losing millions a year nationally in taxes to the underground economy. This underground economy has been created by government tax policy.

Tobacco farmers have had enough. They want out. They are in a market meltdown. Government policy has propped up an illegal tobacco trade with which the legal trade cannot compete. Yesterday was a signal that some farmers have decided that if they can't beat them, they may join them.

An exit package is needed immediately, yet government works at a glacial pace, waiting for the feds to make a move. All the while, these are Ontario tobacco growers.

Those attending the gathering at the Onondaga Longhouse asked for some meaningful dialogue, and they asked for some action.

ANAM AHMED

Mr. Dave Levac: I wish to recognize Ms. Anam Ahmed, of Brantford, who is one of only three recipients of the Lincoln M. Alexander Award. This award, established in 1993, pays tribute to young people in Ontario between the ages of 16 and 25 who have demonstrated outstanding leadership in eliminating racism and discrimination.

This outstanding contribution was recognized at an awards ceremony yesterday in the Lieutenant Governor's suite. The Lincoln M. Alexander Award was presented by the Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable David Onley. A scroll and a cheque for \$5,000, were presented by the former Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable Lincoln Alexander.

Miss Anam Ahmed, only 17 years old, a high school student from North Park Collegiate in the riding of Brant, in Brantford, was recognized for her creative approaches to the discussion of racism. Some of her accomplishments include writing, choreographing and performing a play called "911/Tango" at her school; producing a video

named "Connected," which was judged one of the top 10 in the nation in a contest called "Racism: Stop It"; and she piloted and chaired the anti-racism committee at her school and also contributed to creating a DVD on racism in schools.

Each one of us has a contribution to make in ending prejudice and racism. These young people—there are two others—must be congratulated by us, and we ask them to continue to share their wisdom.

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EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I rise today to gently remind the government of its promise, first in the 2003 election and again in the 2007 election, to amend the educational funding formula—so far unkept, especially as it pertains to students in rapidly growing areas.

In my riding of Halton, which consists of the town of Milton—the fastest growing town in all of Canada—and rapidly growing parts of Oakville and Burlington, problems with the funding formula are causing ongoing turmoil for children.

In Burlington, at Alexander's Public School, portable classrooms litter the schoolyard. Parents are concerned that their children will spend most of their education switching from one school to another as new schools are built and boundaries are shifted.

That situation has already occurred in Oakville, where students at Joan of Arc Catholic school have been shunted around four times in the last few years. Now, to solve a funding formula problem, graduating students of Joan of Arc are being told to attend old St. Thomas Aquinas high school in order to bump up its student population to qualify for funds to rebuild it. These same students at Joan of Arc Catholic school live within walking distance of St. Ignatius of Loyola high school.

These same problems with the funding formula are about to impact students in Milton at Bruce Trail Public School, where high growth and portables rule the day.

This is my gentle reminder to the government of its so far unkept promise. The next time I promise I will not be so gentle. And I, for one, keep my promises.

BAXTER CANADA

Mr. Charles Sousa: It is my great pleasure to congratulate Baxter Canada, a great corporate citizen in Mississauga, Ontario, and Canada, on the occasion of their 70th anniversary celebration this week.

Baxter Canada is located in my neighbouring riding of Mississauga East-Cooksville, held by my distinguished colleague the Honourable Peter Fonseca. Their presence and contribution in Mississauga and across this great country have been tremendous. Over the past 70 years, Baxter Canada has been focused on bringing innovative solutions to improve the lives of patients, particularly individuals requiring kidney dialysis, individuals afflicted with hemophilia, and the thousands of individuals

who each day are treated and recovering in hospitals and at home.

Baxter Canada has not only demonstrated leadership and innovation in health care, but they are also leaders in sustainable manufacturing and environmental stewardship right here in Ontario. Their commitment to improving health, their contribution to a knowledge-based innovation economy balanced with being environmentally responsible, and their commitment to being a great corporate and community citizen are exceptional.

On behalf of my colleagues who represent the great city and ridings within Mississauga, I would like to thank Baxter Canada for their ongoing leadership and wish them continued success over the next 70 years and beyond.

POD GENERATING GROUP

Mr. David Oraziotti: This past Friday in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie, I had the opportunity of being joined by Sandra Pupatello, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, to announce that the largest solar farm in Canada is coming to our community.

Thanks to our government's innovative standard offer program, California's Pod Generating Group has chosen the province of Ontario to make a \$360-million investment. When fully phased in, the project will supply Ontario's energy grid with 60 megawatts of clean, green energy—enough electricity to supply 9,000 homes.

Here's what David Livingston, the CEO of Pod Generating Group, had to say: "As a team, we continue to be impressed by Ontario's commitment to develop clean, renewable power generation. The solar power facilities that we are putting into operation in Sault Ste. Marie are showing what a dedicated group of individuals can do to meet the environmental challenges facing Canada and the world."

Our renewables strategy is working. The new solar farm is one of a series of significant energy projects that are resulting in sizable economic investments in the Soo and area. The Algoma Steel cogeneration facility, a 63-megawatt high-efficiency cogeneration project, is a \$135-million investment and is currently under construction. Nearby, in the riding of Algoma-Manitoulin, the Brookfield Power wind farm, Canada's largest wind installation, is a \$400-million investment.

Across the province, OPA reports that 228 renewable energy projects have been awarded since November 30, 2007. The McGuinty government is leading the way in North America when it comes to renewable energy development to fight against climate change.

SCIENCE COMPLEX AT UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Last week, I was proud to attend the official opening of the new, state-of-the-art science complex at the University of Guelph. This impressive complex allows faculty from a variety of scientific

disciplines to work collaboratively in their pursuit of innovation. The multidisciplinary science complex will encourage students to draw connections across traditional boundaries and seek an intellectual appreciation for the sciences and technology as powerful means for understanding and shaping the world.

Through the Ontario Research Fund and the Ontario Innovation Trust, our government is providing \$11.3 million to the University of Guelph in support of two leading-edge research projects that are sited at the science complex: first, \$7.3 million for a facility for cell membrane and surfaces research, supporting the research activities of over 20 researchers from five departments. The research is advancing our understanding of human diseases and will help to develop effective strategies for therapeutic intervention. The university also received \$4 million in support of an applied evolution centre that is allowing researchers to explore ways to predict and manage the genetic impacts of humans on other organisms.

Congratulations, Guelph. By working together, we will keep Ontario at the forefront of the global economy.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery three members from the Parliament of Lithuania: Kestutis Glaveckas, Vytautas Saulis and Manfredas Zymantas. Please join me in welcoming our guests.

I'd also like to draw the attention of the members to the Speaker's gallery to welcome Mr. Jim McCarter, Ontario's Auditor General, along with a number of his staff. Mr. McCarter and staff, welcome.

VISITORS

Hon. Jim Watson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm delighted to welcome into the members' gallery members of MARCO, the Mayors and Regional Chairs of Ontario. Earlier today, I had the pleasure of meeting with Peter Partington, regional chair from Niagara; Fred Eisenberger, mayor of Hamilton; Tom Gosnell, deputy mayor of London; Roger Anderson, chair of Durham; Bill Fisch, chair of York region; and the chair of MARCO and the chair of Waterloo region, Ken Seiling. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome to Queen's Park.

VISITORS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to introduce visitors in the members' gallery: Donna Dillman, in the 66th day of her hunger strike against uranium mining in Frontenac county, joined by hunger strikers Rita Bijons, Adriana Mugnatto-Hamu and Sharon Howarth. Welcome to the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome.

WEARING OF PINS

Mr. Dave Levac: In consultation with the whips of all parties, I seek unanimous consent to wear the pins of the Ontario Conservation Officers Association members in recognition—and a reminder that in room 228 at 6 p.m., the holiday reception of these fine people will be taking place. The pins are a reminder of their good work.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member seeks unanimous consent for all members to wear the pins. Agreed? Agreed.

VISITORS

Mr. Howard Hampton: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: We have with us in the gallery today a very special person, Tara Mansouri-Moayed. Tara is a legislative learner with the co-op program of the University of Waterloo. She has been a tremendous asset to my office for the past four months. In fact, I want to read a resolution she has drafted for me:

“In the opinion of this House, as a noble tribute to those who served in the great wars, that the government of Ontario give consideration to providing financial support for urgently needed repairs to the rose window in the Church of the Epiphany in Woodstock, which has stood as a tribute to our fallen heroes for the past 75 years.”

I want to thank Tara for her excellent work.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, and welcome.

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INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CHRISTOPHER'S LAW
(SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY)
AMENDMENT ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT
LA LOI CHRISTOPHER
SUR LE REGISTRE
DES DÉLINQUANTS SEXUELS

Mr. Bartolucci moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 16, An Act to amend Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2000 / Projet de loi 16, Loi modifiant la Loi Christopher de 2000 sur le registre des délinquants sexuels.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The minister for a short statement.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I'll defer to ministerial statements.

PENSION BENEFITS
AMENDMENT ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES RÉGIMES DE RETRAITE

Mr. Paul Miller moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 17, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act / Projet de loi 17, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de retraite.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Paul Miller: This bill is critical to the workers of this province. The PBG fund is grossly underfunded, and if we were to have a major problem with closures in this province, this would cause immense problems for that fund. We need to increase that fund to protect the people if our economy takes another slide and businesses run into trouble.

MOTIONS

LEGISLATIVE REFORM

Hon. Michael Bryant: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion concerning a panel of members to consider ways to make the assembly more family friendly.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is there unanimous consent to deal with the motion, as proposed, regarding a committee to make the assembly more family friendly? Agreed.

Hon. Michael Bryant: Before I move this motion, allow me to credit the member for Nepean–Carleton for her initiative and her perseverance.

Applause.

Hon. Michael Bryant: Hear, hear.

Thanks to the House leaders for the official opposition and the third party and to the government caucus as well.

I move that the House leaders of the recognized parties shall agree to terms, and an all-party panel composed of no more than two members from each recognized party shall be appointed to make recommendations to the Speaker on ways to make working at the Ontario Legislature more family friendly for members of provincial Parliament.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Agreed to.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. Michael Bryant: I seek unanimous consent to move motions regarding the committees of the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I move that the membership of the standing committee on regulations and private bills be revised as follows: Mr. Naqvi is removed.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Agreed to.

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. Michael Bryant: I move that the standing committee on social policy be authorized to meet for the purpose of organization on the morning of Thursday, December 13.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Agreed to.

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. Michael Bryant: I move that the following schedule for committee meetings be established for the 39th Parliament:

The standing committee on justice policy may meet on Wednesday and Thursday mornings; the standing committee on social policy may meet on Monday and Tuesday afternoons following routine business; the standing committee on general government may meet on Monday and Wednesday afternoons following routine proceedings; the standing committee on finance and economic affairs may meet on Thursday mornings and Thursday afternoons following routine proceedings; the standing committee on estimates may meet on Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons following routine proceedings; the standing committee on government agencies may meet on Wednesday mornings; the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly may meet on Thursday afternoons following routine proceedings; the standing committee on public accounts may meet on Thursday mornings; the standing committee on regulations and private bills may meet on Wednesday mornings.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Michael Bryant: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion regarding a ballot order for private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(d), Mr. Crozier, Mr. Lalonde, Mr. Rinaldi and Mr. Kwinter exchange places in the order of

precedence for private members' public business such that Mr. Crozier assumes ballot item 4, Mr. Lalonde assumes ballot item 19, Mr. Rinaldi assumes ballot item 26 and Mr. Kwinter assumes ballot item 32.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Government House leader?

L'hon. Michael Bryant: C'est tout.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I think that's all.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the Minister of Transportation very much for his translation.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I rise today to introduce legislation to strengthen Christopher's Law. If passed, the proposed amendments would allow police to track more sex offenders and keep our province and our people safe.

Almost 20 years ago, 11-year-old Christopher Stephenson was brutally murdered by a convicted pedophile on federal statutory release. Christopher's family, victims' groups and law enforcement agencies worked tirelessly to prevent a similar tragedy from happening again. They sought mandatory registration for convicted sex offenders. Ontario responded with Christopher's Law, the first sex offender registry in Canada, and it was a step that spurred nationwide co-operation.

Today, police across Ontario consult the sex offender registry about 400 times each day. It helps them monitor and locate sex offenders in their communities. It's a proven investigative tool and, most important, it's helping to protect vulnerable children and adults from predators. But there's still more we can do.

This afternoon, the report of the Auditor General on the Ontario sex offender registry was tabled. Our government welcomes this report and the valuable recommendations it contains.

Our proposed legislation responds to the recommendations made by the Auditor General. This legislation would require more offenders to register and provide more tools for police to track offenders. If passed, Christopher's Law would be amended to include the following:

Sex offenders serving an intermittent sentence, for example on weekends, would be required to register within 15 days of sentencing;

Persons released on bail pending appeal for a sex offence would be required to register;

If a person found not criminally responsible on a detention disposition were released unsupervised from a mental health facility, the registry would be notified;

The registry would also be notified if a sex offender were released from a correctional facility on an unescorted temporary absence pass.

As federal day parolees fall under federal jurisdiction, the province will work closely with the federal government to ensure the necessary coordination occurs.

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We are also making operational improvements. In his report, the Auditor General salutes the hard work being carried out by those who maintain the sex offender registry. I would echo this, and thank police services across Ontario, as well as the OPP members in Orillia who are responsible for operating and maintaining the registry, and who are so committed to the safety and security of the people of this province.

Today, Ontario's sex offender registry has a 95% compliance rate. This represents one of the highest compliance rates of all sex offender registries in operation, including the registries in the United States. Our government is committed to reaching 100%. If passed, this legislation would help us reach that goal. It would help police track more offenders quickly and efficiently, and it would help ensure safer streets and communities for all Ontarians.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES FINANCES MUNICIPALES

Hon. Jim Watson: I rise today to update members on the progress being made by the McGuinty government to support Ontario's municipalities and to work with them in strengthening our communities. Positive and productive relations with the municipal sector are a priority of this government. Just this morning, I had the real pleasure of meeting with the mayors and regional chairs of Ontario, who I had the opportunity to introduce just a moment ago. A month ago, I met with the Large Urban Mayors' Caucus of Ontario, and before that, I met with municipal representatives in southwestern Ontario.

Et pas plus tard que la semaine dernière, j'ai rencontré le conseil d'administration de l'Association française des municipalités de l'Ontario avec ma collègue, M^{me} Meilleur.

My message to all of them has been the same: The McGuinty government is committed to working with you. At last summer's annual conference of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, held in my hometown of Ottawa, we renewed the memorandum of understanding with AMO. This agreement is the foundation of provincial-municipal relations. It commits the province to prior consultation with municipalities whenever it proposes changes to the provincial legislation and regulations that will have a significant financial impact on the current municipal budget year or planning cycle. I'm pleased to say that our government is also in the process of negotiating a similar agreement with the city of Toronto.

Another example of our strong working relationship with AMO and the city of Toronto is the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal Service and Delivery Review. In this review, both provincial and municipal governments are working to develop affordable and sustainable ways to fund and deliver services for Ontario's communities. While I'm looking forward to the review's consensus-based report next spring, the work of the review has already paid dividends in Ontario's municipalities.

Dans le cadre de l'examen, les administrations municipales et le gouvernement provincial cherchent à trouver des moyens abordables et viables de financer et de prodiguer des services aux collectivités de l'Ontario.

Bien que la parution du rapport consensuel de l'examen soit prévue pour le printemps prochain, l'initiative a déjà profité aux municipalités de l'Ontario.

Beginning next month, the province will upload the cost of the Ontario drug benefit program, and starting in 2009 will upload the cost of the Ontario disability support program. This upload was identified as a top priority by the municipal representatives in the review. The benefits of this upload will be substantial. In 2008, the estimated cost savings to municipalities is \$173 million. By the time the upload is fully implemented in 2011, it will save municipalities, and thus municipal property taxpayers, \$935 million annually.

These savings are on top of the additional funding we will continue to provide to municipalities. Under the Ontario municipal partnership fund, \$843 million will be allocated to municipalities in 2007. That's \$225 million more than transfers in 2004 under its predecessor program. For 2008, I can assure municipalities that, province-wide, the overall dollars for the partnership fund will not be reduced, even though we are uploading Ontario drug benefit program cost.

In 2008, we plan to increase our investment in municipalities for land ambulance services again. This planned increase will fulfill the Premier's commitment in 2006 to invest approximately \$300 million to assist municipalities with land ambulance costs, moving to a 50-50 funding arrangement.

Nous sommes chanceux de vivre dans la meilleure province du pays le plus fortuné du monde. En travaillant ensemble au renforcement de nos petites et grandes villes, nous veillerons à ce que les générations futures d'Ontariens et d'Ontariennes puissent en dire autant.

These are just some of the investments our government is making in our cities and towns, and just some examples of the province and municipalities working in partnership. We are fortunate to live in the best province and the most blessed country in the world, and by working together to strengthen our cities and towns, we can help ensure that future generations of Ontarians will be able to make the same claim.

VENTURE CAPITAL FUND

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Research and Innovation.

Hon. John Wilkinson: Mr. Speaker, let me start by congratulating you on your election to the chair.

I rise today to bring to the attention of all of us in the House the efforts the McGuinty government is making to ensure emerging innovative companies can grow and succeed in this province. These companies represent the future of Ontario. They are the embodiment of our best ideas, the solutions to our most pressing of challenges, and the source of our next generation of jobs and economic growth.

In Ontario, we have world-class researchers. We have world-class, globally competitive industry. What we strive for is a world-class, vibrant capital market to support the young start-up companies that will drive our future economy.

A financial report released last week highlighted the importance of venture capital and, for example, the challenges of attracting large pools of foreign investment capital to Canadian companies. The McGuinty government is well aware of the challenges facing small, innovative firms that need access to capital to take their business to the next level. That's why we committed \$90 million in our 2006 budget to create a venture capital fund to spur investment in new emerging Ontario-based businesses. The McGuinty government understands the need to ensure that large pools of institutional capital, whether they be at banks, pension companies or insurance companies, are available to our young start-up companies. That's why we created the Ontario venture capital fund.

Today I'm happy to report on the progress of that fund. Last month, at the Toronto Stock Exchange, the Premier and I announced that Ontario will partner with the Ontario municipal employees retirement system—OMERS—capital partners, the Royal Bank of Canada capital partners, the Business Development Bank of Canada, and Manulife Financial to create a market-driven fund of funds. Let me emphasize that this is a market-driven solution, and that's why it's so innovative. It is not politicians nor bureaucrats that will be making market decisions. Together with our partners, we are actively pursuing a world-class, top-performing venture capital fund manager to manage the fund of funds.

We cannot expect the rest of the world to invest in our globally significant innovation if we ourselves are not willing to step up to the plate. If we don't do this, our companies will relocate to other jurisdictions to find the capital and support they need, places like Boston and San Antonio and San Francisco. It is those other jurisdictions that will ultimately benefit from the resulting jobs.

I am so very pleased that successful large corporate institutional and federal investors are eager to work with us to invest in Ontario. In total, the McGuinty government and its private sector partners are initially investing \$165 million in the fund. And we're not stopping there. I'm actively encouraging other large institutional and corporate pools of capital to join us in a second round of investment to grow Ontario's VC fund. Together, we will build the next generation of venture capital support in

Ontario. As we grow this fund, Ontario will become even more effective at competing globally for talent, ideas and investment, and even more successful at nurturing Ontario's own emerging companies from the back of a napkin to the front of the business pages.

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In Ontario, we have world-class researchers, savvy entrepreneurs and a well-educated, highly skilled workforce, and the McGuinty government is committed to harnessing this potential through innovative programs like Ontario's VC fund. But Ontario also needs our partners in the federal government to continue to improve the business climate for venture capital in Canada. Ontario can't do it alone. We must work together to build a climate that supports innovative companies, because growing businesses that are on the cutting edge of the new economy means more high-value jobs and economic prosperity for this province.

Ultimately, that's what we're trying to accomplish in everything we do at my ministry. It's about fostering the jobs of the future for our children and our grandchildren, jobs that have not even been invented yet.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I want to respond to the Minister of Community Safety's announcement about amendments to Christopher's Law. As the member who originally introduced the legislation, there's no question that the contents of the Auditor General's report today are very serious, very disappointing and, from the perspective of our party, the official opposition—and I'm sure it's shared by every member—deeply disturbing. When you receive news that hundreds of sex offenders have been roaming the streets in neighbourhoods of the province of Ontario unaccounted for, that has to be, I think, frightening.

This is a public safety system that, until now, Ontarians believed was uniquely working to provide enhanced protection for all citizens of the province, especially our children. And now to find out that it is so flawed, that in fact, given the flaws and the weaknesses that the Auditor General has pointed to, the OPP was at the same time diverting funds over a period of time for other uses, I think just deepens the concern with respect to the utilization of what we all hoped would be a very effective tool to combat sex crimes, primarily crimes against children.

Some of the stats here: 365 provincial sex offenders who should have been registered were not; 360 federal sex offenders who should have been registered were not; 364 non-compliant offenders—almost 70% in breach of the act in excess of two years. I think there's no question that we need to know what went wrong. The minister's amendments, I'm sure, will address some of the legislative shortcomings, and we will certainly work with the government to address those in a timely fashion. But there are things that can and should be done now, given

the legislation in place, that he didn't speak to—I didn't hear him if he did speak to them—and I think it's incumbent upon him to address those as quickly as possible in terms of how we can address those shortcomings immediately to ensure, as much as possible, public safety in the province of Ontario.

There are serious questions here. I believe—and I'm not one who frivolously calls for public inquiries. The now government, the Liberal Party of Ontario, when they were sitting on this side of the House, it was almost a weekly occurrence when they called for a provincial inquiry. So I would appeal to the government, the Minister of Community Safety and the Attorney General to very seriously consider the need for a public inquiry with respect to what happened here. This is a very, very disturbing and serious public safety issue. I think that we need to know what went wrong and why, where the \$9 million went, who made those decisions and who was involved, and who authorized it. I think another question which perhaps we can never answer: How many crimes were committed by individuals who were missed by the registry, who we failed to ensure were in the system and whose movements were being monitored through the sex offender registry?

There's a whole series of questions with respect to the OPP. The current commissioner, Commissioner Fantino, has, I think, responded in a very admirable way to these concerns, but we're going back a number of years in some respects with some of this.

I think we need to know what was involved, and I think that if any issue that's confronted us over the past number of years in this place cries out for a public inquiry, this is it. This is it, and I call on the government to do the right thing: call a public inquiry.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my pleasure to respond to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing in his remarks today, and also to welcome the municipal leaders from around the province who have joined us, including my own mayor, Mayor Eisenberger, from the city of Hamilton.

I have to tell you that it's really sad that four years after the McGuinty government was elected the first time, we are still in a situation where municipalities in this province are being starved. They're being starved because this government simply refuses to pay its bills and refuses to establish the real, concrete measures that need to be established in this province to ensure that municipalities are thriving.

During the election campaign, in fact, many of the parties were talking about this. I can recall, and, in fact, the minister is very pleased and proud in terms of his remarks on what they plan to do, but the Liberal Party vision—I'm quoting from a Toronto Star article that was published during the campaign: "The Liberal Party vision is too much of the same old slow, sad song."

That's the reality here in the province of Ontario. These municipalities simply should not have to come to this Legislature year over year with cap in hand to get some real systemic change happening that's going to make positive impacts, not only on the municipalities' abilities to fund their programs but also to provide the kind of relief that property taxpayers in this province deserve, because the provincial programs that you're not paying for are being paid for on the property tax base. We are literally the only jurisdiction, probably in the entire G8, that has this unbelievable situation. And we wonder why our municipalities are in trouble. I can tell you, it's because this government has not been diligent in its efforts to try to fix the problem that was created by the previous government before them, and that's the downloading.

What do we need to do? We need to see an immediate 50% operating-cost sharing of transit in all municipalities in Ontario. That's what we need to see. We need to see that right away. It'll make a huge difference. We need to see provincially mandated programs paid for by this government the way they're supposed to be paid for by this government. That's what we need to see. We need the rebalancing of the fiscal relationship now—now, not five years from now, not 10 years from now.

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY

Mr. Peter Kormos: To the Minister of Community Safety, who brags about a 95% compliance rate: You see, we're worried about the 5% of noncompliant sex offenders. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure out that the convicted sex offender who doesn't register is one who has a scheme, a plan, and is far more likely to re-offend. Those are the people who constitute the most significant danger out there. They're the ones you ignore.

Where have you been? Where's this government been for the last four years when it comes to protecting kids and women from predatory sex offenders? The government has shown absolute disinterest in the welfare of people in community after community and, indeed, has had the oversight of a system that has not only been negligent in its development but has also been peculiarly skimped of nine million scarce law-enforcement public-safety dollars. I am hard pressed, New Democrats are hard pressed, to believe that somehow the minister and the government could hear no evil, see no evil, never mind speak no evil, as nine million bucks was being diverted away from the essential funding to an effective sex offender registry to other areas of policing.

We join with the Conservatives in calling for a public inquiry into this debacle. This minister has not demonstrated any responsibility or accountability by purporting to comply with some of the recommendations of the Auditor General.

Where's this government been for the last four years? Why did it take the Auditor General to expose these clear deficiencies when this government has been at the helm

for four years, putting people at risk, communities at risk, and displaying a complete lack of concern around community safety here in the province of Ontario?

1420

VENTURE CAPITAL FUND

Mr. Michael Prue: My response is to the Minister of Research and Innovation. Gladly would I accept what you had to say today, except that back in 2005 your same government, under the previous Minister of Finance, cancelled the labour-sponsored investment fund. They cancelled the fund that was set up in 1999, a federal-provincial fund, which did exactly the same—probably better—as what you are attempting to do here today. They gave 15% to 20% of tax rebate that levered new growth. It levered some \$600 million, and for the last two years it has done virtually nothing. When I spoke to the then finance minister, he continued down the path, and your government continued to do that until today, and now you come back with a very weak plan, I might suggest. Today is a tacit admission, I have to say, of the failure of your government for the past two years.

VISITORS

Hon. Margaret R. Best: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to take this opportunity today to acknowledge the staff and students from Sir Wilfrid Laurier school in the riding of Scarborough–Guildwood, my riding. Please stand up.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is for the Premier, dealing with the Auditor General's report and, specifically, his findings related to the sex offender registry. I'm sure the Premier would share our view that the findings are deeply disturbing, serious, in terms of protecting the public and the fact that the monies allocated by the government to administer the registry—some \$9 million over a period of years—were diverted to other uses. Premier, given the nature of this and its impact on public safety, earlier today I called on your government to call a public inquiry into what happened, supported by the third party as well. Will you support that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: No, we will not call a public inquiry. We appreciate what the Auditor General has done today in tabling his report. He has given us some very, very good recommendations. I thank him for those recommendations, and we'll act on them.

I want to repeat what he said at the beginning of the summary of his report: "A dedicated team of OPP officers and support personnel from the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services ... has worked diligently and cost-effectively over the last six years to create a working registry that helps the police investigate sexual crimes and monitor sex offenders in their local communities."

Is the system perfect? No. Will we achieve 100% compliance? We will do everything possible to achieve 100% compliance.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Mr. Speaker, I'd use a word, but you ruled it unparliamentary last week.

There's no question: We're talking about an issue here where the Auditor General has pointed out that we have had hundreds of sex offenders roaming the streets in neighbourhoods of the province of Ontario over the past few years, unaccounted for, and this minister is hiding behind legislation that he's tabling today rather than dealing with what has happened over the past four and a half years, how serious an issue this is, why it happened, and why the OPP diverted money when they were not operating the sex offender registry in an appropriate way to protect the citizens of Ontario. He has an obligation to stand in his place today and explain why he thinks it's sufficient to just go forward and not address the problems that occurred in the past four and a half years that he has been in office and how it could have jeopardized public safety in this province. Answer that.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: We've already acted on many of the recommendations that the Auditor General has put forth. We haven't sat back and done nothing, as he would like to infer, which is wrong.

We, on both sides of this House, should be talking about building confidence in a system that is working, a system that has a 95% compliance rate, a system that obviously can improve but at this point in time is working very, very well. You know, I referred to a media release from Ontario police leaders, who support the proposed changes to the province's sex offender registry.

Listen, it's not perfect. The Auditor General has pointed out where we can make improvements. We have started to make those improvements; we will continue to make those improvements as we go on.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: That's a pretty sad response given what's happened over the past four or five years. I mentioned in my response to the legislation that we don't know how many crimes were committed as a result of the failings of the sex offender registry over the past number of years. I think that should be important and of interest to the current government, why it happened.

The auditor talks about the \$9 million that was diverted to other issues. We don't know what they are. I think the minister has an obligation to tell us where that money went and who was involved in making those decisions. What role did the government have in making those decisions? Recommendation 6 that the auditor makes: "to ensure that all funds that are approved for

registry purposes are actually spent on registry activities.” In the government’s response, they declined to make that kind of commitment, indeed rubber-stamping the diversion of much-needed funds to protect the people of Ontario. Stand up and defend that. Explain to the people of Ontario where that money went, who was involved and how it may have endangered the safety of Ontarians.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Speaker, let me tell you first of all, and let me inform the member, who should know this little fact, that we do not interfere with the operations of the OPP. He should clearly know that, because if you go back and you look at the money that was reallocated over the course of the last several years, you’ll find out that 40% of the money that was reallocated was reallocated under his watch, that government’s watch. In 1999-2000, \$407,000 was not spent on the directory; in 2000-01, \$403,000 was not spent on the directory; in 2001-02, \$940,000 was not spent on the directory. It was reallocated to other priority areas of the OPP. It was—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question. The member from Durham.

DRIVER EDUCATION

Mr. John O’Toole: My question is to the Premier. Premier, in yet another example of how your government has failed to take seriously the health and safety of the citizens of Ontario, our Auditor General has found, shockingly, that in 2006 collision rates were 62% greater amongst drivers who had completed a government-approved driver education course over those who had no driver education course. Can the Premier possibly explain to this House why drivers who have completed a government-approved course are more likely to be involved in a collision than those who have completed no such course?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Transportation.

Interjection.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I don’t want to get into the past; I want to talk about the future. I think that is important.

First of all, I want to commend the Provincial Auditor for doing another outstanding job. One of the virtues we have in our democratic system is we have officers of the House such as the Provincial Auditor who are able to take an independent and outside look at the way government operates. I want to assure the member that with the findings he has made and with the recommendations that he has made, the Ministry of Transportation is already moving on these. That’s an advantage that ministries have. I think the acting Leader of the Opposition mentioned yesterday we get that opportunity, so in the supplementary I’ll be more specific than I was. But I want to thank the auditor for doing a good job. We want to comply with what he is suggesting we comply with.

1430

Mr. John O’Toole: That diversion of an answer—we’re all happy to have an auditor. Thank God the people

of Ontario have an auditor who is concerned about the drivers who are more dangerous when they have completed a driver education course approved by your ministry. It absolutely makes no sense, Minister.

The auditor highlights the concerns of several stakeholders who are worried that some unscrupulous driving schools are selling certificates to drivers who haven’t earned them; meanwhile, the government has turned a blind eye. Why is the government ignoring these facts? Why isn’t it ensuring that new drivers can safely operate the cars they drive, and why aren’t they taking seriously the potential fraud that exists in the system you are the minister of?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I want to say to the member that that is precisely what officials in the Ministry of Transportation are doing at this time with the findings of the auditor, and he has been very assiduous in pointing out some of the concerns and how he believes the Ministry of Transportation can move expeditiously to deal with them. I want to assure the member that that in fact is the case.

The licensing of unqualified drivers is simply not acceptable to me and, I really don’t think, to any members of this House. We will suspend any organization found to be licensing unqualified drivers. In the New Year, an improved inspection process will target and follow up on organizations that have unacceptable practices in place.

So when we look at any problems that have been identified, I think you will find that, by and large, the ministry has already moved on them and we are undertaking to take further action to comply with everything the auditor has suggested.

Mr. John O’Toole: Quite frankly, the auditor has, year after year for the last four years, made very similar audit comments, and yet we’re still in this serious dilemma. In fact, here is what the auditor said: “The ministry’s inspection of ... driving schools had not focused on ensuring that the training was in accordance with the ministry-approved curriculum. Where inspections were done, many cases of significant non-compliance were disregarded” completely.

The government is falling down entirely when it comes to ensuring the safety of new drivers on our highways in the province of Ontario. My question again: Why has this government repeatedly turned a blind eye to these challenging and very serious issues of fraud as well as public safety? Please answer that question.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I thank the member for raising that issue. I guess one of the advantages you have when you’re a new minister of a particular portfolio is that you have the opportunity to take a new look at some of the challenges that are out there, and I think he has raised, fair enough, some challenges that are there.

He mentioned, for instance—I think all of us would find this odd—that if you went to a driving school, the rate of accidents is higher. We now have an outside person looking at that to determine why that would be and what all the factors are. But one of them that you

might consider—and British Columbia did—is that it might well be that if you get one of these certificates, you don't have to go the full year before you reach the next stage of licensing. I think you go eight months instead of the full year. It may well be that that is the reason, and so we're going to look at what British Columbia is doing and what other jurisdictions are doing. But I want to tell the member that we're prepared to act on everything the Provincial Auditor has suggested we act upon.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have with us in the Speaker's gallery a delegation from the Council of the Senate of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, led by Senator Oleg Tolkachev. Accompanying the delegation is the Honourable Andrey Veklenko, Consul General of the Russian Federation in Toronto, and other guests. Please join me in welcoming our guests today.

DRIVER EDUCATION

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Premier. It has been evident for over five years that new drivers who take the Ministry of Transportation approved beginning driver education program are far more likely to have a traffic collision than new drivers who don't take the course. Do you see a problem with that, and if you see a problem with that, why did your government not act on it for four years?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The Minister of Transportation.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I have a note coming here that may or may not be helpful, but I want to say to the member that he raises, through the Provincial Auditor's report, a very good question. As I indicated, we have within the ministry an outside organization—a person—looking at what the reasons for that could be. Because it's illogical to you and to me; it's counterintuitive to think that if you've gone to driving school, you're going to have more accidents than otherwise. The ministry has already acted upon some of the findings that were in the 2005 auditor's report and has implemented those.

In the supplementary, unless he moves to another area, I will try to answer some of the questions that he's dealing with. I want to repeat what I said, that one of the considerations is what British Columbia found and it's that shortened period for being able to get the licence.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The minister talks about something being illogical. What is illogical is that the Ministry of Transportation has known about this for five years and did nothing. For five years the Ministry of Transportation approved a driver education program. It's been a fact that students who take that are more likely to get into a serious traffic collision than students who don't take it. The issue is this: How could you know about this

serious threat to public safety and for four years do absolutely nothing about it?

Hon. James J. Bradley: The characterization that the leader of the third party would have is not the characterization I would say has been the case with the Ministry of Transportation. The Ministry of Transportation has been addressing the auditor's findings with changes and the ministry will follow through to fix all the concerns that he has mentioned.

The ministry is looking at the possibility that the higher collision rates, as I mentioned, are as a result of the certificate being obtained in eight months instead of the full year. We also began regulating the BDE schools, the driver education schools, last year in compliance with provincial standards. They're being monitored and strongly enforced wherever necessary.

In the last year, we have removed 22 schools from our ministry-approved lists because they weren't up to standard. Based on the recommendations in the auditor's report, over the past few weeks we have notified an additional eight driving schools of our intent to remove them from the ministry's approved list.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Actually, the Auditor General tells us how this could happen. He points out, for example, that a driving instructor who was hired in February 2007 had four demerit points himself and had received six licence suspensions since August 2004, all of which happened under the McGuinty government. He also noted that two driving instructors had been convicted of fraud under \$5,000, including falsifying student records, and were still licensed as student driving instructors.

This has been happening for five years—four years under the McGuinty government—yet the Auditor General says you've effectively done nothing. Tell the people of Ontario how this can happen and the McGuinty government effectively does nothing.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I can say to the leader of the third party that it would be interesting to go back to some of the auditor's reports when he was in power and he had—

Mr. Howard Hampton: You and Bob again?

Hon. James J. Bradley: No. He likes to try to get out of it by talking about the person who was the leader, as though all of them were asleep for the full five years. But I don't think that's as important as what is happening now.

In response to the auditor's report, the ministry is tightening standards for driver education and driving instructors; we're making it so that the ministry will not licence a new driving instructor if that person has a single demerit point or a criminal conviction. And the ministry has tightened requirements for driving instructors' licences and has reduced the allowable number of demerit points an instructor can acquire. If an instructor is found not to be satisfactory, that licence will be pulled by the Ministry of Transportation. I give the member my assurance that I will ensure all these things are done.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question. The leader of the third party.

1440

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Mr. Howard Hampton: Again to the Premier: The Auditor General says that all too often pharmacies are routinely charging more than the drug formulary price for prescription drugs. In fact, I can quote him: "In February 2007 ... more than 30% of the unit drug prices ... exceeded the formulary price by 12,500%, resulting in the ministry paying almost \$2,400 for a claim that ... should have cost less than \$20."

Premier, why hasn't your government acted effectively to stop this kind of price gouging?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman: As always, we thank the Auditor General. The examination of elements at the Ministry of Health helps us to do our work better.

I'm pleased to tell the honourable member that the very mechanism that was referred to in the Auditor General's report, which is called cost-to-operator, was taken out of play for generic drugs in June 2007 and for almost all brand-name drugs as of August 1, 2007. So the very mechanism that proved problematic has been eliminated, but there is more work to be done on this. I'm very pleased to say that within about a month a draft model will be revealed and consulted on, which relates to a variety of options around pharmacist compensation models.

This is all part and parcel of the initiative that this Legislature passed, called Bill 102. It is a work in progress. We've made some progress already on the most egregious circumstances highlighted by the auditor. There is more work to be done, and his efforts stimulate ours.

Mr. Howard Hampton: As usual, the McGuinty government wants us to believe that after the horse has left the barn, they've got the situation well under control. But the Auditor General says that the real issue was that you weren't using your own enforcement powers, that the Ministry of Health has not taken any action against drug companies that do not comply with the formulary price.

Premier, why wasn't the Ministry of Health, under the McGuinty government, using its enforcement powers? Why weren't you enforcing your own rules?

Hon. George Smitherman: I'm not sure if the honourable member was deliberate in suggesting that drug companies are the same as pharmacies; I don't believe that was the Auditor General's suggestion.

But on the matter at hand raised by the Auditor General, in the time since his investigation, as a result of the changes brought about by Bill 102, the cost-to-operator mechanism which was relied upon by pharmacies for the kind of cost creep that was discussed by the auditor is no longer possible in the province of Ontario.

We do have more work to do, for sure, to enhance these circumstances and to bring in, as I identified in my

earlier answer, a new model for reimbursement with respect to pharmacies. But I can tell Ontarians that we've made substantial progress, even in the time since that report was worked on. There is more to do, and I'll be looking forward to opportunities to make all members of the House aware of those changes.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Once again the Auditor General, with respect, disagrees. He says the real issue is enforcement. He says that despite two previous warnings to your government, "a reduction in the number of field inspection staff has significantly reduced the inspection coverage of dispensing agencies. Currently," Ministry of Health "inspectors can only examine each dispensing agency about once every 30 years."

You want the people to believe that the situation has improved; the Auditor General says no, that it's actually gotten worse.

Can the minister tell us, given the practices the auditor has uncovered, do you think one inspection every 30 years is going to protect the public and the consumers of the province?

Hon. George Smitherman: What I do think is that a mechanism which was the subject of abuse is no longer available, and that's a good step in the right direction.

I do agree that there are always opportunities in the breadth of the Ministry of Health to have a greater resource related to inspection and enforcement. We try to balance that out with the necessity of providing resources to those who are working on the front lines in delivering clinical care.

We've made good progress already on the areas where the Auditor General and his staff have done work. There is more to be done, as I've acknowledged and as I've indicated to the honourable member in my earlier answer. I'll look forward to an early opportunity to bring that information back to the House for the benefit of all members and, indeed, Ontarians.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Premier. The auditor has uncovered yet another area where the government is failing to protect the health and safety of Ontarians. For the second year in a row, the auditor has damned the wait times reduction program. Specifically, he has found that only 14% of all surgeries are covered by the program and he was shocked and surprised to find that the government has no idea how many operating rooms are in the province. He found that 12% of them sit empty most weekdays, and sometimes as many as 40% are empty. Meanwhile, we also learned from his report that people are waiting years—yes, I say "years"—for knee replacements.

If the government is really serious about reducing wait times, and you've talked about it now for years, why are so many operating rooms sitting empty and why don't you know anything about them?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman: Maybe the honourable member would like to be reminded of her time in office as the Minister of Health for one reason, which is important. As the longest-serving Minister of Health in the Harris government, she had the opportunity to do something about the capacity the system has to manage wait times and she didn't do anything.

In the time since I've had the privilege of being Minister of Health, we've introduced the wait time information system. It is expanding on a daily basis, enhancing the capacity to manage the health care system. Because the people of Ontario rejected their \$3 billion cut to health care, we're now in a position to expand the wait time information focus to the broad array of the surgical platform of general surgery, which is 40% of all the surgical activity in our hospitals. So the wait time information system is now established, taking benefit and trying to make up for the lost time squandered on the part of that honourable member.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: It's unbelievable. This minister is in his fifth year and he's still blaming the Harris government. If you can't do the job, get out of the kitchen and give it to one of the other people in your caucus. It's really quite simple.

The wait time reduction system that this minister continues to tell us is up to date and reliable is not. The auditor proved it today. The hospitals aren't using the wait times information system to monitor and manage wait lists; nor are the surgeons. There is so much more to be done. I would say to you, you've tried to cover it up with misleading ads and bluster. Why is the wait time information system not doing what you promised it would do?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just ask the honourable member to retract the comments that she made, please. Have respect for the Legislature.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: If I said something unparliamentary, I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): You did.

Hon. George Smitherman: The honourable member, if she carefully re-reads what she said, has made references to the auditor's comments today which I think on themselves don't hold up. Here's what he said: The ministry "has introduced several encouraging initiatives in connection with its wait time strategy designed to help hospitals improve their surgical processes." Here are the results: angiography down 60.7%, angioplasty down 50%, cataract surgery down 54.7%, hip replacement down 37.9%, knee replacement down 35.2%, CT scan down 30.9%, cancer surgery down 14.8%. And because the people of Ontario rejected her party's \$3-billion cut, more wait times are coming down.

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY

Mr. Peter Kormos: To the Premier, how could this government, in the years 2003 to 2007, have allowed money that was budgeted for the development of the sex offender registry to be spent by the OPP on other polic-

ing operations, especially when this government knew that that registry was in shambles?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: The member knows full well that we do not infringe on the operating opportunities of the OPP, but let me just tell you what the money was spent on. Some \$8.7 million has been used to offset the cost of physicians within the behavioural science unit for work that supports the registry's mandate, as well as other public safety policing priorities, including post-911 security.

Our government will never interfere with the operating of the OPP. The commissioner is in charge of that. We will ensure that we protect the integrity of the system by allowing the commissioner of the OPP to manage his budget.

Mr. Peter Kormos: It's clear that the sex offender registry has been and remains in shambles: Almost 400 sex offenders wandering Ontario are not registered, and a computer system that fails police officers who want to locate speedily a sex offender. Why would this government have allowed that registry to fall into such a state of shambles, or is it blaming the OPP for negligence in not building an effective sex offender registry?

1450

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Let's understand. I think it's over there that they are criticizing the OPP. We support the OPP. We support the recommendations of the Auditor General—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order in the opposition benches, please.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: All money should be allocated towards the sex registry that is assigned to it, and we will ensure, as the commissioner has said, that from here on in, the Ontario Sex Offender Registry's allocation will be spent on that allocation. The commissioner of the OPP, a person that we should all respect and trust, has assured us that that will happen.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Minister, today is Injured Workers' Day. Rallies are held across the province, and I know one was held outside your office earlier today.

In 2006, there were more than 260,000 workplace injuries in this province. Recently, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board was criticized by some and complimented by others for the graphic nature of its television ads that highlight workplace injuries. The goal of the ad campaign, of course, is to raise awareness that injuries and deaths on the job are preventable. We know, however, that there will be injuries to workers. I want to know from the minister, what is the government going to do to help injured workers in my riding of Hamilton Mountain and the province of Ontario?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for Hamilton Mountain for that question, as well as for her advocacy when it comes to injured workers in the Hamilton area. She has had the opportunity to speak to me, and I know she really does care about injured workers, as does this entire government, as our last four years in office have demonstrated.

Our government is committed to creating a brighter future for injured workers. We've taken action to put more money into the hands of injured workers through benefit increases and reforms to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. For the past 12 years—Mr. Speaker, I know you would know this—erosion of inflation protection under the NDP's Friedland formula and the Tories' modified Friedland formula saw injured workers' benefits increase by only 2.9%, while inflation rose by 29%. We're going in a different direction. Changes in our last budget helped address this situation by enhancing the benefits for more than 155,000 injured workers by 2.5% on July 1, 2.5% in another month, and 2.5% on January—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: Minister, we want injured workers in this province to know that every effort will be made to help them return to work. The Hamilton and District Injured Workers' Group in my riding is a strong advocate group for injured workers. I know when I meet with them in the new year, they will ask me about what we are doing as a province to help injured workers return to the workplace. I would like the minister to elaborate for me and my constituents just what assistance is provided to injured workers.

Hon. Brad Duguid: In fact in 2007-08, we've increased the Office of the Worker Adviser funding by another \$1.4 million. Mr. Speaker, I know you would know about that, sir, because I know you are responsible for doing that, so I commend you for that.

The Office of the Worker Adviser will also receive an additional \$810,000 per year in ongoing funding. Also, the WSIB increased expense allowances for injured workers in both January 2006 and January 2007. In fact, as I said before, since 1995 when the NDP removed full inflation protection for workers, we've gone in the opposite direction. When you compare the 12 years prior to the 2007 budget to the year and a half preceding the 2007 budget, we're left looking at a very big difference—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HAZARDOUS WASTE

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is for the Premier. The auditor's report details story after story about how this government is failing to protect the health and safety of Ontario citizens. The failures in the Ministry of the Environment when it comes to hazardous waste are scandalous. The auditor found that 5,000 shipments of

hazardous waste were made by unregistered generators, and I quote, "The ministry could not explain to us why the generators were not registered." And worse, the ministry made no attempt to follow up with the unregistered generators.

For a government that likes to pontificate about its environmental record that is a scandal right now, why isn't the government taking the transportation of hazardous waste seriously?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: In the absence of the Minister of the Environment, I welcome the question.

First of all, let me just say to the Auditor General and his staff that we thank you for the report. That particular office is nothing if not thorough, and their recommendations and advice are always helpful.

I know there were 11 separate recommendations offered to the Minister of the Environment in this regard. I also know that each of those was responded to by the ministry. I can say as well, whether it's the matter of inspections, computer systems or dealing with household waste, that there have been separate responses to each and every one of those. I know the Minister of the Environment looks forward to continuing to make additional progress when it comes to treating hazardous waste in the province of Ontario.

Ms. Laurie Scott: When the Auditor General still reports that your Ministry of the Environment knew and you did nothing about it, maybe we should ask the auditor to investigate how much hazardous waste is being produced here by the Premier this afternoon in this Legislature.

The story quite simply keeps getting worse. The auditor found there were 26,000 shipments of hazardous waste where the amount sent out was less than the amount received—more than half. That's more than 13,000 that had variances that fell outside of acceptable guidelines. In some cases, 90% of the shipment was lost somewhere between the generator and the receiver, and this government took no action to follow up. Why should Ontarians have any faith in this government's commitment, let alone its ability, to protect their health and safety where hazardous waste is concerned? Why should—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: In fact, there was the kernel of a good question there, and I want to speak to that. That question was: Why should Ontarians have faith in our ability and our determination to follow up on recommendations and advice offered by the Auditor General?

Here's what the Auditor General said about the Conservatives in his 2003 annual report, and he quotes that again in this year's report: "It was apparent to us this year that there were far too many areas where prior-year concerns—often going back four, five, six, seven, or even 10 years, had not been satisfactorily addressed ... there is no excuse for a lack of effective action...." This year, the auditor says that we have fully implemented 44% of the recommendations he made two years ago and

have made progress on more than 80%, in contrast to 15% on the Tory watch.

There is always more work to be done, still more progress to be made, but the record clearly demonstrates that when it comes to following up on recommendations coming from the Auditor General, we are there, four-square, making progress on behalf of Ontarians.

CONSERVATION OFFICERS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. The auditor's report points out this year what many have known, that conservation officers across this province are unable to do their jobs mandated by this Legislature. In fact, they're not able to enforce the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act. In one particular section of the report, it says, "In the case of one unit, we noted that regular patrols were suspended by mid-November 2006 for lack of funds, even though the deer hunting season still had another 10 days...."

Premier, my question is simply this: Why have you allowed this to happen under your watch?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I thank you for the question. As a matter of fact, it has been stopped. We've put an extra \$1.6 million into that particular operating budget. We still have the same number of conservation officers we've always had, 300 of them. So now with the added money that was put in, we're able to continue on to do the work that is required of the conservation officers, protecting wildlife in this province.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, the reality is that you're not doing a very good job. The reality is that conservation officers don't have the funding to go into the bush to do what they're mandated to do by this Legislature. Across Ontario, we have conservation officers who are lucky if they're able to put fuel in their trucks and get out in the bush one or two days a week. They held bake sales all last winter to raise money to put gas in their trucks. So I ask you the question again: Why has this been allowed to happen under your watch, and what are you going to do to fix it?

1500

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: As a matter of fact, the officers did not hold bake sales. There were other folks who actually held the bake sales for them to raise what they felt was an issue. Unfortunately, they didn't give the officers the money that they did raise. They kept it. Having said that, we gave them the money, the \$1.6 million, they required to be able to continue the operation. There's no question that they are the finest when it comes to enforcing the laws of Ontario for the protection of animal rights. They are without a doubt incredible people who work hard every day on behalf of the people of this province, and we should be very proud of the work they do. We did what the Auditor General had indicated, and we were ahead of the game and had already put the money in place.

TOURISM

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is to the Minister of Tourism. The tourism industry is a vital part of Ontario's economy. As a matter of fact, in my riding it's a toss-up whether agriculture or tourism is the biggest industry. This year in Ontario we've already had quite a bit of snow and cold weather, which are great for the tourism industry. In my riding of Northumberland-Quinte West, there's an abundance of activities that visitors can enjoy, from snowmobiling to snowshoeing and cross-country skiing, for example, at Presqu'île Provincial Park, the Loomis conservation area, the county forest, which is part of Ganaraska, and the Batawa ski hill. Can you inform the members of this House what other events and activities are available to people travelling in Ontario during these winter months?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Tourism and Recreation.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations on your election. I want to thank the member for Northumberland-Quinte West, a great tourism destination, for his question. The member is correct in saying that tourism is so vital to our economy. In fact, it touches every community, every riding across this province. We have beautiful scenery, spectacular cultural attractions and exciting festivals and events. Ontario is also packed with outstanding outdoor activities for families and travellers to get out and enjoy.

We have ski hills and trails across this province that faced high temperatures and a lack of snow last season. This season they've received an incredible amount of fresh snow, and that, along with extensive snow making, has made for an outstanding ski season already.

All across this province there's a full range of activities, from skating on the Rideau Canal to attending Winterlude, the ice wine festival in Niagara region, or snowmobiling on our gorgeous trails. It's going to be a great winter.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary, member from Sault Ste. Marie.

Mr. David Oraziotti: Mr. Speaker, congratulations on your new position. Minister, the constituents of my riding of Sault Ste. Marie understand the full economic impact that tourism has on our community. As you know, the summer is a very busy time for festivals, but winter is also an exciting time in Ontario, with many festivals and events that draw visitors from across the globe. In my riding, one of the ways we celebrate winter is the Bon Soo Winter Carnival. Last year, our government contributed more than \$10,000 to this annual celebration, which brings residents from the US and Canada to participate in ice sculptures, skating events, the renowned polar bear swim, as well as other outdoor activities. We're proud to support this event again. Minister, given some of the challenges that the tourism industry is facing as a result of the high dollar, what festivals and events are taking place across the province this winter to

encourage more Ontarians to spend their vacation dollars at home while attracting more tourists from abroad?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'd like to thank the member from Sault Ste. Marie for giving me the opportunity to talk about the many great festivals like Bon Soo and other events happening across Ontario this winter. I know that every region in the province celebrates winter the Ontario way with world-class festivals and events, tourism attractions such as Upper Canada Village Alight at Night festival, or travellers can stop in and catch a performance of White Christmas at the Sony Centre in downtown Toronto. Both of these events were enhanced by our Celebrate Ontario program last year. We also continue to promote Ontario to the rest of the world, like a giant snow globe that we have right now in downtown Manhattan, it's going to be featured on Good Morning America this Monday, and that will also be travelling throughout Ontario.

I also want to encourage all families to get out and enjoy Family Day in February, being tourists in their own province. We have an abundance of activities and family events.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, we asked you about the scandalous dispensing fees that were really sucking the medication programs in our long-term-care facilities dry. We learned today that the situation when it comes to medication programs is even worse than we had originally thought. We see that about one third of the money is going into the pockets of those dispensing the drugs and is not having any impact on the care of residents.

Premier, my question to you is, how can you justify shortchanging the residents of long-term-care facilities and not giving them the money that they've been asking for for personal care, which you promised back in 2003, and that it's going into the pockets of these other people?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman: I'm very proud to tell the honourable member that the level of care that's being provided in Ontario's long-term-care homes today is far superior to that which we inherited. At least 0.6 hour per resident day is the implication to date, with about \$1 billion of public investment.

With respect to the matters of medication, I think these have been discussed in the House through question period today. As I mentioned, the cost-to-operator claim was a mechanism that was resulting in some egregious cost increases, but the door has been shut on that mechanism for many, many months now, following the passage by this Legislature of Bill 102, which I'm very pleased to say is leading us forward in reforming the system and ensuring that we get the best possible value for the patient dollar. Accordingly, it would have been nice to see support on that bill from the opposite side.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Mr. Speaker, the hole that he says has been plugged wasn't plugged. The numbers

he was given yesterday were for November and October, so he should check again.

However, we hear from a minister who promised a revolution, and then this summer we hear about seniors sitting in diapers that are 75% wet. Now we hear in the auditor's report today about the fact that there were 18,000 level 1 drug alerts generated at pharmacies, indicating a high-risk combination of drugs; 91% were overridden by pharmacists with no record of consultation with doctors.

The health and safety of our vulnerable seniors is at risk, and this government is negligent when it comes to appropriately monitoring the level of care in our homes. I ask the minister today, what else is going on in the long-term-care homes that he has turned a blind eye to?

Hon. George Smitherman: Some of the other initiatives that are ongoing in long-term-care homes are increasing the comfort allowance many, many times, something that was never done by the party opposite; enhancing the accommodation rates; building new long-term-care homes; rebuilding B and C long-term-care homes; substantially increasing the amount of raw food; and making a variety of similar adjustments.

On the issue of medication which the honourable member raises, I think it's noteworthy that in her question she speaks about two regulated health professionals, physicians and pharmacists. Accordingly, much of the regulation and oversight that she seeks is provided by self-governing associations, and we'll certainly be asking similar hard questions of the colleges as we seek to ensure that they are fulfilling their important responsibilities.

Like I said earlier, the Auditor General's report is very helpful to us and we appreciate the work that they've done. We'll be taking all of the information that they've brought forward as direction and improving these circumstances. As I mentioned before, I'll look forward to updating the House on those initiatives.

SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. Le vérificateur général a écrit dans son rapport que deux des trois foyers de soins de longue durée qu'ils ont visités ne disposent d'aucun document confirmant qu'ils avaient obtenu le consentement éclairé nécessaire pour administrer un nouveau médicament à un résident.

Je vous demande, Monsieur le premier ministre, est-ce que nos aînés dans les résidences de soins de longue durée en Ontario se font droguer contre leur gré?

1510

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health

Hon. George Smitherman: The provision of medication in long-term-care environments was the subject of Bill 102. We took advice on the matter of inappropriate use of drugs for our seniors. We really followed a lot of advice that was on offer by Frances Lankin, who, as a

former member of this Legislature and of your party's caucus, was very vocal and passionate around this. As my then-parliamentary assistant, Monique Smith, worked on developing that legislation, she really did seek out a lot of input from the aforementioned individual. I'd be happy to try to answer further on the supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: The Auditor General goes on to say that there were unreported medication errors in all the long-term-care homes they visited; that there is wide use of high-risk drugs; and that a quarter, 25%, of residents are on 12 or more medications and there are no policies to monitor adverse drug reactions.

Premier, are Ontario seniors in long-term-care being overmedicated and given inappropriate drugs without consent and without proper monitoring?

Hon. George Smitherman: No. I think two issues would be helpful. The first is to repeat what I said a moment ago. The responsibility for ordering drugs is fulfilled by regulated health professionals: doctors and pharmacists or the partners in those relationships. It is possible that a patient or a client or resident might have 12 drugs listed. That means that a physician has approved their use; it does not mean they are all in use.

I do think this is an area that does call upon us to ensure that those regulated parties are fulfilling their responsibility. In the broader sector, we've brought in MedsCheck, which takes a hard look at any circumstance where a patient is using more than three drugs for chronic diseases. Accordingly, we think there are opportunities to enhance this sort of surveillance on the population of long-term-care residents, something I'd be very happy to work with the honourable member on.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: My question is for the Minister of Culture—and congratulations, Minister.

Ontario libraries are very important community hubs for information, learning and literacy. In rural communities like the riding of Huron–Bruce, I strongly believe that local libraries serve valuable local needs and also preserve our local rural identity. I'm very proud of the great work that libraries in Huron and Bruce counties are doing in our communities. In the riding of Huron–Bruce, I have over 25 libraries.

Minister, can you please inform the House of what the government is doing to invest in, and how you will support, our rural libraries?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: I thank the member from Huron–Bruce for her question. Indeed, our government does recognize the importance of libraries across our province, and especially in rural communities. That's why we provided a one-time investment of \$5 million to strengthen over 260 rural, remote and First Nations libraries. That helps to contribute to their vitality in the communities.

In Huron–Bruce, two public libraries have recently benefited from our government's investment of \$306,000. We know that Huron County Public Library

and Bruce County Public Library will welcome this funding to assist in learning, literacy and citizen engagement.

Our government understands the value of libraries, and we're especially proud to invest in Ontario libraries in rural communities.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Thank you for highlighting the investments in Huron–Bruce. I can tell you that my constituents and people living in small and rural communities are very pleased to know that the government supports learning hubs in all of our communities across the province by strengthening our communities through the hubs.

While these direct investments are absolutely crucial to our small communities, I know that we're providing more help for our local libraries. Minister, could you please tell us what else you are doing to assist libraries in my riding and throughout all of Ontario?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: Besides the \$5-million investment in small and rural libraries, which the honourable member has mentioned, we are indeed making other contributions as well.

We're investing in a virtual reference library so that communities—small or large, urban or rural—can easily access information online. We're also providing funding to address the connectivity needs of libraries across our province, so that geographic boundaries are not barriers to learning. Finally, because libraries are indeed the hub of many communities, ServiceOntario uses libraries so that Ontarians can readily access important government services and important government information from home without having to travel great distances.

HAZARDOUS WASTE

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Premier. People across Ontario are rightly worried about what is happening with the hazardous waste that is being transported on our roads and highways. The Premier talks about responding to the auditor, but his government has ignored the problem for years and now claims that they're acting only after being caught. When 90% of a hazardous waste shipment goes missing and the government does nothing to investigate until the auditor raises the issue, we're left to conclude that there are no internal controls. This is a government that wants us to take them seriously when it comes to pollution reduction, but their actions don't match up with reality. Can the Premier please tell the House and the people of Ontario where the hazardous waste is going?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know the Minister of the Environment, upon his return from Bali, is going to want to keep working on this particular issue, but I think there's one—you know, it's a lengthy Auditor General's report, and it all makes for very good reading, of course. But I want to refer you to page 27. There is a fabulous chart there, which is called "Figure 1: Percentage of Audit Follow-ups Noting Significant Progress in Addressing Our Recommendations of Two Years

Earlier.” It goes from 1998 to 2007. In 2004, it takes a dramatic, sharp increase upwards, and it’s been going up ever since.

As I said in my last question, the reason that Ontarians can and should have confidence in their government when it comes to following up on the advice of the Auditor General is because of our record. We have a very good record. In fact, it’s the best record of any government in the history of this province when it comes to following up on the auditor’s recommendations.

Ms. Laurie Scott: But when the Premier, who has seen the Auditor General’s report—I know he quoted a graph. But the auditor said that up to 90% of shipments of hazardous waste are still going missing. You can’t still use the refrain, “Don’t worry, be happy.” It’s not good enough. The Auditor General has said that up to 90% of shipments of hazardous waste are not accounted for. Things are not under control. That is not reality. The government has ignored the problems for years. So again, I ask the Premier, where’s the hazardous waste going?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, to put this in some context, I think Ontarians really want to know about our commitment to the environment. Let me just talk about some of the things that we’ve done on that score. We’ve got a new Clean Water Act, the best of its kind in the country. We’ve got a new law protecting endangered species, the best of its kind in the country. We’ve protected a green space larger than Prince Edward Island. We have an aggressive, ambitious yet highly achievable climate change plan, which is devoted to assuming our responsibility as global citizens in the face of a global challenge, which is climate change. And of course, we are very concerned about treating hazardous waste. That’s why we brought the first law of its kind in Ontario which bans the land disposal of untreated hazardous waste in our province. That wasn’t there before. So yes, we will carefully examine and follow up on each and every one of the recommendations brought forward by the Auditor General.

INJURED WORKERS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Will the government listen to injured workers, whom I joined at the 16th Annual Injured Workers Christmas Demonstration this morning? I didn’t see any other government members besides you, Minister, and you left halfway through. Will he eliminate deeming and determining, eliminate the experience rating, guarantee coverage for all workers, and provide full permanent cost of living for people receiving benefits? Will he or won’t he?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Indeed, it was my privilege this morning to join injured workers, a tradition begun by my predecessor, Mr. Bentley, and continued by yourself, Mr. Speaker, something that no other Ministers of Labour had ever done before. So I was privileged and honoured to meet with those injured workers.

Here are some of the stories that they had to tell. We were there to listen. I think the fact that we were there

shows that we are very earnest in wanting to listen to their concerns. But over the last four years, we’ve made a lot of progress when it comes to improving the situation with regard to injured workers across this province. I said earlier on, in a question from the member for Hamilton Mountain, that we’ve doubled the amount of funding in a year and a half—more than the previous governments did in 12 years.

We care about injured workers and we’re going to continue to build on our successes.

1520

Mr. Paul Miller: When will the government deliver fairness for injured workers who have lost the ability to work and take care of their families by providing full coverage of 100% of Ontario’s workforce, the support to help injured workers through their most difficult times, and the appropriate assessment and retraining to help injured workers re-enter the workforce?

And to the minister in the front: We were there, Minister.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I appreciate the question, but I’ve got to wonder where the NDP were in 1995 when they brought in the Friedland formula. If anything did damage to injured workers in this province, it was that formula. And guess what happened? The Tories modified it later on and made it even worse for injured workers.

We’re working very, very hard to turn that around. We’re working hard to turn that around because we believe that the Friedland formula brought in under the NDP was a real disaster. It really impacted the lives of injured workers. A 2.5% increase in July, a 2.5% increase this January, another 2.5% increase in January 2008: We care about injured workers and we’re putting our money where our mouth is.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I’ve got a question for the Minister of Education. Minister, the member from Halton recently stated that there have been no significant changes to the educational funding formula since 2003. We, on this side of the House, understand that this is simply not the case. Minister, can you remind the member from Halton and all the members of this House about the significant changes we’ve made to the educational funding formula since 2003?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It is absolutely true that the member for Halton has got it wrong. Every year since we’ve been in office, we’ve been changing the funding formula. Not only have we put billions of dollars into education to hire more elementary, more primary teachers to reduce class size, more student success teachers to help kids graduate from school, but we’ve changed the structure of the funding formula. We’ve put in place a school foundation grant that helps us move away from the per pupil grant and, most significantly for the member from Halton, we’ve expanded the criteria in the capital grants to allow for growth school funding, and that’s something that he seems to have overlooked.

PETITIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have here a petition signed by a great number of my constituents in the great part of my riding in the town of Tillsonburg. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the undersigned recognized the lack of adequate long-term-care beds in Tillsonburg due to the increasing senior population; and

“Whereas, according to year 2001, the statistics for Tillsonburg were as follows: age 45 to 54: 1,735; age 55 to 64: 1,455; age 65 to 74: 1,580; age 75 to 84: 1,195; age 85 and over: 305; and

“Whereas the present situation of 34 beds at Woodingford Lodge and 101 beds at Maple Manor does not reflect the needs of the ‘senior’ in need; and

“Whereas the median age of the population in 2001 was 41.4 years of age; and

“Whereas, in the year 2006, the statistics reported 5,160 persons in the 55-plus years of age, approximately 31% of the population; and

“Whereas two adult lifestyle subdivisions have been allowed to build 800 homes, bringing at least 1,000-plus seniors to the area;

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

“To act promptly to satisfy the needs of the seniors of Tillsonburg and Ontario.”

I attach my signature.

DAVID DUNLAP OBSERVATORY

Mr. Reza Moridi: It’s my pleasure to deliver a petition from the residents of Richmond Hill, “Save the David Dunlap Observatory Lands,” a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the David Dunlap Observatory in Richmond Hill is of historical and heritage significance; and

“Whereas the land was donated in trust by the Dunlap family to the University of Toronto in 1935, and the pre-Confederation farmhouse is still standing;

“Whereas the observatory, featuring the largest optical telescope in Canada, has been the site of scientific discoveries; it has been a place of learning not only for students of the University of Toronto, but for the general public as well;

“Whereas the observatory has been recently declared by the University of Toronto as ‘surplus’ to its academic needs, and subject to sale for development;

“Whereas the observatory sits in an incredibly unique and beautiful 180 acres of green space, the largest such space in the town of Richmond Hill, with trees, birds, animals, plants, insects and butterflies in the middle of a rapidly urbanized area;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the protection of this property of such historical, scientific and natural significance.”

NATIVE LAND DISPUTE

Mr. Toby Barrett: These petitions have come in from Lowbanks, Ayr, Cayuga, Nanticoke and Caledonia requesting land dispute hearings.

“Whereas land dispute deliberations to date have operated under a veil of secrecy, without transparency, and have created a atmosphere of privacy and scepticism, shutting out people from information and decisions that impact them directly; and

“Whereas Ontario’s aboriginal affairs minister has indicated, in both the media and during his visit to Caledonia, his intention to garner local public input; and

“Whereas our Ontario Legislative Assembly provides a mechanism for open, accountable, transparent recorded discussion through all-party committee hearings that are open to the media;

“We, the undersigned, petition our provincially elected legislators, representing all political parties, to commence public hearings through a select or standing committee, as soon as possible.”

I agree with this proposal and affix my signature.

BREASTFEEDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Health Canada, the Canadian Pediatric Association and the World Health Organization recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life, with continued breastfeeding along with other food sources for up to two years and beyond for optimal health; and

“Whereas many Ontario health care services lack adequate resources needed to assist women to achieve success for the recommended, well-established timeline;

“We are asking the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take a leadership role in ensuring the provision of adequate breastfeeding support for women in Ontario by:

“(1) Creating a provincial breastfeeding policy in Ontario;

“(2) Initiating a process whereby all Ontario hospitals become baby-friendly as per the WHO/UNICEF guidelines;

“(3) Adequately fund health-care-providing organizations to properly train all health care providers working with new and expectant mothers in hospital and community settings;

“(4) Increase the number of both hospital and community-based—breastfeeding—‘clinics in Ontario;

“(5) Fund the creation of a provincial ‘centre for excellence for breastfeeding’ which would serve as a training ground for professionals, a centre of research and a fully functioning clinic accessible to all women who require assistance.

“Given the documented and well-known health benefits to our population and subsequent financial benefits to our health care system, it is irresponsible for our provincial government not to support and increase breastfeeding resources in Ontario.”

There are 740 names on this petition; I fully support it and will sign it.

FEDERAL ELECTORAL REPRESENTATION

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario regarding the increase in the number of seats in the federal Parliament. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the government of Canada has proposed legislation to increase the number of seats in the federal Parliament, resulting from the recent data reflecting population growth;

“Whereas, as has become the custom with Stephen Harper’s government, Ontario once again is getting the short end of Confederation’s stick;

“Whereas this legislation discriminates against Ontario electors by making their vote count for less in the House of Commons, in comparison to electors from other parts of the country, such as British Columbia, Alberta and Quebec; and

“Whereas there is an apathetic concern for the challenges the sluggish US economy and the strong Canadian dollar are placing on our manufacturing sector by failing to come up with a plan to aid the McGuinty government’s efforts in this regard;

“Whereas this injustice hits at the very heart of democracy by creating a House of Commons where every single Canadian vote doesn’t carry the same weight;

“We, the undersigned, formally request that in a nation where the Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees equality for all, such an injustice must not be allowed to prevail.”

I agree with this petition, affix my signature to it, and give it to page Annie, who’s with me today.

1530

FREDERICK BANTING HOMESTEAD

Mr. Jim Wilson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I obviously agree with this petition, and I’ve signed it.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the citizens of ward 3, Colchester South and ward 4, Harrow, Essex county, had no direct say in the creation of the new town of Essex; and

“Whereas the government by regulation and legislation forced the recent amalgamation against the wishes of the overwhelming majority of the people of Colchester South-Harrow; and

“Whereas the government has not delivered the promised streamlined, more efficient and accountable local government, nor the provision of better services or reduced costs, and there is a total lack of harmony between residents of wards 1 and 2 and those of wards 3 and 4 with correspondingly different civic and social agendas; and

“Whereas the promise of tax decreases has not been met, with an average total increase of 35% since amalgamation, and the expected transition costs to area taxpayers of this forced amalgamation have already exceeded the promised amount;

“Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Immediately rescind the amalgamation order, return our local municipal government in Colchester South-Harrow to the local citizenry and their democratically elected officials and in so doing provide for citizen-based, democratic decision-making and local municipal governance.”

HEALTH CARD RENEWAL CLINIC

Mr. Tim Hudak: I’m pleased to present a petition entitled “Bringing Health Card Renewal Services Closer to Glanbrook Residents.” It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas seniors, the disabled, families with young children and other Mount Hope and Binbrook residents are forced to drive to downtown Hamilton to renew their Ontario health cards; and

“Whereas the province of Ontario mandates that health cards be renewed on a regular basis and that an Ontario health card must be presented to receive OHIP health services; and

“Whereas the Dalton McGuinty government has increased taxes and fees on local residents but has not improved services;

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

"To work with the Ontario Ministry of Health to bring a mobile health card renewal clinic to the Mount Hope and Binbrook area so that residents can more readily renew their Ontario health cards without the drive to downtown Hamilton."

Beneath the signatures of Margaret and Wray Daw, I affix my signature in support.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I'm pleased to present a petition that has to do with universal public health care systems in Ontario. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the people of Ontario deserve a universal, high-quality public health care system; and

"Whereas numerous studies have shown that the best health care is that which is delivered close to home; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government is working to increase Ontarians' access to family doctors through the introduction of family health teams that allow doctors to serve their communities more effectively; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government has fulfilled its promise to create new family health teams to bring more doctors to more Ontario families;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the McGuinty government's efforts to improve access to family doctors through innovative programs like family health teams."

Since I agree with this petition wholeheartedly, I'm delighted to sign it.

HIGHWAY 35

Ms. Laurie Scott: "Highway 35 Four-Laning

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas modern highways are economic lifelines to communities across Ontario and crucial to the growth of Ontario's economy; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has been planning the expansion of Highway 35, and that expansion has been put on hold by the McGuinty government; and

"Whereas Highway 35 provides an important economic link in the overall transportation system—carrying commuter, commercial and high tourist volumes to and from the Kawartha Lakes area and Haliburton; and

"Whereas the final round of public consultation has just been rescheduled;

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

"That the Liberal government move swiftly to complete the four-laning of Highway 35 after the completion of the final public consultation."

I affix my signature to this and hand it to page Parker.

FEDERAL ELECTORAL REPRESENTATION

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a petition to the Legislative Assembly, entitled "Increase to the Number of Seats in the Federal Parliament." It reads:

"Whereas the government of Canada has proposed legislation to increase the number of seats in the federal Parliament, resulting from the recent data reflecting population growth; and

"Whereas, as has become the custom with Stephen Harper's government, Ontario again seems to be getting the short end of Confederation's stick; and

"Whereas this legislation discriminates against Ontario electors by making their vote count for less in the House of Commons, in comparison to electors from other parts of the country, such as British Columbia, Alberta and Quebec; and

"Whereas there is apathetic concern for the challenges the sluggish US economy and the strong Canadian dollar are placing on our manufacturing sector by failing to come up with a plan to aid the McGuinty government's efforts in this regard; and

"Whereas this injustice hits at the very heart of democracy by creating a House of Commons where every single Canadian vote doesn't carry the same weight;

"We, the undersigned, formally request that in a nation where the Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees equality for all, such an injustice must not be allowed to prevail, and call upon the federal government to address this."

I agree with this, and affix my signature.

HEALTH CARD RENEWAL CLINIC

Mr. Tim Hudak: I have another petition to read into the record on behalf of Glanbrook residents interested in health card renewal of services. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas seniors, the disabled, families with young children and other Mount Hope and Binbrook residents are forced to drive to downtown Hamilton to renew their Ontario health cards; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario mandates that health cards be renewed on a regular basis and that an Ontario health card must be presented to receive OHIP health services; and

"Whereas the Dalton McGuinty government has increased taxes and fees on local residents but has not improved services;

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

"To work with the Ontario Ministry of Health to bring a mobile health card renewal clinic to the Mount Hope and Binbrook area so that residents can more readily renew their Ontario health cards without the drive to downtown Hamilton."

Beneath the signature of S. Bingham and J. McCready, of the St. Ann's and West Niagara areas, I affix my signature in support.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HEALTHY FOOD FOR HEALTHY SCHOOLS ACT, 2007 LOI DE 2007 PORTANT SUR UNE ALIMENTATION SAINÉ POUR DES ÉCOLES SAINES

Ms. Wynne moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 8, An Act to amend the Education Act / Projet de loi 8, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Education has moved second reading of Bill 8, and I'm pleased to recognize the minister if she chooses to lead off the debate.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Right off the top, I'd like to just say that I am going to share my remarks with my parliamentary assistant, the member for Guelph, and I thank her for the work she has done on this legislation.

There are a few things as important as the health of our children and young people, and that's why the Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act, 2007, is extremely important. We, in the McGuinty government, take this issue very seriously.

Last week, I was at Bayview Middle School with the Premier. Bayview Middle School is a Toronto school that is working to create a healthier school environment for its students. Along with a number of other schools in the Toronto District School Board, Bayview has already begun reducing trans fat from the food sold in its cafeteria. The school cafeteria at Bayview has also been recognized by Eat Smart. I just want to acknowledge all the people who work in the cafeteria and in the school, especially Debbie, who works in the school cafeteria and makes the soup and makes sure that the kids have healthy options.

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Eat Smart is an award of excellence program that recognizes restaurants, school cafeterias, workplace cafeterias and recreation centres that meet standards of nutrition as well as food safety. I want to congratulate all of the schools, like Bayview, that have begun to limit trans fat in the diets of their students. Those schools have shown leadership and this government is showing leadership on moving on this issue in our schools.

I think all of us in this House know that obesity has become a serious health threat to children and adults across the province. In 2004, the Canadian Community Health Survey, conducted by Statistics Canada, found that 28% of Ontarians aged two to 17 were either overweight or obese, and the levels of obesity among Canadian children aged seven to 13 have nearly tripled

over the last two decades. It's also estimated that 29% of teenagers aged 12 to 17 in Canada are either overweight or obese. Bien que ce problème soit très visible, souvent on n'y prête pas attention. This is a serious issue and it deserves our immediate attention.

We know there's a lot that families can do: there are guidelines that families can follow in terms of nutrition; we know that it's important for families to make sure their children get exercise. But there's a lot that government can do too, and this is one of the things we are moving on. The proposed Healthy Food for Healthy Schools legislation is just one part of our comprehensive healthy schools strategy to help create healthier school environments for students to learn and grow.

Les enfants et les jeunes ont besoin d'une bonne alimentation, d'activités physiques et d'un environnement sain qui favorise l'apprentissage et l'épanouissement. These elements are vital to helping to maintain health and improve students' readiness to learn. The health of Ontario's youngest is something that should matter to absolutely all of us, and if we don't take action to fight against obesity now, our children will suffer from its effects in the future. It's very important that children establish habits at an early age that are good for their health going forward.

The facts are grim, I'm afraid. People who are obese are more likely to develop illnesses such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer, stroke and hypertension. It also contributes to high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels, breathing problems and joint pain. But it produces more than physical harm: Childhood obesity can have a negative effect on academic achievement and on social development. Children who are overweight may suffer from depression and self-esteem issues. It can also lead to discrimination on the playground, resulting in other psychosocial problems. We, as a government, are putting in place strategies to deal with some of the bullying issues that take place in the schoolyard, but the fact is that those interactions still take place. We have an opportunity to make positive change.

Bon nombre d'enfants et de jeunes n'ont pas un régime alimentaire équilibré ou adéquat sur le plan nutritif. For example, based on data from the 2004 Canadian Community Health Survey, 59% of Canadian children and adolescents were reported to consume fruit and vegetables less than five times a day. These young people were significantly more likely to be overweight or obese than those who ate fruit and vegetables more regularly. They are instead, as we all know, eating foods that are high in calories but low in essential nutrients.

If we want our students to reach their full potential, we need to make sure that they are eating the right food and staying active. We've already introduced a number of programs and initiatives that are helping to promote healthy behaviours within our schools. Last year, we launched the Healthy Schools recognition program. Everyone in this House may have been in schools where they saw the plaques and the—

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Banners.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:—banners; thank you.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I've handed them out myself.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You handed them out yourself—the banners that are hanging in the front halls of our schools that recognize our Healthy Schools initiative. We launched that Healthy Schools recognition program, encouraging schools to take part in activities that promote healthy behaviours, and we challenged schools across the province to voluntarily undertake just one more thing, one more activity to make their schools healthier. Some schools that accepted the challenge took on not one but two or three initiatives that demonstrated that they were taking part in these healthy school activities. This is evidence of the enthusiasm that schools demonstrate when they look at the kinds of activities that their students can take part in.

The Ministry of Education also developed a broad framework for healthy schools in consultation with experts from the education and health sectors. That framework outlines components of a healthy school that can help schools develop healthy activities and programs for staff and students. As part of that framework, a healthy school has a number of features that include, for example, quality instruction and programs, a healthy physical environment, a supportive social environment and community partnerships. That's why the anti-bullying supports that we have put in our schools and the funding that we've put in place to allow schools to have anti-bullying initiatives are part of that healthy social environment. So this goes beyond the physical and takes in the social and psychological.

Within this very broad framework of a healthy school, a variety of health-related topics can be considered, such as healthy eating, physical activity, bullying prevention, personal safety and injury prevention, substance use and abuse, healthy growth and development and mental health. I know that many of the members in this House have been to schools in their own ridings where programs such as Walk to School Day—now, this might be something that is different in an urban setting than in a rural setting. In the urban settings, there is a lot of driving to school that goes on, and not just school buses. I know that in rural settings a lot of kids are required—they have to, because of the distances—to ride a school bus to school, and they need to get their physical activity in other ways.

In urban settings, in the past there has been the opportunity for kids to walk to school. That doesn't happen as much now as it did even 10 or 15 years ago. Many schools are reinstating Walk to School Day or a walking school bus, where kids in the community walk together to school for safety reasons, and there's an acknowledgment at the school when kids have walked to school. So I know we're seeing those kinds of programs starting in our schools, and it's really important that we encourage those.

I'm sure that many of the members in this House have gone to schools when the daily physical activity is taking place and have taken part in the aerobic—I'm seeing the

member from Peterborough; he's done that. He has gone to schools in his riding and he takes part in the daily physical activity. It's important for us. We all have to stay healthy too.

So through the Healthy Schools recognition program, schools are recognized for addressing these areas. They adopt school-wide bullying prevention programs or they can partner with community sports groups to increase participation. All of these initiatives help to create a healthy and positive school environment that will enable students to reach their full potential.

I'm pleased to tell you that approximately 1,300 elementary and secondary schools participated in this program last year. Those schools identified more than 2,500 specific activities, and that is cumulative. That makes our system healthier. Schools that accepted the challenge received a recognition certificate and a banner to hang in their school. In addition, information about what they committed to is posted on the Ministry of Education's website so that schools can look at what other schools have done. Some of the activities included preparing healthy lunch menu suggestions for the cafeteria using student input.

I just want to acknowledge how very important it is in any of these activities that the students be involved. Kids have great ideas, and I think the very best programs in our schools are ones that tap into the ingenuity and the knowledge of our students. That's why I know that our Healthy Schools initiatives are going to continue to be successful, including the removal of trans fats from menus in our school cafeterias. This is what students want. They want to be healthy and they know what it means to be healthy, so we can absolutely rely on kids to be part of the development of these healthy school initiatives.

Another activity: organizing Fit Fridays programs that provide students with opportunities to participate in fitness such as yoga or pilates during lunch on Friday. That's another aspect of this whole initiative. There's a whole range of healthy activities, if we're looking just at physical activity. It doesn't have to be the traditional sports activities that kids take part in. It can be a whole range of fitness activities that can last students throughout their lives, through to the years when they are, as I am, 54, and can't necessarily—

Interjections: No.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Fifty-four. It's sad but true. But it's not always possible to carry on with those traditional activities. So a full range of fitness activities is what we want to get kids interested in, such as creating a peace garden where classes can congregate to meditate, to conduct classes and to socialize outside—gardening is one of the very best activities that you can undertake for general overall wellness—or organizing a wellness week that includes opportunities for kids to take part in things like yoga and a variety of sports, those intramural programs.

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Schools across the province have demonstrated leadership. They've demonstrated a commitment to taking part

in the challenge and they've demonstrated creativity in the kinds of activities that make their schools healthier.

To provide schools with further resources, tips and tools are available online to parents, students and educators so that they can come up with ways for contributing to a healthy school community. What I have found is that these healthy school initiatives involve the whole community; it's not just the students, but it's the parents and all the community partners. So as well as encouraging healthy behaviours and practices, the program also, as I said, engages the community.

In order to accept the challenge, schools are required to work with the school council and student leaders. I'm very pleased that we're offering the Healthy Schools recognition program again this year, and I hope to see even more schools taking part. I know that we will. Schools will be sent information on how they can participate in the program, and then they can get more information on the Ministry of Education website.

En outre, nous avons introduit un certain nombre d'autres initiatives pour faire la promotion d'écoles saines. These include instructing school boards to implement 20 minutes of daily physical activity in elementary schools, and, as I've said, this is a very successful program. This step ensures that all elementary schools have a minimum of 20 minutes of sustained moderate to vigorous physical activity each school day during instructional time. That activity could be active games, dance, aquatics, sports, fitness, play, walking or other recreational activities. This gives kids the additional opportunity to become more active during the school day. We've supported this initiative not just with policy encouragement to the school boards, but we made an investment of \$12.7 million for training and resources because not every elementary school teacher was comfortable with providing that daily physical activity.

We've provided encouragement and have been working with the schools to make sure that teachers have the resources they need. In the Ministry of Education, we have developed resource guides for teachers, principals and school boards, as well as an e-learning module that includes video examples of activities that teachers can use.

We also—and this is a very important aspect of our Healthy Schools initiative—passed Sabrina's Law, which came into effect January 2006. This legislation requires that every school board have an anaphylaxis policy in place. These policies must include ongoing training for school staff on dealing with life-threatening allergies, creating individual plans for people who have anaphylactic allergies, and a plan to communicate information on life-threatening allergies to parents, pupils and staff. The Ministry of Education supported this by providing every school in the province and every public health unit with an anaphylaxis resource kit.

Mr. Dave Levac: Hear, hear.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: This is very, very important, and I want to recognize the member for Brant for his leadership on that initiative. We also, on that initiative,

developed an e-learning module for boards and schools so that they can have video demonstrations on how to administer medication.

Healthy eating and active living are also supported by the Ontario curriculum. The health and physical activity curriculum includes a strand on healthy living. The elementary and grade 10 curriculum focus on healthy living, which includes overall and specific expectations on the importance of healthy eating.

Nous avons aussi bénéficié d'une aide de la part d'autres ministères. The Ministry of Health Promotion introduced the northern fruit and vegetable pilot program last year, and this program currently delivers three weekly servings of fruits and vegetables to 12,000 students in the Algoma and Porcupine regions of northern Ontario. That is a terrific initiative.

The Ministry of Health Promotion's new EatRight Ontario telephone service enables teachers, parents and caregivers to have nutrition-related questions answered by a registered dietitian for free. It's very important that we have that information available to everyone in our community. We can't just assume that people know what the nutrition guidelines are and what the appropriate nutrition standards are. We have to have ongoing education of the community on that.

We're supporting the development and distribution of resources such as BusyBodies and Eat Right Be Active for parents and caregivers of young children. In addition, in February this government invested more than \$175,000 in programming aimed at improving intramural sport programs across schools. Intramurals are very important for students who may or may not be involved in varsity sports. They need to have an opportunity to get involved and develop their skills. Raise the Bar and similar programs give kids more opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity, regardless of their ability, so that they can lead healthy and active lives. These resources help instill healthy eating habits and encourage physical activity at an early age.

Lorsque les élèves sont actifs et consomment des aliments sains, ils ont plus de chances d'être éveillés et d'être prêts à apprendre.

The proposed Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act, 2007, would complement all of our other initiatives, so we can reach every student in this province so that we can provide the healthiest environment possible for those students so they can reach their full potential and be fully participating citizens in the province of Ontario. That is our goal.

I would now like to ask my parliamentary assistant to speak about this legislation.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I am very pleased to rise in the House today for second reading of legislation that would help improve the health of students in our schools. Our government takes the health of our children and young people very seriously. When students are healthy, they have more energy for learning, and when they have that energy, they are better prepared to learn and be successful in our schools.

Because our children and young people spend such a significant amount of their time at school, it is important that they have healthy meal and snack choices available to them. Foods that are high in sugar, fat—including trans fat—and salt tend to be high in calories and can therefore have a significant impact on body weight. Yet students continue to consume these foods.

The Dietitians of Canada and the Dairy Farmers of Canada reported that the biggest challenge for school-age children to eat well at school is simply the availability of high-fat and sugary treats. This includes chips, chocolate bars and soft drinks. They also identified another related challenge: Students have limited access to nutritious foods because they are not available at school or the choices they bring from home are not the best. Yet our students do spend a large part of their time at school. That's why the proposed Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act, 2007, is so important.

If passed, this legislation would remove those higher-fat and sugary treats from vending machines. This would ensure that students have healthy options to reach for when they want a snack. The well-being of our children and youth depends on a healthy, active lifestyle. That's why, within our schools, we want to encourage the healthier food choices and more active lifestyles that the kids need to be successful.

We want to make sure that all students are healthy and able to concentrate on learning. Part of that means making sure that when students line up for lunch at the cafeteria, there are healthy food options available for them. Providing a healthy learning environment and encouraging students to make healthy lifestyle choices now will help them develop healthy habits for a lifetime. That's why we are proposing these amendments to the Education Act. We want to make sure there are healthy food choices available in the cafeteria, which do not contain high levels of trans fat, and we want to make sure that kids are reaching for healthy options, like milk and juice, in vending machines as well. It's important that our kids are eating healthy and nutritious foods.

The proposed Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act, 2007, would help to introduce these healthy options. The proposed amendments would drop trans fat from food and beverages sold in school cafeterias. The proposed legislation would apply to food and beverages sold in school cafeterias and also to ingredients used in food and beverages prepared in school cafeterias.

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However, I want to be clear that if this legislation passes, an exemption would be made for dairy products and meat products like beef and lamb that contain small amounts of naturally occurring trans fat. There just simply isn't the evidence around the naturally occurring trans fats and their negative impact on health that we have from a multitude of researchers who have been looking at industrial trans fats, those that are artificially hydrogenated. So we're going to go with the scientific evidence and exempt natural dairy products and meat products.

Special-event days, such as pizza days, would also be exempted. We don't want to stop these special days at school and we know kids look forward to them, but we would encourage schools to select healthy options. There are many healthy and tasty options available. Contrary to some of the media around this, it is possible to have a trans-fat-free french fry. So the question is about how you prepare the foods, not simply that there will be blanket prohibitions on some of the foods that have been suggested.

Many companies, in fact, have already begun to remove or reduce trans fat in their products. This legislation would offer the food industry a business development opportunity to continue to create and market healthier options. By moving to drop trans fat from food and beverages sold in school cafeterias, we are encouraging students to make healthy food and beverage choices and helping them to reduce their intake of harmful trans fats.

In June 2006, the Trans Fat Task Force reported to the federal Minister of Health. In their report, they wrote that studies showed trans fat increased blood levels of bad cholesterol and decreased blood levels of good cholesterol. These combined effects are associated with increased risk of coronary heart disease.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada estimates that consumption of processed trans fats may account for 30,000 to 50,000 heart attack deaths every decade in Canada. We don't want our kids to repeat that cycle. So if passed, this legislation would drop trans fats from food and beverages sold in school cafeterias. The health of our children and young people is precious, and we should act now to protect it. Providing healthier food options in schools and reducing the amount of trans fat that students consume can help reduce rates of childhood obesity as well.

That's why other jurisdictions are also taking action. In 2004, the Danish government banned the use of food oils containing more than 2% processed trans fats. That's one of the definitions; there are a few definitions that are used internationally and that's one. Danish authorities said that the regulations did not affect availability, price or quality of the foods affected, simply because the manufacturers co-operated with the ban and found new ways to produce the products that complied with the new rules.

In addition, a University of Minnesota study found that schools' lunch sales don't decline when healthier meals are served. It also found that nutritious lunches don't necessarily cost schools more to produce.

The proposal to ban trans fat has wide public support. The CEO of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario, Rocco Rossi, recently said, "We are very pleased the government is joining us in our fight against trans fats. We look forward to working together to make our schools a healthier environment for our children."

We recognize that dropping trans fat is only one step to tackling childhood obesity. We would also remove unhealthy food and beverages in elementary and

secondary school vending machines. The proposed Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act, 2007, would build upon the voluntary ban on junk food in elementary school vending machines that we introduced back in 2004, and which the minister has already referred to.

These voluntary nutrition standards have already been widely accepted in elementary schools across the province. This proposed legislation would enhance those voluntary standards to keep unhealthy foods and beverages out of secondary school vending machines and, in fact, legislate it for all school vending machines.

The proposed changes would help us take a very important step towards protecting something that's so very important: the health of our children and young people. That's why I'm pleased that we are taking action so very quickly, because we would be addressing such an important issue. Giving our children healthier options while they are at school is simply a wise choice.

We are also going to examine options for establishing nutrition standards for school cafeterias, vending machines, tuck shops and canteens and other daily school food services in consultation with stakeholders. We know we will be needing to work with the stakeholders. The school boards, the schools, the contractors that provide various food services to schools, the people who are concerned about nutrition advice: We know we need to work with all of those, and we will be consulting with them about new regulations for nutrition standards over the next number of months.

The healthier menu choices that we would be outlining in those new regulations, however, would align with the new Canada's Food Guide. We know how important it is that young people start making healthy and balanced choices at an early age. Although there are other factors, poor diet and lack of physical exercise are the primary contributors to obesity. Both of these factors are things we can control by reaching for the healthier options and making sure we get the exercise we need.

Many parents may not be able to provide the balanced diet a child needs because they simply don't know what the Canada Food Guide's requirements are for nutritious meals. That's why our government must work together with communities and parents to make sure that we all understand what the rules are. I'm sure that once we have a healthier meal regime introduced into the schools, our students will become the disciples to go home and educate parents, as often happens with kids: The kids get it first and then they all educate the parents. So perhaps we may even end up with healthier adults. Wouldn't that be great?

However, we do know that poor eating habits in childhood are likely to be carried into adulthood and increase the risk of chronic diseases. If we tackle the issue of obesity now and instill in children the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle, they will have greater health benefits later in life. Students who develop healthy habits now will be more likely to develop and maintain a healthy body weight through adulthood. That's why this proposed legislation is so important.

I'm pleased to see that our proposed legislation is receiving strong support from Ontario school boards. In Guelph—my hometown—for example, Bob Borden, chair of the Upper Grand District School Board, said, "There is a significant concern relative to the diet of our young people, and anything we can do to try and support healthy choices is good." He goes on to say that our board—that is, Upper Grand—"has been proactive over the last couple of years, in that they have been moving to eliminate vending machines that have a lot of junk food in them and food that is deep-fried, while trying to provide more healthy choice" for students.

Likewise, Don Drone, director of education for the Wellington Catholic District School Board, says his board fully supports our initiative. He believes, "It is really all about the good health of our young people and establishing good eating habits, which are going to be a lifelong investment."

I am proud to tell you that if this proposed legislation passes, Ontario will be among the first provinces in Canada to drop trans fats—

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's going to pass.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I think it probably will pass; I'm very hopeful about that.

We expect to be among the first provinces in Canada to drop trans fats from foods and beverages sold in school cafeterias. We are showing true leadership in promoting student health and developing healthier schools.

This proposed legislation is just one part of our broader healthy schools strategy. We started with elementary school vending machines, we continued with daily phys ed and now we're going to address trans fat, secondary school vending machines and healthier menus—a good package for all our students.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Although the McGuinty government recognizes that child obesity is a problem that needs to be tackled, all this bill is really doing is adding provisions regulating the trans fat content in food and beverages in school cafeterias. It does not ban trans fat, it does not ban junk food; all it does is regulate it.

If we were really serious, we would do more. When all you do is take away the trans fat, it does not mean that you actually have healthy alternatives; you can still have a lot of junk food. Our school cafeterias are full of fatty and sugary foods, whether they have trans fat or not.

I was invited to speak at Confederation high school in my riding. After I spoke with the students, they invited me for lunch in their cafeteria, which I accepted. So I'm standing in line, and I ask all the students around me, "So, what's something good to pick from the cafeteria?" The answer was unanimous: They recommended I eat the poutine. I hope you all know what that is. It's french fries with cheese on top, drenched in gravy. My husband calls it "the high diving act of cholesterol fix." It's not a recommended delicacy or anything. Those types of choices are available in all of our schools.

Le gouvernement McGuinty voudrait nous faire croire que ce projet de loi va apporter de meilleurs choix et des choix santé dans nos écoles. Ils reconnaissent l'épidémie d'obésité chez nos enfants et nos adolescents, et ils reconnaissent que le gouvernement doit agir, mais ce qu'ils nous proposent, c'est un bien petit pas, et la route qui demeure est encore très longue.

Mr. Dave Levac: It's a pleasure to speak on this topic. As an educator for 25 years, I can tell you that 25 years ago I was advocating, as a specialist in phys ed, to add 20 minutes a day for fitness. This government did it. Isn't that nice? We've got that.

The second thing: I want to ask the member from Nickel Belt—I appreciate her comments, saying how serious an issue this is, and I do agree with her—why wasn't it in your platform? It wasn't in your platform. Is that right: It wasn't in your platform? If it wasn't, I'm sorry it wasn't; if it was, I stand corrected, and I'll apologize.

Having said that, I offer some of the good things that are happening. Let's look at what they're doing in the high schools. They've formed their own clubs—on their own—about healthy eating. So let's celebrate that. Let's say to them, “We're not going to prescribe; we're going to celebrate the fact that you're looking at good, healthy eating from now on.”

We also want to know this, in a simple way: Do the cafeterias want to feed kids unhealthy food? The short answer is, of course not; no, they don't. What have we learned in science over the decades? More and more, as we evolve, we're learning how to do these things better, and that's what we're proposing. We're just going to do it better. We're going to get better at doing this.

We know the statistics in this place, and I think in Ontario we know the statistics, about obesity and where we've led our kids. We're talking about leadership, so let's lead them out of the wilderness, and let's give them the opportunity to fix it themselves.

I know the families will be jumping on along with us because we all want healthy children. Nobody is going to sit back and say, “Let's not do this.” What they're going to say is, “Let's do it together.” So let's put our hand out with the schools, work with the groups, with the clubs, with the organizations and even the private sector, which is taking trans fats out of their foods—like Wendy's. Thanks very much. Let's move it forward.

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to add a few comments. I will get a chance a little later on to speak in more detail to this bill, but I just wanted to get on the record that the PC Party will be supporting Bill 8, the Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act, although—

Applause.

Mr. Norm Miller: Don't applaud too quickly here. We'll certainly be critical of your approach because, from my perspective, this bill is more about show than anything else, as we sit here in the Legislature.

I would also like to point out that I have been on the record in 2006 supporting some of the actions of the Making the Grade program, and we of course had the

Bracebridge and Muskoka Lake Secondary School nutrition action committee that wrote to me in 2006. So I did get their letter on the record supporting greater nutrition.

But certainly it is our feeling on this side of the Legislature that this is really more about show. It's one very specific minor detail. You should be taking a more comprehensive program or approach to dealing with obesity. You should certainly be encouraging more lifestyle changes in terms of a lot more exercise and generally better eating habits in society; but this is one very small part.

I might add, in this session of the Legislature, this fall session, we have been sitting for some three weeks, in two of which it seems that the main thing we do is go to receptions. This is about the only bill we've talked about in this whole session of the Legislature, so it's been a stretch. This new agenda of the new government—to meet for about an hour and then go to receptions seems to be the new approach in this new McGuinty government.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I just want to say to the citizens that it's 4:15 p.m. at this time. I will be speaking in approximately an hour and 10 minutes for those of you who are interested in my lead on this bill. I just alert those of you who are having a glass of wine and some popcorn and some other fatty food: Just tune in.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): One of the government members now has two minutes to reply, if you choose to do so.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the members of Nickel Belt, Brant, Parry Sound–Muskoka and Trinity–Spadina for their comments on the bill.

The member from Nickel Belt described the problem very well. In fact—

Interjection.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Very good.

In fact, if you go into some school cafeterias—not all, but some school cafeterias—what you find is that the food choices that are currently available are not very healthy. You can go into other school cafeterias and find in fact that the schools are already doing a very conscientious effort of trying to provide students with a balanced choice, a healthy range of foods that are available. What we want to make sure is that it isn't just hit-and-miss, depending on the staff at a particular school or the food contractor at a particular school to make sure that the healthy menu is available.

If you look at the bill, in fact, there are three parts. The first part bans trans fats.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It doesn't say that.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: What it says is that the schools must meet the rules laid out in regulations around the restrictions on trans fats. The reason for that is that we want to make sure that we can comply with the Canadian federal definition of trans fat. As research unfolds, those definitions of what minute part of trans fat can be allowed vary from year to year, over time, with the federal government. We want to make sure that we can comply forever and not have to come back—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate?

1620

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to participate in this debate. It's clear that we're in a new session of Parliament. We have a new Lieutenant Governor, we have a new Speaker, but it's very clear we have the same Premier and the same Minister of Education because we're back to the same old spin over substance when it comes to legislation in this House. The Minister of Education is again leading the charge for the government to conduct the photo ops and to speak the rhetoric of government that attracts a headline but is very, very shallow in terms of content.

In my response to the minister's statement when she tabled this legislation, I stated clearly that I would support the legislation, and I speak today on behalf of our caucus as well, who have confirmed their support for the legislation. But it's our responsibility as the official opposition to point out to the public, to the taxpayers, to those who observe the proceedings in this House, the emptiness of this legislation, and I intend to do that along with my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka, with whom I will be sharing my time.

I want to first of all pay tribute to a young lady who was involved in drafting legislation that deals with the issue of nutrition in schools and school cafeterias. Her name is Nupur Dogra. You'll recall from the last session of the Legislature the CBC program spearheaded by Mike Wise. The program was called Making the Grade. Maybe some of the pages will remember that program. It's an initiative that involved grade 9 students. The program invited students from across the province to participate in the development of legislation. I had the opportunity to sponsor one of those bills spearheaded by Nupur Dogra, who, as I indicated, was a grade 9 student at Iroquois Ridge High School in Oakville. Speaker, you will recall that we dedicated a very special session of the Legislature to debating not only that bill but two other bills under that program.

The reason I mention that bill is that I pulled that bill down from Hansard, I reviewed the construct of that bill, and when I compare it to the legislation that the Minister of Education has brought forward to the House as government legislation, the weight of the bill prepared by those students is significant compared to the legislation that's being presented by this government today. The content is more far-reaching, and the end result of that legislation prepared by the students will have a much more far-reaching impact on the health of the students in this province than the current government bill ever will.

So I invite the minister to listen carefully to what I have to say, and perhaps she will consider, when this bill goes to committee, accepting the official opposition's recommendations for amendments, which will in fact incorporate many of the recommendations made by the students' bill, into the government bill so that we actually have a substantive piece of legislation to achieve the objectives that are set out in this legislation.

To that end, I'd like to, for the benefit of viewers and for the benefit of those Liberal backbenchers who have not read the legislation—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And us.

Mr. Frank Klees: Well, the third party always reads the legislation. I very seldom agree with them, but what I do respect about the third party is that they are conscientious, they do their homework and they know what they stand for.

Here's what the explanatory note of this legislation states: "The bill amends the Education Act to add provisions regulating the trans fat content of all food and beverages sold in a school cafeteria. The Minister may make regulations exempting"—the very next sentence—"from the trans fat standards any food or beverage in which the trans fat content originates exclusively from ruminant meat or dairy products." It goes on to say—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We're not banning lamb or beef.

Mr. Frank Klees: No, I understand. I'll get to that.

"The bill also adds a requirement for boards to ensure that food and beverages sold in vending machines comply with the nutritional standards set out in regulations. Power is given to the Minister of Education to create policies, guidelines and regulations governing nutritional standards for all food and beverages provided on board property, on school premises or in connection with a school-related activity."

Now, I would like to just set out in contrast to that preamble, that explanatory note of the government legislation, and read into the record the content of the bill that was proposed by Nupur Dogra that I referred to earlier. This is the student's bill that was proposed, and here are those amendments that were proposed. First of all, this was the amendment to subsection 170(1) of the Education Act. That amendment reads as follows: "7.3 Require every pupil in every school year who attends a school under the jurisdiction of the board to receive instruction that the board provides on nutrition standards that it considers necessary for healthy eating, which shall include instruction on Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating and Canada's Guidelines for Healthy Eating, both published by Health Canada as they are amended from time to time."

That's substantive, and it goes to what we believe should be taking place. There is no reference in the government legislation that speaks at all to the issue of requiring education of our students, so that they can, in fact, make an informed decision, an informed choice about the foods that they eat.

The next section of Ms. Dogra's bill reads as follows: "7.4 Establish a committee composed of the persons that the board appoints to advise the board on what nutrition standards should form part of the subject matter of the instruction described in paragraph 7.3." Again, very common sense. Let's get people together from the local school, within that local board, make a decision about what it is that those students should have by way of education and instruction, have the local input and let the

local school councils have their input in terms of how best to communicate that.

The third section of that bill reads as follows: “7.5 If the board operates a cafeteria in a school under its jurisdiction for the use of the staff and the pupils under paragraph 37 of subsection 171(1), post a copy in the cafeteria of Canada’s Food Guide to Healthy Eating and Canada’s Guidelines for Healthy Eating, both published by Health Canada as they are amended from time to time.” Once again, very practical, informational. Allow students to see the information, give them instruction, and remind them how important it is to make healthy decisions about the food they eat and how they conduct their lives.

In contrast, we have in the legislation before us essentially a request from the minister to have the authority of this Legislature to allow her to study the matter, to create yet additional bureaucracy, to create more red tape, to create more regulation. At the end of the day, essentially what the minister is trying to do is to catch up to what she full well knows most school boards in the province are in fact already doing.

1630

Let me just, by way of example, point out that the York Region District School Board is one of those boards, and I’m sure not the only one, that in fact has a board policy—I have a copy of board policy 135 here. I’d like to, for the benefit of the Minister of Education and her parliamentary assistant, who shakes her head, “No, that’s not the case”—well, let me advise her that it is the case. I’m certain that the York board is not the only board that has taken this initiative. Here is what I would like to do—

Interjection.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, if you could bring the parliamentary assistant to order so that we can get on with the debate, I’d appreciate—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask all the members of the House to come to order and allow the member to make his presentation.

I return to the member for Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: As I was saying, I’d like to first of all commend the York Region District School Board for their responsible actions on this issue. I’d like to read into the record their board policy statement 135. It reads as follows:

“It is the policy of the York Region District School Board to permit food and vending services for students which follow Canada’s Food Guide in order to encourage healthful choices for students and staff. This policy is also in accordance with the provincial government’s policy/program memorandum 135, healthy foods and beverages in elementary school vending machines.”

The school board in York region has embraced the need, obviously, to ensure that students under its responsibility have healthy choices.

The policy goes on to indicate several responsibilities of the board: that is, to ensure that the principals are fully aware of the policy, that the plant services are respon-

sible for certain aspects of implementing the policy. And it defines healthful choices for the students. It refers to the fact that not only is it a policy, but they want to ensure that it is implemented throughout the entire school board.

I also have here a copy of a letter that was sent to the school partners of Aramark Corp. This is the private sector firm that is providing food services to the York region board and many others across not only this province but across the country and throughout North America. Here is what this memorandum states very clearly. It states that through the holistic nutrition program of Aramark, there is a corporate commitment to create more healthy nutrition environments, stating that they are working diligently to provide students and school communities with balanced, healthy choices.

I’m going to quote from the memorandum, because I think it’s important for members as well as the public to understand that there is, in fact, a broad recognition of the importance of addressing this issue, and that in many ways, as I said before, the private sector is way ahead of this government. Let me read to you from this memorandum that was sent to the school board by Aramark. It reads as follows:

“Aramark continues to be actively involved in shaping nutrition initiatives and programs across the province and country, participating on the Eat Smart advisory committee and partnering with regional public health units, school communities and our food suppliers. Moving forward, we’re excited to build on the success of our FUEL program that provides students and staff with well-balanced menu options and supports educational initiatives around healthy lifestyles and the centrality of food in our daily lives.

“Aramark is also committed to reduce and eliminate artificial trans fats used in all of our food service operations across North America and throughout our school food service operations. We are working to meet and exceed the recommendations made by the Canadian Trans Fat Task Force in June 2006, supported by Health Canada and the Heart and Stroke Foundation and endorsed by the Minister of Health in June 2007.” And I might add that is not the Minister of Health for Ontario, it is the Minister of Health for the federal government.

My point is very simply this: The legislation that we’re debating today is really not much more than a photo op on the part of this government to say, “Me too; us too,” because the world is quickly passing them by. What is needed is not legislation to allow the minister to create more regulation and to be seen to be doing something. What the Minister of Education and this government need to do is to give the province of Ontario a comprehensive strategy to deal with the health and wellness of our students, of our young people. And that is much more than creating a regulation around trans fats, because most of the world is already there.

Quite frankly, what we would want to see and what I would have expected the Minister of Education to do is to bring in to this House a resolution that would call on

the federal government to deal with this trans fat issue as a national issue, and do what has been done in other jurisdictions and in other countries such as Denmark, where the national government of that country took this issue on because it recognized the importance to the health of its population and in fact implemented regulation that banned trans fats above a certain level—I believe they used 2%—to the point where now across that country there is no such thing in any of its food as unhealthy trans fat levels. That's what we should be doing, not one-off pieces of legislation that take hours and hours of this Legislature's time to talk about an issue that, quite frankly, is redundant. What we should be doing is calling on the federal government to take that national strategy.

In addition to that, here's what we should be doing here. We should be developing a provincial strategy that deals with the health and wellness of our children, that incorporates not only the foods that they eat but also deals with issues such as diabetes, which is a serious problem, that deals with the consequences of the unhealthy lifestyles that we have allowed our children to become accustomed to.

I want to thank Helen Poon, who is a constituent. She is the community mission specialist with the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada. She wrote to me this past Monday on this issue. She encouraged the Legislature to move forward with this legislation, but also spoke to the issue of a broader strategy and how important that is. I received subsequently, after speaking with her, information from the Heart and Stroke Foundation. I want to commend the Heart and Stroke Foundation for the good work that they have done, the extensive research that they have done on this issue. There is a report, and I trust that the minister will take advantage of that work. I trust that the government of Ontario will support the work of the Heart and Stroke Foundation to ensure that all of this research that has been done will be incorporated into the work that the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Health undertake with regard to this issue.

1640

I want to read into the record some statements from the Heart and Stroke Foundation for the benefit of my colleagues and the public. Here are some of the facts that the Heart and Stroke Foundation want us to know about:

“—Lowering trans fat and saturated fat in your diet will help reduce your risk for heart disease and stroke,” but

“—Simply lowering or eliminating trans fat in packaged food will not necessarily make the food we eat more nutritious. You should also be aware of the salt and sugar content of foods and the overall number of calories.” That, again, is to the issue of vending machines. To be seen to be eliminating trans fats and to make that pronouncement without addressing these other aspects of what that food is like that is in those vending machines is doing only half the job.

“—Risk factors you can control,” such as “smoking, physical inactivity, high blood pressure, high blood

cholesterol, obesity and diabetes” are the issues that we as individuals have control over and that we should be helping others to deal with as we approach this debate.

What I would like to propose to the government is that, in addition to dealing with these regulations, which the government will, in fact, deal with—and we will be supportive, but, as I say, we will also be providing some amendments that we trust the government will consider as we move forward. What is important is the issue of physical activity for students. Again, the government has come a very small step, to say that they require 20 minutes of physical activity. I don't think they've gone far enough, because what the government should also do is ensure that the resources are there, that the physical spaces are there for our students to actually participate in meaningful physical activity.

How many of our schools today do not have an appropriate gymnasium, do not have the appropriate facilities where an adequate physical activity program can take place? That is because this government, over the last number of years, has refused to listen to school boards as they've appealed to this government, time and time again, to address the funding formula that is resulting in school infrastructure throughout this province crumbling.

I have visited them, Speaker, and I'm sure you have as well, where gymnasiums, instead of being used for the activity for which they were designed, are packed during lunch hour with students having their lunches. Instead of having physical activity, students are packing gymnasiums to have lunch. Why? Because this government has failed those schools, has failed to address the issue of physical infrastructure needs throughout this province. We call on the government not to put off for another four years reviewing the funding formula, but to do that now. Our schools are in desperate need of having that funding formula addressed.

The other aspect of this issue—

Interjection.

Mr. Frank Klees: —and I hear Mr. Levac—what I want to do next is refer to a piece of legislation that was practical, that was brought into this House not by the government but by a private member who saw the issue that he brought a solution to, through his Bill 3. It was a response on the part of the government to a private member who came forward and said, “Look, let's be practical. Here is a solution.” I'm simply saying: Let's have this government listen once again to individual members of this House when we appeal to the government to go beyond simply bringing in empty frameworks of legislation and be specific. If we all agree, and I believe we all do, that the issue of obesity and the issue of health for our young people is ultimately responsible—if we agree on that broad, common ground—then why can we not also agree in terms of the solution to dealing with that? Let's ensure that we do have a proper strategy, a long-term strategy that addresses the issues of health, physical activity and the physical wellness of our students.

I want to allow some time to my colleague, who is going to bring his own perspective to this issue. But I

will wrap up my remarks by simply saying that we look forward to the committee hearings. I've stated clearly that we want to support the intent of this legislation. We're highly disappointed with the emptiness, with the fact that there's really not much more here than rhetoric on the part of the government. We'll be watching very, very carefully—I'm sure the public will as well—how receptive the government is to moving forward with substantive steps to ensure that we implement the kinds of policies and regulations that will be necessary to make a difference in the lives of students across this province, not only today but for generations to come.

Mr. Norm Miller: Certainly, the member from Newmarket–Aurora did an excellent job of pointing out how we support this bill but that it's just one, tiny aspect of improving the health of our children; what is needed is a complete strategy.

Bill 8, An Act to amend the Education Act—it's a pretty tiny bill—"amends the Education Act to add provisions regulating the trans fat content of all food and beverages sold in a school cafeteria." As I said a little earlier in the couple minutes when I had a chance to speak, in this session of the Legislature—we've been here three weeks—this is really about the first bill that's been debated. Most days, we've been here until about four in the afternoon and then it's off to three or four receptions. I find it quite surprising that this government, having just won a majority, wouldn't have some initiatives they'd like to accomplish, versus this bill, which I say is more about show than anything else, although we certainly support trying to make our children more healthy.

This bill bans trans fat. What is trans fat? Well, from Wikipedia, trans fat is "the common name for a type of unsaturated fat with trans isomer fatty acids. Trans fats may be monounsaturated or polyunsaturated." Unlike other dietary fats, trans fats are neither required nor beneficial for health. Eating trans fats increases the risk of coronary heart disease. Trans fat raises your bad, LDL, cholesterol and lowers your good, HDL, cholesterol. Health authorities worldwide recommend that consumption of trans fat be reduced to trace amounts. Trans fats from partially hydrogenated oils are generally considered to be more of a health risk than naturally occurring oils.

I think we're in agreement, and it sounds like world-wide agreement, that trans fats are generally bad and we shouldn't be eating that many of them. But what I would say is, why are we dealing with this in one, tiny provincial bill that just affects school-age kids? If they're bad for school-age kids, they're probably bad for all of us. So I would suggest that the more appropriate place to deal with this would be to set national standards across the country and deal with it that way.

Canada is one of the largest consumers of trans fats in the world. Since December 2005, Health Canada has required that food labels list the amount of trans fats in the nutrition facts section, so that's a bit of an improvement. But in June 2006, a task force co-chaired by Health Canada and the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Can-

ada—the member from Newmarket–Aurora referenced the Heart and Stroke Foundation—recommended a limit of 5% trans fats of the total fat in all products sold to consumers in Canada. The amount was selected such that most of the industrially produced trans fats would be removed from the Canadian diet, and about half of the remaining trans fats would be naturally occurring trans fats.

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This recommendation has been endorsed by the Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association, and Food and Consumer Products of Canada has congratulated the task force on the report, although it did not recommend delaying implementation until 2010. Ten months after submitting their report, the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada and Toronto Public Health issued a plea to the government of Canada to act immediately on the task force's recommendations and to eliminate harmful trans fats from Canada's food supply. In fact, on June 20, 2007, the federal government announced its intention to regulate trans fats to the June 2006 standard unless the food industry voluntarily complied with these limits within two years.

My point is that this is a national problem; it doesn't just affect kids, although of course we want to protect our kids, and it should be dealt with on a national level so that everyone in this wonderful country of Canada benefits from consuming less trans fats, versus what we're doing here; I think it's more about show. It's about the only bill being debated in this fall session of the Legislature. This government is so much about optics and show, and this bill simply demonstrates that. What have we done in this session of the Legislature? How much did it cost to bring the Legislature back for these three weeks? We elected a Speaker, we've had a speech from the throne, we passed one bill unanimously in all of about 10 minutes to do with OHIP coverage for military personnel returning to Canada, and I think this is the latest the House has sat; it's 4:50 p.m. Most days we've been out of here at 4 o'clock and on to another of three or four receptions.

There doesn't seem to be much pressing business that this newly elected government wants to accomplish. If we're going to be dealing with education issues, I have plenty of them that need to be dealt with in the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka, but certainly issues that affect all of northern and rural Ontario.

This government has said in the past that they were going to fix the funding formula that was brought up by the member from Newmarket–Aurora as well. It seems like they may have made some changes, and that's what the minister said today in the Legislature, but they certainly have not fixed that. They had a whole ream of newspaper articles particularly from the Parry Sound area, all fairly recent, from the spring right through to quite recently, outlining how the funding formula certainly is not working with the Near North District School Board. I note that in a recent edition of the Beacon Star they're talking about the fact that municipal politicians

are stepping up to assist the local schools because of the problems that are occurring.

I'll quote from the *Beacon Star*:

"The problems facing Near North District School Board trustees and administrators are faced by school boards throughout northern Ontario because a funding formula made in Toronto can't be applied to rural communities. The formula is based on the fact schools have a minimum of 350 students. In the north, that just doesn't work. The Near North District School Board, with schools from North Bay to MacTier, has two schools with barely 350 children. Any attempt to have 350 kids in every building would mean children travel for hours on buses—which would wreak havoc on their social lives and overall well-being. It would also wreak havoc on the social structure and economic strength of every small town...."

"Here's hoping they, and the school board trustees, make this week's meeting a catalyst for change. Here's hoping they can be the first group to awaken the deaf ears of Toronto bureaucrats and politicians who ignore the plight of rural schools." I would say that is referring to the current government. "Here's hoping they are the small spark that would ignite a northern political effort Queen's Park can't afford to ignore."

"We'll cheer them every step of the way."

That is a fairly recent editorial in the *Beacon Star* from Parry Sound.

Certainly, the Near North District School Board is facing some significant challenges because that funding formula hasn't been fixed. Every week there's another article in the Parry Sound newspapers about having to deal with possible school closures. At a recent district of Parry Sound municipal association meeting—that's where all the municipalities of Parry Sound get together and talk about important issues—in October, they passed a resolution to do with the Near North District School Board. I won't read the whole resolution, but they said, in conclusion, "Therefore may it be resolved that the Near North Board of Education work toward the future with the interests of maintaining the integrity of the municipalities by developing and implementing a strategic plan and that the municipalities are made aware of the plan and its progress, so that a greater degree of efficient coordination among parties is possible." They're passing that because obviously education is a big concern in rural areas of, certainly, Parry Sound–Muskoka, but I would say it's safe to say in all of northern Ontario, all of rural Ontario.

As I say, every week there's another article in the local papers. Here's the *Beacon Star* from December 7, about the second meeting the municipal leaders have had:

"Area municipal leaders reiterated their plans to help lobby on behalf of schools Wednesday...."

"During the meeting Tom Shultz, the board's superintendent of business and finance, outlined the Near North's budget, highlighting financial woes in two areas:

"—the need for money to repair or replace aging buildings—about \$120 million according to the province's 2002 estimates, and;

"—annual funding shortfalls in operating expenses, with the board paying more for staff salaries and benefits, support staff, full-time kindergarten, school offices and building maintenance than it receives from the province."

So the province isn't giving enough money to the board to cover the costs.

"One of the biggest losses the board faces each year comes from teachers' salaries, Mr. Shultz said. On average, the board pays about \$71,639 per elementary teacher and receives about \$70,471 from the province. The board also spends about \$9,163 per elementary teacher in benefits, and receives \$7,137 per teacher from the province—a total funding difference of about \$3,194 per teacher. With similar shortfalls for secondary teachers, the board faced a loss of more than \$825,000 this year. Boards across the province face the same shortfall for salaries, Mr. Shultz said."

Obviously the province has negotiated salaries and then hasn't funded them properly, so the boards are facing some real pressures.

We're talking about this trans fat bill that I've said should be dealt with at a national level, but in the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka, we have schools that are in real need of repair. We have the Parry Sound High School, which had a lot of work done to it last year. It's an old school, and I would say the Parry Sound community needs a new high school. It's the only high school for miles around. We have the Huntsville High School. Huntsville is a growing community. That's another situation where it's an old school and it needs to be upgraded. But this government is not funding the school boards—that covers Near North District School Board and Trillium Lakelands District School Board—sufficiently so they can make the necessary improvements to those schools.

When I was in the election at the Parry Sound High School, one of the questions the students asked me was, "When are we going to get our new school?" So I would ask the government, "When is Parry Sound going to get a new school?" They've got a crumbling school, it's in need of repair, and this government instead is talking about something they think is going to look good in the newspapers: trans fats.

In the recent budget passed by the Near North District School Board, we're seeing significant cutbacks. Here we are again, in the *Beacon Star*:

"The Near North District School Board will lose about 34 educational assistants and several teachers, but hang on to all-day kindergarten in a budget passed late Wednesday night.

"Cuts include about \$2.2 million in special education, most of it staff, including the educational assistants and some special education teachers. The move still leaves the board absorbing \$876,000 in special education costs not directly funded by the province."

So the province isn't even funding the special education needs in the Near North District School Board. They're having to dip into their own budget to the tune of \$876,000 and use up all their reserves and run a deficit.

So we have the extraordinary situation where all the municipalities are getting together and having meetings to try to drum up support and raise awareness for the terrific need of the schools in Parry Sound–Muskoka.

1700

I would say to the government, it's great that we're talking about trans fats. We support eliminating trans fats. We support having a more comprehensive plan versus this one-off, very small bill in which we're talking about just banning trans fats in schools. As I say, I made it very clear that I think this should be dealt with on a national level across the country so that not only the kids in our schools but all of us benefit. We support, and I certainly support, encouraging healthier lifestyles, encouraging more exercise, but there are some significant problems in our schools that this government should be dealing with and that it currently is not dealing with, particularly the funding formula as it relates to rural and northern schools.

So I'm pleased to have had the opportunity today to add some comments to this Bill 8. We will be supporting it.

I know the member from Newmarket–Aurora made mention of the Making the Grade program. I would like to note that in the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka we have a proactive nutrition action committee at the Bracebridge and Muskoka Lakes Secondary School. They wrote to me in 2006 supporting the private member's bill put forward by Nupur Dogra in the Making the Grade program. They wrote:

“To Norm Miller:

“We are writing to encourage your support of Bill 93, the Education Amendment Act (Nutrition Standards in Schools), 2006. The Bracebridge-Muskoka Lakes school nutrition action committee ... applauds Nupur Dogra for taking this initiative and introducing this bill” to the Legislature.

“It is time to address the poor eating habits of Ontario children and youth. Overweight in young people due to poor nutrition and lack of physical activity is identified as one of the greatest health challenges and risk factor for chronic disease—one that may soon overtake tobacco as the leading cause of preventable death and disease.

“Our committee is comprised of teachers, school administrators, school board trustees, food service staff, parents, students and public health staff. We joined together to address a common concern in our school ... the overwhelming accessibility of unhealthy food choices available all day long in schools for students and staff.

“Our committee in conjunction with our food service company Aramark”—that company was mentioned by the member for Newmarket–Aurora—“is working to make healthy food choices more available, more affordable and more visible in our cafeteria and vending options. We have made great strides during this school year but we need the help of Bill 93 to make nutrition standards compulsory and consistent in schools as well as increase the student knowledge on healthy eating.

“We invite you to visit our school cafeteria to see first-hand what we have been doing to make changes to the food choices and what obstacles are still in our way.”

That was sent by Steve Kinnear, teacher and chair of the BMLSS—Bracebridge and Muskoka Lakes Secondary School—nutrition action committee, and I certainly support it.

One of the problems in dealing with trans fats only in this bill and not across the country in broader ways—I think of Gravenhurst, where also in the election I was at a favourite downtown restaurant once in the midst of the election campaign, having lunch there. It was very busy, so I was at the front counter. There was a steady procession of high school students coming into this restaurant to buy their favourite lunchtime meal, which was poutine. Hopefully it didn't have trans fats in it, but I suspect it wasn't the healthiest choice they might make. I'm sure they like it. I like poutine the odd time myself. But the point I'm making is this: You can ban trans fats in schools, and that's a good thing, but the students can still walk outside of the school and go down to their local restaurant and have a meal that's full of trans fats. So you still aren't necessarily having as much benefit across society as you might otherwise if you took a broader approach to this.

Mr. Speaker, I will wrap up now and thank you for the opportunity to have a chance to speak to this Bill 8.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: This Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act sure has a big title and would lead us to believe that we are about to do some great things. We all recognize that our kids have to eat better food, that the obesity epidemic is upon our youth and children and something has to be done. With a title like this, wouldn't we all rally and say, “Hey, we're doing the right thing”? But as soon as you start to read it, as soon as you do your homework, you realize that this bill is not banning trans fat, this bill is not banning junk food. All it says is that we now have the power to set levels in regulation. This is a far cry from what we actually need. We need to take concrete action.

When you talk to nutritionists—and certainly Madame Suzanne Primeau-Raymond from my riding is a nutritionist who talks to kids about healthy food choices all the time—banning trans fat is something very important. It is so important that the federal government has already passed a law that makes manufacturers publish the amount of trans fat in each and every one of their foods and it has to be less than 0.2 grams of trans fat per serving in order to be labelled trans-fat free. So those regulations are already there. People are already making healthy food choices when it comes to trans fat.

We have to bring it a step forward. We have to look at all of the fat content in the food that's served in our schools. We have to look at the sugar content of the food that is served, the calories, the salt. There are a lot of healthy choices out there, but by banning trans fat, you are so limited that you can ban all the trans fat and still

serve poutine and still serve potato chips and still have candy bars that are trans-fat free. But that does not mean that you're serving healthy food, that does not mean that you have healthy food for healthy schools, which the act would lead us to believe.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the members for Newmarket and Parry Sound–Muskoka for their comments on the bill.

I must agree with one thing the member for Newmarket–Aurora said, which is now that we're back we seem to be at the same old, same old. In fact, we're back to that same old performance, that when the members of the official opposition actually rather agree with what we're doing, they try to convince the public that we're not really doing anything. In fact—

Interjection: Same old, same old.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Same old, same old from Mr. Klees.

However, what we are doing here is banning trans fat and the definition will be the federal definition of trans-fat free. We are banning junk foods by legislation in both elementary and secondary school vending machines, and we are going to work with stakeholders and develop regulations that will give us a broader set of nutritional guidelines.

It's interesting that the two Conservative members— one said all boards are doing this and read out a policy; another read out a letter that showed in fact all boards aren't doing it and we need these regulations. So we're going to bring some consistency to this.

I'd like to also share that, in fact, we have met with the Heart and Stroke Foundation. We do have their report. We have invited them to participate with us in the stakeholder group that will be developing the broader recommendations and the broader regulations. So we are fully engaged with that group on broader nutritional guidelines.

Yes, it would be wonderful if we had a federal response, but unfortunately the federal response to the Trans Fat Task Force was to come up with a federal definition of trans-free, and then to decide maybe we'll legislate later—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I listened with interest to the two members discussing Bill 8, this proposed legislation to ban trans fats in school cafeterias. As the member for Newmarket–Aurora indicated, this is hardly a comprehensive approach. It's just a one-off, knockoff piece of legislation, hardly a shotgun approach. To use the Legislative Assembly and its committee process to focus on such a narrow issue, to me, is like using a sledgehammer to drive a tack, hardly a comprehensive health—let alone health promotion—strategy.

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I give credit to Voortman cookies. The private sector obviously does have a role to play. This bandwagon's been rolling, to my mind, for 12 years. Voortman cookies announced that it would rid its products of trans fat. I

also see that New York City's board of health has approved a ban on trans fats in all restaurants across the city, not limiting it to elementary students or secondary students. There are many of us who have graduated from school—I think most of us here have graduated from school—and we should be getting a bit of help from our Ontario government.

So the target here, rightfully so but not comprehensively enough, would be doughnuts, pastries, cookies, crackers, muffins, croissants, all snack foods, fried foods, French fries, breaded foods. There's quite a list here. These foods have something in common: The trans fat content of these foods may be as high as 45%.

Mr. Mike Colle: I want to thank the member for Trinity–Spadina in this time of generosity for giving up his two minutes so I can speak.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's the holiday season.

Mr. Mike Colle: Thank you for your holiday good cheer.

I just want to say that yesterday morning I had the pleasure of bringing the Minister of Children and Youth Services, the Honourable Deb Matthews, to a school in my riding, Flemington Public School. She saw first-hand how children in a high-need Toronto area—it's one of the 13 designated high-need areas—are benefiting from having better nutrition in our schools. In fact, in that school they have a servery in a kitchen and the children, for \$1 a week, can get free breakfast, and their siblings can also get breakfast. For \$2 they can get lunch that's provided.

The kitchen staff and the nutritionist in the school are very concerned about the children having good food on a regular basis because, ironically enough, next door to Flemington Public School is the Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre. Do you know what they've had to establish in the Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre over the last year? They've had to establish a diabetes clinic. As many of you know, type 2 diabetes is a disease, a sickness, that has reached epidemic proportions in Canada and in Ontario. So when we talk about healthy foods and trans fats and physical education for our children, this is serious business for parents, serious business for our health care system, and it's very serious for children who want to know what foods are good for them and what are not.

So this is a very meaningful initiative that means a lot to children and means a lot to families, parents and teachers. That's why I applaud Minister Wynne for taking this initiative. Our children deserve this kind of protection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde): Questions and comments? Two-minute response.

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to thank the members for their comments, especially my colleague from Muskoka for his insight.

For the benefit of the government—although they say they have this report, it's very clear they haven't read it—I would like to read into the record from the Trans Fat Task Force report with regard to the Danish experience:

"In 2003, in response to recommendations from the Danish Nutrition Council, the Danish government prohibited the use in foods of oils containing more than 2% of industrially produced trans fat by 2004. Recent analyses of foods that have traditionally been significant sources of industrially produced trans fats clearly demonstrate that these trans fats have been virtually eliminated from foods in Denmark. As well, the analyses showed that international fast food chains, while continuing to sell foods with high levels of industrially produced trans fats in other countries, had reduced the amount of these trans fats in foods sold in Denmark."

The reason I want to share that with the government is that it points out the difference between a government that wants to comprehensively tackle an issue, take action on and get the job done, and this government, which continues to pick around the edges, drops one-off pieces of legislation in this House and then runs out the door with their photo ops and claims to have done something when in fact they have done nothing.

Our job is to expose this government for its shallowness, and I say to the parliamentary assistant that it is a very easy job to point out to the people of this province how little you really do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I welcome the citizens of Ontario to this parliamentary channel. We're on live, and it's 5:15. I hope people have their wine and beer and popcorn and chocolate bars and potato chips, to enjoy the debate in this place.

I went to Bayview Middle School last week when the minister, the Premier and the local member were there, presumably to congratulate the Premier and the minister on what they were about to announce. I have to admit that I was looking forward to some big announcement, because when you have the Premier coming to make the announcement, you think it's really important. It's got to be. Why else would the Premier come? So I said to myself, "It's got to be a big announcement"—healthy food for healthy schools. I said to myself that it had to be something that would attract my attention, that would be riveting, that would be of the utmost significance; otherwise, the Premier would just leave it to the minister to announce. And so I waited.

Lo and behold, we go to the cafeteria; we go to the gymnasium, where the Premier takes a photo with the students—it was really very nice; and then we head off to the school library and wait for the announcement. I heard the Premier say, "We're getting rid of trans fats," and I assumed they were getting rid of trans fats at the elementary and secondary levels. But the Premier said, "No, we're not doing that. We're only getting rid of trans fats at the elementary level."

Immediately, a staff person comes, as I'm doing media interviews, and says, "No, no, no, you've got it all wrong. We're getting rid of trans fats at both the elementary and the secondary levels," and I reminded the young woman that the Premier didn't say that. She said,

"He did," and I said, "No, he didn't," and we went back and forth in that vein for a couple of seconds. But she clearly heard what I heard, and everyone around me was startled, befuddled about this great announcement about banning trans fats at the elementary level and not at the secondary level. So we thought this was a curious announcement. It is so picayune that I thought I shouldn't be there.

He went on to say, "We're getting rid of junk food in our schools," and I thought, "Okay," until a journalist asked, "Well, what are you really getting rid of?" He said, "Well, we're not getting rid of anything; we're simply going to consult with the manufacturers." And I thought, "What kind of announcement is this? They're not banning trans fats. They're not banning junk food," and I thought, "Why am I here?"

Curiously enough, a journalist said, "But, Rosario, didn't the government ban junk food three years ago?" I said, "As far as I'm concerned, I think they did." But you really couldn't tell, because as we walked through the hallway of Bayview Middle School, you had a vending machine selling all sorts of things, and not just milk. So clearly, we didn't get rid of junk foods; they're still there. But the journalist believed we had banned junk food, and the public believed we had banned junk food, three years ago. Lo and behold, they banned nothing.

Speaker, through you I'm going to quote some stuff that clearly tells the story about what they did and didn't do three years ago. Here is an editorial from the Thunder Bay Chronicle. It says, "Move Toward Healthy Schools." That was mon ami M. Kennedy when he was the minister. He's gone now to bigger things. He's not elected, but he's gone somewhere. Just to read what the editorial said: "Just such a move was made yesterday by Ontario's new education minister. Gerard Kennedy told school boards that if they have contracts with pop and junk food companies to sell their products in elementary schools, cancel them." You get the drift? You get the impression that mon ami M. Kennedy said that he was going to cancel the contracts with any vending machine that had junk food in them. Isn't that what I hear, what you read?

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M^{me} France Gélinas: Absolutely.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You're reading the same thing, right?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Absolutely.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The editorial goes on: "What a treat"—it's kind of amusing—"to have a cabinet minister be so forthright," indicating that the minister knew what he was talking about then, and that he was banning junk food. He was forthright, according to the Thunder Bay Chronicle. "It is simply common sense," they argue, borrowing a line from the Conservative Party, "that if on one hand, government warns about the growing epidemic of child obesity, it cannot on the other hand have its schools encouraging child obesity by allowing the purveyors of pop and chips exclusive access to students in exchange for a cut of profits."

You follow? I hope some of you are listening because the editorial indicates, understands and believes that mon ami M. Kennedy had banned junk food because he was so clear and forthright.

It goes on: "It is bad enough that schools entered into these agreements in the first place to recoup some of the money removed from their budgets by previous provincial administrations," meaning the Conservative government.

"But Ontarians need to feel secure that schools consistently place the best interests of their children above all else. These contracts—and some Thunder Bay schools have them—do not serve those interests.

"Kennedy is saying the government will not compensate boards for the costs of cancelling contracts as ordered. It tells boards they should have known better than to go down this road." I hope some of the Liberals are listening to this. "But what are the consequences of this loss of revenue to cash-strapped schools?"

"Kennedy reminded boards his government is working on a plan to boost the revenue they receive. But that is a long-term proposition"—Liberals speak in the long term—you know, it goes on and on—"and Kennedy wants the pop and chip machines out of schools right away."

Do you understand? I'm not making this up. This is the Thunder Bay Chronicle that clearly—

Hon. John Wilkinson: Why the Thunder Bay Chronicle?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Minister, are you somehow in disagreement with what they're saying? Because they were supporting you guys.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'm listening to you.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm assuming the Thunder Bay Chronicle is an objective paper up there covering the news as they see it. As they saw mon ami M. Kennedy being clear and forthright and he was banning junk food, they had a clear understanding of what they were doing. Clearly they were wrong. They didn't ban a thing.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: We have been quite clear we're expanding—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Oh no, you're quite clear. Oh yeah, no, Liberals are always very, very clear, and you can tell from the editorial from Thunder Bay that Liberals were very, very clear.

It's okay, Speaker. Let her speak. Let her speak. It's okay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member has the floor and I'd like to hear you. I'll return to the member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I think we need to give every Liberal member an opportunity to speak when they're standing or sitting. It's only fair. They have so many members in this place, they can't even get two minutes. Please, let them speak. This way we can have a dialogue, interact with each other. It's quite okay.

I have something here from the—hey, Jim, oh no, it's not from your parts. It's the Kingston Whig-Standard: "Ontario to Get Rid of Junk Food at Schools." You

understand? It's very clear. Some members believe that you were not as clear as that, but I think you were clear. "Education minister Gerard Kennedy plans to go ahead as soon as possible with the Liberals' plan to get rid of junk food and sugary drinks in elementary schools." That's so funny. Did you ban junk food, because the article says you're getting rid of it?

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: All the fine Liberals are saying, "Yeah, yeah", but we're going to take an eternity to do it, right? Except that from a media perspective, the media says, "They're banning junk food," and the poor citizens watching this parliamentary channel think, "They've banned junk food." Don't you agree that if you read this article, you've got—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: See, the good doctor says, "Yeah, of course, because it's common sense, right?" If you say you're getting rid of junk food, the public says, "Oh, they're getting rid of it." But the Liberals say, "Nah, we didn't quite say it that way." But they don't even say, "We didn't quite say it that way"; they were quite happy to have the Kingston Whig-Standard say, "Yeah, we're getting rid of it," and they got a good hit. Three years later, a journalist asked me, "Did they ban junk food?" Because even the journalist gave the hit and moves on, so as to allow the public to believe that's what happened.

I have to complete this quote: "'We don't expect them to be offering junk food to kids in elementary school,' Mr. Kennedy said yesterday"—

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Elementary.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Elementary—as if, somehow, to suggest that because it's only elementary, they were not completely telling the full story. What difference does it make? The point is, whether it's elementary or secondary, the inference is—and the good doctor understands it—that you're banning junk food, and you didn't do it. It doesn't matter whether it's elementary or secondary; you didn't do it.

Let me move on. There's more. I always love when I have my Liberal friends dealing with us, because the member from Guelph—she's so insistent, too, as she says these things. "It's elementary," she says. I know it's elementary; that's why I'm pointing these things out.

Then I got a news-style release communiqué from the government which says, "Healthy Food in Schools Means Healthier Kids." The paragraph says: "Toronto—The McGuinty government is making schools healthier places for students to learn by directing school boards to remove all junk food...." Do you understand? What does it mean?

Hon. John Wilkinson: Keep going.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Keep going—oh, of course—"to remove all junk food from vending machines in elementary schools"—

Hon. John Wilkinson: Ah, vending machines. Read the whole quote.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You guys crack me up. I just read the whole quote. I just read it; what more do you

want me to read? “Getting junk food out of elementary school vending machines is the next step in our plan to make all of Ontario’s schools healthier places to learn....” Good citizens of Ontario, you’ve just got to be in this place to love it, because you don’t get the full flavour of this exchange, right? But I hope you get just a little bit of the flavour of what we do in this place.

What I just read to you from the communiqué is that they’re banning junk food. You didn’t do that. My friend Bob Delaney from Mississauga–Streetsville is just enjoying himself silly with his gestures, because he’s trying to imitate me, but he can’t do it; he just can’t do what I’m doing. There’s no point in trying to imitate me, because it’s not working for you.

“Getting junk food out of elementary school vending machines is the next step in our plan....” Sorry, you didn’t do any of it, and Speaker, you know because we all know, right? But it’s part of this Liberal game. You put out a communiqué, tell them what you want. The media, sometimes helpful, says, “Yeah, they’re getting rid of the junk food,” and the next day, it’s gone; the issue is just gone, marvellously. As all of the people who get that hit say—they absorb the message, “Junk food is gone,” and it’s not. Three years later, the vending machines and the junk food are still in our schools.

As I said in my response to the minister’s statement, vending machines have been proliferating like rabbits in all of our school system. Why? Because schools need money. Junk food is good money for schools. Schools know that it’s bad, principals know that it’s bad, teachers know that it’s bad, all of the health community knows that it’s bad, but schools are still selling junk. Why? It’s about the pecunia: They need the pecunia in the schools, and that’s why they haven’t banned junk food. But for all intents and purposes, the government had done it three years ago.

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When I go into schools—indeed, even the school where the minister and Premier chose to make this announcement—I see the high-calorie, sugar- and salt-laden junk food being offered to our schoolchildren. In some places, schools don’t put the junk in the vending machine, they put in it a different carrying machine. They actually cart it around as a way of getting around the vending machine. Some of you from Peterborough might think, “No one is doing that,” but they’ve got the wheelbarrow and other stuff to wheel that stuff into the schools so kids can buy the garbage. Why? Because they need the money. So it’s laughable when the minister stands up and says, “Oh, schools voluntarily made progress.” Now they’re into voluntary; at the time they were banning. Now they’re into voluntary because they’re admitting they’ve done nothing in three years.

Then she says, “Kids have great ideas about the health of their schools and we need to involve them.” Of course; why wouldn’t we? It’s nice that some kids think that we’ve got a deal with these products. But on the whole I tell you this, Speaker—because you’ve got children as well, correct? Of course you do. If they have a choice

between going to the junk and eating carrots and blueberries, what are they going to go after first? They’re going to go after the candy first. If you read what’s in these candies, these chocolate bars—I’m telling you. We were just reading with mon amie Madame Gélina—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes, you’ve got some too. But open the label, open it up. There is so much sugar and salt and crap in these things, and people are ingesting and digesting it, if they can, every day, adults and others. If you go in this cafeteria, what have you got down there?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Broccoli.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Broccoli, my foot. You’ve got vending machines where you’ve got potato chips. What else have you got?

Interjection: Carrots.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Oh, yeah, carrots. You’ve got vending machines selling crap downstairs. That’s a fine way to lead. If you want to lead, get rid of the junk food in this place. But if you want to make money, because there’s a contract with some of these guys—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Union people make some of these foods.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Oh, I see. But if union people make trans fats that lead into so many products that we don’t like, does that mean we keep the trans fats? No. If products are produced and they cause difficulty to our body, physiological changes, physiological disorders, and they kill us, whether they’re produced by unions or not, we’ve got to get rid of them. Yes?

I put the health of our bodies ahead of anything that is produced by anyone, whether they’re in unions or otherwise. If it’s bad for you, it’s bad for all of us. If it’s going to kill you, then you’ve got to deal with it. If asbestos, a product that Stephen Lewis fought to deal with in terms of recognizing that it dealt a heavy blow to people by causing cancers—lethal, deadly, painful cancers—we had to deal with it because it kills people. It kills union members. It kills non-union members. It kills people. It’s bad.

So today’s measure really is a little, tiny thing. As usual, I was surprised today that the Liberals didn’t say, “This is historic,” because there would have been a revulsion in my body that I could not have contained. Usually the Liberals preface their remarks by saying, “This is historic.” Usually when they say that you know there’s nothing in it, because they’ve got to puff it up. At least they didn’t do that, in all fairness.

But to be fair and to congratulate for a brief second—because I don’t want to do that for too long; otherwise people will think I’m overextending my praise for them—“the bill amends the Education Act to add provisions regulating the trans fat content of all food and beverages sold in a school cafeteria. The minister may make regulations”—may make; I think Mr. Klees made reference to this—“exempting from the trans fat standards any food or beverage in which the trans fat content originates exclusively from ruminant meat or dairy products.”

Whatever you might think—good or bad—it sounds positive. You at least have to say, “Okay, that’s good.” So we say to the Liberals, “It’s nice that you did this; it’s really nice. You really moved a little step.” How could I not say that that little step is good? You have to say, “It’s a little step,” and so you want to pat the Liberals on the back and say, “Okay, you did good.”

But then they say, “The bill also adds a requirement for boards to ensure that food and beverages sold in vending machines comply with the nutritional standards set out in the regulations. Power is given to the Minister of Education to create policies, guidelines and regulations governing nutritional standards for all food and beverages provided on board property, on school premises or in connection with a school-related activity.”

My point is, why don’t you just ban them? Why don’t you just ban junk food? How difficult is it to do that? If junk food is indeed harmful, deleterious to your health, and we know it is, why not just say, “We’re banning it”? But when I went to Bayview Middle School and I was waiting for the Premier to say, “We’re banning them,” as he did three years ago by way of mon ami Monsieur Kennedy, then the Minister of Education, he said, “Oh, no, no, no. We’re not banning anything; we’re consulting. We are consulting the manufacturer.”

This little addition in this bill about junk food is simply an afterthought to create the illusion that something is being done about vending machines. When will the minister use the power to get rid of these machines and compensate boards by providing funding to replace the revenue that schools have come to depend on? That’s the point: The minister has the power—indeed, the Premier has the power—to ban junk food. He didn’t do that; she didn’t do that; the Liberal government isn’t doing that. They’re consulting again, three years later.

Do you see why I get tired? Do you feel it? I get tired. I have to repeat the same things. Three years later, they’re banning it. Three years later, they’re banning it, but, no, they’re consulting. It’s never going to end. Three years from now I’m going to be making the same speech about the government doing something else that moves the health initiative just another little step. It’s not very much.

My friend Madame Gélinas pointed out that: “Health Canada has required that food labels list the amount of trans fat in the nutrition facts section for most foods. Products with less than 0.2 grams of trans fat per serving may be labelled as free of trans fats. These labelling allowances are not widely known, but as an awareness of them develops, controversy over truthful labelling is growing. In Canada, trans fat quantities on labels include naturally occurring trans fats from animal sources.” What Health Canada is doing is saying to manufacturers, “You’re going to have to label these trans fats.” As soon as the public starts understanding what is being put in these products, assuming they can read it—because I have to tell you, before Wayne sees me, that you can’t even read this stuff.

You understand what I’m saying: You can’t read the labels. The print is so tiny that an almost senior citizen like me can’t read it, even with glasses that are designed for fine print. Nobody can read these labels. But the public is becoming more and more aware that trans fats are harmful. And what does it do when you build awareness? The public is not going to buy those products. So already we are getting the manufacturers to stop producing foods that have trans fats in them.

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So the government now announces, “We are dropping”—in the ministry document, or at least in the ministerial statement, it says they are “dropping” trans fats. What does “dropping” mean? It doesn’t even say “abolishing.” She says, “We are dropping them,” as if somehow trans fats can be held up and they drop down to the floor. What does it mean? Does dropping mean banning? But if they wanted to ban, why don’t they say “banning”? Does dropping mean reducing? But if they wanted to say “reduction,” why don’t they say “reduction”? “Dropping” is intended to suggest they are dropping it off, as if to suggest the banning of those products. They’re not doing any of that. The government is moving in the direction of where the public is at and where the manufacturers are going. So when the government does this little picayune step, do I say, “This is great. This is revolutionary”? I can’t do that. It’s just a little thing. I wish that we could deal with substantive bills in this place rather than little, tiny, minuscule, mini, picayune bills. I get a little bit tired. Let me look through this bill to see if I missed anything.

Mr. Dave Levac: Frustrated?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Sometimes frustrated.

“A board shall ensure that a food or beverage offered for sale to pupils in a vending machine on school premises meets any nutritional standards set out in the regulations, including any applicable standards relating to trans fat content.”

My point is that it’s not good enough. It should be banned. If it’s bad, member from Brant, former school principal and father, it should be banned, n’est-ce pas? If it’s not banned, it can’t be that bad. That’s the implication; that’s the inference I make. If it’s bad, it should be banned. If it’s not bad enough, they’re not banning it. Therefore, trans fats are, by implication and inference, good. But it’s still there. It doesn’t say they’re banning—again, three years later.

Further regarding the regulations: “governing nutritional standards for food and beverages and for any ingredient contained in food and beverages provided on board property, on school premises or in connection with a school-related activity.” Like when? “Requiring boards to ensure that the standards referred to in clause (d),” which I just read, “are met.” When? What are the timelines? There are no timelines. The timelines are Liberal timelines, and Liberal timelines are, “We’re going to do it sometime in the future, and when we get there, we’re going to repeat it again and move on and repeat and repeat”: announce, pronounce, preannounce, post an-

nounce, etc. It's a Liberal syndrome. It's a syndrome about announcements. They never do the job. They're always repeating the same things. That's why it gets tiring. There's more. There's got to be more.

When we ask why we are keeping these vending machines in our schools, schools are doing it because they don't have any money. Minister Kennedy, the then-minister, said, "Don't ask for any money. You're not going to get any." Therefore, schools keep on having the vending machines there in order to be able to make money. You understand, Speaker, that schools and parents are fundraising to the tune of \$560 million a year. What it speaks to is a lack of funding in our school system, because if we had adequate money, the vending machines would not be there. If we had adequate money in our schools, the minister would ban junk food. The minister implicitly and explicitly condones the use of vending machines because she is not giving enough money to our schools in order for them to deal with the day-to-day problems in our school system. She condones it and they de facto exist because of a lack of money, and the fundraising by parents is going on year after year and the fundraising increases year after year.

Why do parents do that? I'll tell you why and I'll read some quotes:

"I don't agree with this means of fundraising"—that two-tier problem where schools can fundraise for any purpose, including additions to a school or portables or a rec room in a school, whatever it is. "It certainly lets the Liberal government off the hook to provide critical funding for our children. What does this mean? In exchange for funding, will our schools be named after private companies now: St. Coca Cola, let us say?" A parent from St. Sofia school.

Another parent: "One obvious area where two tiers exist is the area of school libraries. Northern schools have had their libraries decimated, and these too often are in communities with only minimal or no public library structure."

Jim Neill, teacher-librarian, another parent: "Only the rich could afford proper education. I have two kids that need tutors but I'm unable to give them that. In rural Ontario, we've had to fundraise for new math books."

Talking about math books, if you listen to the government, they've been giving millions and millions of dollars to deal with these issues, including books, yet this parent is saying, "We're fundraising for new math books."

"I am fundraised to death. Now I must go to fundraise for my daughter's graduation ceremony." Cathy Parent, mother of two.

"At Palmerston Avenue public school we anticipated that the government would rely on parents, driven by love and concern for their children, to fundraise, to fill in the funding gaps created by the government." Vanessa Ring, mother of two.

"As a mother of three, I am currently desperately trying to avoid going to our local public school. It is not as well funded or supported as the good schools just a

few blocks away. Our choices are to pay for private school, attend a second-tier school or move three blocks and several hundred thousand dollars over and attend a good public school in a wealthier area that is supported by endless and fruitful fundraising activities." Alison Morgan.

You get the picture. Parents are tired. They're tired of fundraising for essential things, something the government and the minister claim they've dealt with. Oh, yes, they have more do, but you would think, with all of these evolutionary additions they have put into our school system, surely they would have dealt with these tiny little issues that parents are dealing with in their schools. They haven't. They're fundraising to death. They're deathed out of fundraising, and they don't want to do it anymore, yet they keep doing it for the love of their children—560 million bucks a year, almost \$1 billion of fundraising, out of people's pockets for essential things. How good can this education system be, and how good can this Liberal government be, when parents are raising close to \$1 billion a year? It can't be that good. Something is wrong in the kingdom of Ontario when parents are fundraising to death.

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The minister says, "We've got teachers doing 20 minutes of exercises in the schools." Let me tell you and the citizens of Ontario that only 34% of the schools have gym teachers—34%. Physical education teachers are trained to train students. Regular teachers are not trained to do physical education. What did the government do two years ago or so? They got kids jumping up and down in the classroom. I don't know what they're doing. No criticism to teachers, but I don't think they know what they're doing, and the government claims, including mon amie from Guelph, who was a former school trustee, "Oh, no; they're doing a lot. They're jumping up and down for 20 minutes. It's really great." We don't know what they're doing. We don't have any physical education teachers. Only 35% of the schools do. You're not doing a thing. If you were serious, member from Guelph, if you were serious as a former school trustee and close to these issues, you would say to the Premier and to the minister, "We've got to get physical education teachers into our school system and get these kids to actually do something about their health." Jumping up and down in the school for 20 minutes won't do.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Well, what do you think they're doing for 20 minutes in the classroom? Are they walking around the classroom, one after the other? Are they moving all the desks out of the way so they can jump in the middle, up and down? What do you think they're doing?

Mr. Dave Levac: Making their heart rates go up.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: So, member from Brant, former school principal—

Mr. Dave Levac: Phys ed teacher.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Were you a phys ed teacher as well? See, you would know. You've got to do a two-

minute rebuttal. You would know. What could they be doing for 20 minutes? But if you hear the Minister of Education or the member from Guelph, because you've got a lot of Liberal boosters in the back, on all sides of this House, they'll say, "Oh, no. We're dealing with this issue. We're getting kids to exercise." I'm sorry. They're not doing a good job of it and the kids are not getting the exercise they need because we don't have physical education. I've got to tell you, by the way—

Mrs. Liz Sandals: There are schools in Guelph where there are perfectly good programs—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm going to come for a walk in that classroom and see how you do it. But I understand.

We have a lot of work to do. And by the way, most kids, I say to the Minister of Education, don't know what good foods are. Now, to be fair, some mothers and fathers, individually or collectively, wherever they may be, are probably doing a good job, doing their best. But I know, as a grandfather—can you believe it? As a grandfather and as a father, I know that if you leave kids to their devices, they will go to the junk food in a minute. Yes or no, Minister?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I disagree. If there's a healthy choice, they will eat it.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: They will not do it.

Speaker, don't be so uptight. It's okay. We're having a discussion here.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, no, because he's got to do his job; I understand. But it was a good exchange. It wasn't so bad.

They, kids, will go to the chocolate. I would go to the chocolate. I love dark chocolate. I would go to dark chocolate in a minute. I could stuff myself for hours on dark chocolate. I've got to tell you, I don't like dairy, the milk products stuff; I don't like it. Dark chocolate is what I would eat. But I—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And it's even better for you. Not too much, though. I follow the golden mean of Aristotle: everything in moderation, because anything beyond that can cause bad problems to your body.

The point is that we've got a big job to do in the school system, in this place. Minister, remember, we've got a vending machine down here. We've got to get rid of it. We've got to lead.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Starting with the schools.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, we lead here. We've got to lead here, and we've got to get rid of this vending machine, because if you don't lead here, it means we can't do it out there, okay? So we've got to do that. And, Minister, I was just saying—because I know you were busy—we've got to get physical education teachers in the classroom. You're about to say we are.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes, because I thought you were. No; we only have 34% of our schools that have physical education teachers. You will admit, as someone

who is serious about physical education, that you need training. I don't know what to do with some things. And, yes, I could learn, it's true, but when you're talking about kids in the elementary school system—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Daily physical activity is very important and it's working well.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: What's working well?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Daily physical activity, DPA, for 20 minutes a day.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I would simply say I disagree with you, because the 20 minutes a day I'm sure is not working. And with all due respect on all sides—to the teachers as well—they are doing their best, but we do need to do a little more.

Yes, getting rid of trans fats would be great, wouldn't it? And if we're doing it, why don't we say we're banning it, we're getting rid of it? Why don't we just say that? You have an opportunity in the next couple of days, because we've got a couple of days, to say, "You're right, Marchese. We're going to ban it," and just add it in.

Interjection: Put forth an amendment. We'll support the amendment.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Is that what you want, an amendment saying we're going to ban it? Is that what you want? Are you going to convince the minister that if I say so—

Interjection: A friendly, thoughtful amendment—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I can do that. When we're debating this bill, I can just write a little addition.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Okay. We're going to ban junk food because, as mon amie Madame Gélinas said, getting rid of trans fats is but a little, little thing in the scheme of things. When you see these chocolates that I was showing—Wayne was getting upset that I was showing them—when you see the ingredients—

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The little chocolate bars? It's scary. We read that together. Every two words has salt or sugar before it—yes or no?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: What does it say?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Sugar, glucose, fructose; it goes on.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But it repeats itself in terms of sugar and salt attached to different kinds of products that are in there. That's a lot of junk food to put in your body. How can we put that stuff in here? How could we do it? But we're doing it every day. Mr. Kormos knows what I mean because next week he's going to speak for 20 minutes about—

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: They're telling you that because you're not the critic. You only have 20 minutes. I know you need more time. I understand.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I've only got time to inhale.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You'll have plenty of that. He'll have 20 minutes to talk about the need to eat healthy foods. We all know that obesity is a problem and

so we've got to deal with junk food. We have to deal with that. I take the Minister at her word that if I introduce a motion—did you say that you would consider it?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I didn't.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: She said she wouldn't consider it.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: What do you mean, "a thoughtful motion"? We're going to ban junk food. Should I put "thoughtful," in it? I don't know, if I put "thoughtful," it might not do what he said. How much more thought do you have to put into the fact that junk food is bad, that sugar, salt and calories are bad for you? How much more thoughtfulness do you need in that regard?

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, we were actually challenging the Premier—at least a journalist was—to define which junk foods we're getting rid of. The member from Guelph is challenging me to define, and the journalist was challenging the Premier to define, what junk food was, and he said—

Mrs. Liz Sandals: That's why we're putting it in a regulation. You can't define it for me.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You see what I mean? So why do you give the indication that you're banning junk food when you're not doing it? Because you don't have a clue what you're banning, what you're getting rid of, what you're dropping, what you're consulting on, what

you're regulating. You don't have a clue. Shouldn't you have a clue before you introduce a bill? We're going to introduce a bill that says—

Mrs. Liz Sandals: We actually do have a guideline that—

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Speaker, let me know when you want to stand up to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask that you involve the Speaker in this conversation, if you will.

I return to the member for Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Here is another package beside me: "Crunchy Werther's toffee with bits of hazelnut and almond in fine milk chocolate." I can't stand milk chocolate. Look at the ingredients. Let me get my other glasses. Hold on.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: We've got two minutes; hold on. It says here, "calories 20; fat content one gram; saturated .05"—that's not bad. Trans is zero.

Mr. Mike Colle: Zero trans fats.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But there's more; there's more.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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