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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 12 December 2007

Mercredi 12 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

Wednesday 12 December 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 12 décembre 2007

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FREDERICK BANTING HOMESTEAD

Mr. Jim Wilson: I rise to bring to the attention of this House the recommendations made by the Conservation Review Board on the future of Sir Frederick Banting's homestead in Alliston.

In their report, they wrote that "cultural heritage value or interest exists in Frederick Banting being born and raised on this Ontario farm property, and that it was this farm that instilled those qualities and knowledge and provided the support that led to his discovery of insulin." The board went on to state that, "Cultural heritage value or interest also exists in the way in which the community of Alliston, now part of the Town of New Tecumseth, has embraced and commemorates Frederick Banting and the Banting homestead as an expression of the identity and historic achievement of the community."

These statements reflect those that I have expressed on more than 70 occasions in this House. To that end, today I'm tabling a resolution that reads as follows: "That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should support the town of New Tecumseth and the Sir Frederick Banting Legacy Foundation by ensuring that the recommendations made by the Conservation Review Board on the future of the Sir Frederick Banting homestead in Alliston are enacted and that the government of Ontario should take every measure necessary to ensure that this property is transferred to either the town of New Tecumseth or the Sir Frederick Banting Legacy Foundation for the purpose of creating an educational and interpretive centre on a non-profit basis, such as a camp for diabetic youth, and to ensure that the property is properly maintained."

I can think of no better way for the new Minister of Culture in the McGuinty government and member for Barrie to begin her term in office than to support this resolution and ensure that it is enacted.

CANADIAN SOLDIERS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: First of all, I'd like to acknowledge that we made some headway last week, compelling Prime Minister Stephen Harper to consider revising the deadline to award Constable Chris Garrett the Cross of Valour that he so deserves.

I had the great honour to attend a Christmas tree display this past weekend. This display was organized by Jaimie Corriveau of CFB Trenton's Military Family Resource Centre. The theme is entitled "Evergreen Memories of Home: A holiday salute to our deployed soldiers."

These are no ordinary Christmas trees. This is a display of 14 Christmas trees decorated to represent the 10 provinces and three territories. The 14th tree is a peace tree and honours our fallen soldiers. This tree displays the name of each of the soldiers we have lost in the war in Afghanistan. I was honoured and touched to be in attendance when Lieutenant Colonel Debbie Miller, wing administration officer, lit the peace tree. This touching ceremony was shared by civilians and military personnel alike, including the families of our soldiers. This display will be on for the whole week until Christmas.

VISITORS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I would also like to acknowledge some people from my riding who are here visiting Queen's Park today: Delphine Patchett, John Sharko, Victoria Sharko and Regan Trottier, in the members' west gallery. Welcome.

NATIVE LAND DISPUTE

Mr. Toby Barrett: On at least 10 separate occasions, I've tried to get answers from the aboriginal affairs minister about newspaper reports of a development freeze on local Ontario Realty Corp. properties because of the Six Nations/Caledonia land dispute. They include the Sprucedale correctional centre, a former OPP office and a horticultural research farm—all near Simcoe—the Jarvis and Canfield MTO yards, the Cayuga courthouse, Rock Point Provincial Park, Selkirk Provincial Park, 4,700 acres in South Cayuga, 1,400 acres in Townsend, as well as over 500 acres at both the Burtch Correctional Centre and Douglas Creek Estates.

If, indeed, these properties are being used as a bargaining chip, the question is, why? Will they be handed over to Six Nations? Which side of the negotiating table asked for this in the first place? Why is Norfolk county being targeted?

As MPP, I have visited all of these properties, and at least seven of the 12 are not in the former Haldimand tract. Does the Haldimand tract no longer apply to land claims negotiations? Why aren't there similar conditions on government land elsewhere in the Haldimand tract, in

Kitchener or in Cambridge, or are we in my area seen as low-hanging fruit?

Local mayors ask me about this, but until the veil of secrecy is lifted, the only information I have is printed in the newspapers.

FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Peter Kormos: Today at Queen's Park, we have amongst us firefighters from across Ontario, members of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association. We're proud to have them in our midst and amongst us, because we know that these are women and men who run into dangerous scenarios that others flee.

But these firefighters make three specific points here at Queen's Park today. One is the grief and chaos that this government's elimination of a retirement age has caused in the firefighting profession. That's why New Democrats are in accord with firefighters in Ontario, who call for a legislative remedy to the dilemma and crisis that the elimination of a retirement age has created amongst firefighters in Ontario. We will join with the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association in pursuing a legislative endeavour to create a retirement age of 60 for any firefighter engaged in fire suppression or training activities.

Similarly, those firefighters are seeking some correction of the mediation/arbitration/conciliation process created in 1997, which is demonstrated to have created huge delays, as long as four years, in the settlement of contracts. No worker, firefighters included, has any business being denied a contract for four years. We will pursue that remedy as well, shoulder to shoulder, arm in arm with Ontario's firefighters.

PARENTING AND FAMILY LITERACY CENTRES

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: A month ago, the McGuinty government announced \$6 million of support for 89 parenting and family literacy centres across this province, including two brand new centres in my riding of Ottawa Centre. The parenting and family literacy centres are located in high-needs communities, and focus on providing opportunities for young children to build essential early literacy and numeracy skills through stories, music and reading, while providing parents with a supportive environment to engage with their kids and help them to succeed in school and life.

I'm pleased to let members of this Legislature know that in my riding of Ottawa Centre, the family and literacy centres located in Cambridge Street Community Public School and Hilson Avenue Public School are doing extremely well, thanks to the funding received from the McGuinty government. Our local Early Years coordinator reports that families in our community are making use of the new centres on a daily basis, and the support continues to grow. Our dedicated team of early childhood educators in Ottawa Centre is working hard to

ensure that these parenting and family literacy centres are engaging families in our community. I want to thank all the parents and teachers for their enthusiastic involvement in the program.

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These great services to parents and children of Ottawa Centre would not have been possible without the support of the McGuinty government. I'm proud to be part of a government that believes that investing in our children and families is the foundation to building a strong community. I know that our government will continue to provide a strong foundation for success, ensuring that together we move Ontario forward.

TOURISM

Mr. Ted Arnott: I wish to congratulate the member for Mississauga East-Cooksville on his appointment as Minister of Tourism.

The new minister assumes office at a time when our tourism industry needs our support more than ever before. For many consecutive months, Ontario has seen a dramatic decline in the number of American visitors coming to enjoy our hospitality, our events and attractions. The most recent numbers show a decline of more than 10% in September since last year. Worse still, same-day travel was down by more than 15%.

Writing off the American tourism market, as the McGuinty Liberal government has done, is really hitting home for our tourist operators. This means lost opportunities and fewer jobs.

Our new Minister of Transportation, currently besieged by the auditor's report, would want us to believe that his new upgraded Ontario driver's licence helps to solve our US passport problem. In fact, it only makes it easier for Ontario residents to go cross-border shopping.

The upgraded Ontario driver's licence does nothing to help bring Americans back to Ontario, because they may still need a US passport to get home, meaning they still won't be able to come to Ontario without one.

Instead of leading people to believe that the upgraded licence helps tourism, the government must immediately present a comprehensive plan to strengthen the industry in the short and medium terms, focusing on an effective marketing strategy. The government needs to get to work.

MUSICAN

Mr. Mario Sergio: Last Friday I had the honour of attending an exciting event held in my riding of York West. MusiCan, the national music education charity of the Canadian Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences, awarded seven schools in my riding with a \$30,000 grant for musical instruments. This money will go a long way in helping hundreds of youth who aspire to become great musicians.

The event included Toronto's own Jully Black, the chart-topping, platinum-selling artist who grew up at

Jane and Finch in my own riding of York West as well. She is truly an inspiration to the future musical artists who filled Driftwood Public School last Friday evening.

I would like to thank the Toronto District School Board for hosting this inspirational event, and my deepest appreciation as well to the organizers of MusiCan for continuing to encourage young people to pursue their dreams in the music world. Since its inception in 1997, MusiCan and its sponsors have donated over \$2.3 million to the program, assisting 165 postgraduate students and over 120,000 students across Canada.

Again, I would like to acknowledge and thank those organizations that cultivate and promote the positive impact music makes in every community. With their support, many young people can look forward to an inspiring, successful and fulfilled future in the music world.

DAVID DUNLAP OBSERVATORY

Mr. Reza Moridi: I rise here today to highlight one of the milestones of my wonderful community. Richmond Hill is home to one of the most unique observatories on this continent. The David Dunlap Observatory was established in 1935 on a 200-acre parkland.

At the grand opening of this historical structure, the former Prime Minister Mackenzie King praised the observatory as “a gift to science all over the world.”

It was at this observatory that in 1971, Professor Tom Bolton, a Canadian astronomer with an international reputation, verified the black hole theory. And later, in 1987, Dr. Ian Shelton discovered a supernova. These studies and discoveries paved the way for a better understanding of our universe.

It is with great regret that I bring to you the news that the University of Toronto has decided to close this observatory and sell its vast land to developers.

As the MPP for Richmond Hill, I hope that we can form a partnership with all levels of government, private sector and the public to protect this property of such historical, scientific and natural significance for our country.

I welcome Councillor Godwin Chan, Dr. Ian Shelton and Mr. Rupi Jeji in the members' gallery.

FIREFIGHTERS

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I too, like Mr. Kormos, want to pay tribute to the men and women of the Ontario fire service and the organization that represents them, the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association. Would all members join me in welcoming firefighters from around the province today.

Firefighters are vital to keeping our communities safe. I'm proud to say that our government recognizes that firefighters protect us and, in return, we must protect them.

We actively support Ontario firefighters in many ways. Through the Ontario fire grant, the McGuinty government invested an unprecedented \$30 million into fire services across this province, the first time in 20 years

that the province has invested in Ontario fire services. These funds help provide training and equipment and support fire prevention and public education programs.

Last session, our government brought forward legislation that ensures that our firefighters from all communities are treated fairly in the face of occupational illnesses. We believed it was necessary to bring forward legislation to provide fair treatment and respect in regard to workplace compensation claims for occupational disease and heart injuries.

Our government recognizes the hard work and dedication that firefighters across this province demonstrate every day. Situations that others are fleeing from, firefighters run to every day.

We thank the men and women of the Ontario fire service for putting themselves in high danger and great risk on our behalf.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

GROW OPS DISCLOSURE ACT, 2007 LOI DE 2007 SUR LA DIVULGATION DE LA PRÉSENCE D'EXPLOITATIONS DE CULTURE DE MARIJUANA

Mr. Sergio moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 18, An Act respecting the disclosure of information about marijuana grow operations / *Projet de loi 18, Loi ayant trait à la divulgation de renseignements sur les exploitations de culture de marijuana.*

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. Mario Sergio: The bill requires property owners and agents to disclose information to prospective tenants and purchasers about the use of a property for marijuana grow operations. The bill also requires chiefs of police to disclose information to the public about current and former marijuana grow operations in a municipality.

INCOME TAX AMENDMENT ACT (PUBLIC TRANSIT EXPENSE TAX CREDIT), 2007

LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI DE L'IMPÔT SUR LE REVENU (CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT POUR DÉPENSES DE TRANSPORTS EN COMMUN)

Mr. O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 19, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act to provide for a tax credit for expenses incurred in using public transit / *Projet de loi 19, Loi modifiant la Loi de l'impôt sur le revenu afin de prévoir un crédit d'impôt pour les dépenses engagées au titre des transports en commun.*

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. John O'Toole: This is a very important component of supporting public transit while it's supporting our economy and the environment. Gridlock is choking the economy and the environment, and the government's Move Ontario 2020 doesn't move until 2011. GO Transit is sputtering, according to media reports.

How is this legislation going to impact commuters in Durham region? For example, individuals commuting from Durham will spend \$100 a week, or \$5,000 a year. This expenditure is contributing to saving the environment. I would encourage the Speaker and the members of the government to speak to the Premier and the Minister of Finance to support commuters in this province who are supporting the environment.

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ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH
(TORONTO) ACT, 2007

Mr. Zimmer moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr3, An Act respecting St. Andrew's Congregation of the United Church of Canada at Toronto.

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): Pursuant to standing order 84, this bill stands referred to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

DIRECT ELECTION OF THE NIAGARA
REGIONAL CHAIR ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR L'ÉLECTION
AU SCRUTIN GÉNÉRAL DU PRÉSIDENT
DU CONSEIL RÉGIONAL DE NIAGARA

Mr. Hudak moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 20, An Act to provide for the direct election of the Niagara Regional Council chair / Projet de loi 20, Loi prévoyant l'élection au scrutin général du président du conseil régional de Niagara.

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. Tim Hudak: This act, if passed, would allow for the actual taxpayers of the region of Niagara to directly elect the regional chair, probably the most significant municipal position in all of Niagara. It certainly has worked very effectively in Halton region as well as Kitchener-Waterloo. I believe the taxpayers of Niagara would like to see it instituted in time for the 2010 municipal election.

PROVINCIAL PARKS AND MAJOR
PROVINCIAL TOURIST ATTRACTIONS
SIGN ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007
SUR L'ÉRECTION DE PANNEAUX
DANS LES PARCS PROVINCIAUX
ET À L'EMPLACEMENT D'IMPORTANTES
ATTRACTIONS TOURISTIQUES
PROVINCIALES

Mr. Lalonde moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 21, An Act to require bilingual signs in provincial parks, parks under the control of the Niagara Parks Commission and at major provincial tourist attractions / Projet de loi 21, Loi exigeant l'érection de panneaux bilingues dans les parcs provinciaux, dans les parcs sous le contrôle de la Commission des parcs du Niagara et à l'emplacement d'importantes attractions touristiques provinciales.

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

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

First reading agreed to.

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

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: C'est lors d'une visite des membres de l'Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie de l'Amérique, accompagnés de membres de l'Afrique et de l'Europe, que le sujet a été signalé. Donc, la raison d'être de ce projet de loi est d'encourager le grand nombre de touristes francophones du Canada et du monde entier à visiter notre magnifique province et de leur faciliter l'accessibilité à ces merveilles ainsi qu'aux nombreux sites d'attractions de l'Ontario.

The purpose of this bill is to encourage the large number of francophone tourists from Canada and around the world to visit our wonderful province and to make it easy for them to access the many wonders and vistas of Ontario.

Mr. Phil McNeely: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm pleased to welcome to this Legislature—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member would appreciate that that's not a point of order, as you know. Please allow us to finish the rotation dealing with the introduction of bills, and then I will call on your point of order that is not a point of order in a little bit.

BATTERY DEPOSIT
AND RETURN ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007
SUR LA CONSIGNATION DES PILES

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

Bill 22, An Act to establish a deposit and return system for batteries / Projet de loi 22, Loi établissant un régime de consignation pour les piles.

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. Norm Miller: Earlier this year, Environment Canada released the Canadian Consumer Battery Baseline Study, which proves that the annual number of consumer batteries discarded is increasing dramatically. Batteries have the potential to release toxic substances into our land and water, including mercury, cadmium and lead. This bill enacts a new act that prohibits persons from selling a battery unless it meets the standards, prescribed by regulations made under the act, of being capable of being recycled. The goal is to increase proper disposal and recycling of batteries to keep them out of our landfills and protect our environment.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR
THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY
TO ANIMALS AMENDMENT ACT, 2007
LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA SOCIÉTÉ DE PROTECTION
DES ANIMAUX DE L'ONTARIO

Mr. Runciman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 23, An Act to amend the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act / Projet de loi 23, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société de protection des animaux de l'Ontario.

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. Robert W. Runciman: This is the reintroduction of a bill that amends the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, so that the standards of care in the act for keeping a cat or dog apply generally and are not limited to keeping the animal for breeding or sale.

VISITORS

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to welcome to this Legislature four members of the Ottawa Professional Fire Fighters Association: Peter Kennedy, John Sobey, Erik Leicht and Dean Taylor. They are in the east visitors' lobby.

VISITORS

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have the pleasure today to introduce, in the west gallery, students of the grade 12 history class from PCVS, with their two teachers, Steven Ainslie and Steven Deline. The most famous graduate of PCVS high school in Peterborough is Lester Pearson—we're celebrating the 50th anniversary of his Nobel peace prize.

We also have with us today Mr. Greg Simmons, a captain with the Peterborough fire service. Let's give them a warm welcome to Queen's Park.

VISITORS

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'd like to welcome Stephen Emo, president, from the Collingwood Professional Fire Fighters Association.

VISITORS

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: I'm proud to ask others to join me in welcoming here today Mike Fowler, president of the Welland Professional Fire Fighters Association. He represents a fine community of women and men down in Niagara region.

VISITORS

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'd like to welcome two members of the Thunder Bay Professional Fire Fighters Association, Mr. Eric Nordlund and Mr. Guido Nadin, who are not sitting together today for some inexplicable reason.

1400

VISITORS

Mr. Dave Levac: Point of order: For all of us here, we welcome everyone to the gallery.

VISITORS

Mr. Mike Colle: I'd like to welcome one of the great firefighters from the city of York, Kevin McCarthy, who served with the famous Digger O'Dell, a great firefighter from New Brunswick who served the city of York well.

VISITORS

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'd like to have the House welcome four proud Burlington professional firefighters. We have Paul Cunningham, Dan Vanderslelie, Seandore Toth and Jeff Rock.

VISITORS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I welcome today Donna Dillman on the 67th day of her hunger strike against uranium mining and exploration in Frontenac county, accompanied by Sharon Howarth, Adriana Mugnatto-Hamu and Rita Bijons. I thank them all for attending the Legislature today.

VISITOR

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'd like the House to help me recognize Kyle Marsh, the former president of the Nipissing University student union, who's here today from North Bay.

VISITORS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'd like everyone to join me in welcoming members of the Hamilton Professional Fire Fighters Association, our president, Henry Watson, and Ron Summers.

VISITORS

Hon. James J. Bradley: Since people are welcoming people, I'd like to welcome a delegation of firefighters from the great city of St. Catharines, led by their president, Terry Colburn.

VISITORS

M^{me} France G linas: It is also my pleasure today to welcome a delegation from the Sudbury Professional Firefighters Association and its president, Mr. Marc Gobbo.

VISITORS

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm delighted that we have with us here today Colin Hunter, who's the president of the Guelph firefighters' association, a wonderful group of firefighters.

VISITORS

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I risk insulting my firemen when I don't introduce them, but at this time of year, when everyone is sending out their season's greetings, I want to introduce the newest grandchild to appear on the Van Bommel Christmas card, Katherine Anne Griffiths. Katie, as she's called by her brothers Blake and Nolan, was born in August, and she looks like a Cabbage Patch doll. Her brothers can't wait till she can don skates because they say they need a goalie for the net.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Congratulations from all members.

VISITORS

Mr. Dave Levac: Since it didn't work the last time, let me introduce the president of the professional firefighters, Fred LeBlanc, and Mr. Brian George, the vice-president. Congratulations, gentlemen.

VISITORS

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Because my colleague from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex couldn't and there are so many other people who want to, I think we should welcome not only all the firefighters, but especially those from London, St. Thomas, Strathroy and everywhere else who haven't yet been introduced. Why don't we give them a big round of applause.

WEARING OF PINS

Mr. Mike Colle: I seek unanimous consent to allow all members to wear the Lung Cancer Canada pin in honour of Lung Cancer Awareness Month.

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

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I have to welcome my good friend Warren Scott, from the St. Thomas Professional Firefighters Association, who is in the Speaker's gallery today. Welcome, Warren.

And to anyone who has not been introduced, whether you're a firefighter or a guest, welcome to Queen's Park today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The government House leader—the leader of the official opposition.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: That was wishful thinking on my part, Mr. Speaker.

In any event, a question to the Minister of Community Safety. During Premier McGuinty's time sitting in this chair, your party called for public inquiries on 153 separate occasions. We have many quotes attributed to Mr. McGuinty outlining why he felt a particular inquiry was required.

The Auditor General's report on the failings of the sex offender registry seems to not only fit the bill but exceed what your party in previous years felt was justification for a public inquiry. Minister, will you commit to such an inquiry, and if not, why not?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Thank you very much for the question. No, we will not commit to a public inquiry. The Auditor General has issued his report with regards to the sex offender registry. He suggested some recommendations that would make that registry stronger. My ministry is actively implementing those recommendations.

There were some legislative changes that he believed should be included. We've filed an amendment to Christopher's Law. We will ensure that not only are we satisfied with 95% compliance but we will strive for 100% compliance.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I'll run quickly over some of the Auditor General's findings on the registry: 365 sex offenders walking around our neighbourhoods with women, family and children unaware because of the system's failings; another 360 sex offenders released from federal custody, not included on the registry; close to \$9 million in operational funding for the registry reallocated by the OPP.

Minister, these are serious issues: money diverted, hundreds of sex offenders unmonitored who may well have committed serious crimes against women and children because the system failed them. This cries out for a public inquiry. If your positions in the past were more than specious double-talk, why are you refusing to call one now?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: None of us are happy and none of us suggest that reallocating money from the registry to other priorities is what we would've wanted. The OPP did it in the past. We have a guarantee from Commissioner Fantino that it will not happen in the future.

With regards to sex offenders walking the streets, let me tell you, all convicted sex offenders are not only registered, but they're being tracked.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: We have confidence that Commissioner Fantino will do the right thing, but what the minister is saying is contrary to his party's rhetoric in opposition and their 153 separate calls for public inquiries.

The diversion of \$9 million from a public safety initiative into who knows what, hundreds of sex offenders roaming our streets and neighbourhoods unknown to families, committing who knows how many crimes—that doesn't meet the standard. That is apparently, and shamefully, what you are saying.

Minister, how can you, in good conscience, given your party's past positions and the alarming findings of the Auditor General, stand in your place today and then deny the very clear need for a public inquiry? How can you do that?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I believe it's very, very important to ensure that proper information is given to the people of Ontario. We are taking real action on the recommendations of the Auditor General. But let me answer and be specific on one particular instance and one suggestion that the leader of the official opposition makes with regards to sex offenders roaming rampant in Ontario. Are the 1,060 inmates—700 which were incarcerated and 360 under community supervision in federal custody at the time of the registry's inception—now on the registry? The answer is clear: Yes, they are all on the registry. Let's be very clear: They are all on the registry.

1410

RETAIL SALES TAX

Mr. Tim Hudak: I have a question to the Minister of Revenue. But first, congratulations to the member on her new position as Minister of Revenue.

Minister, yesterday the Auditor General's report showed even more bad news for Ontario taxpayers. Some 35,000 vendors are in default with compliance with retail sales tax, so \$967 million in sales tax are owing—almost a billion dollars. The McGuinty government, despite promises to the contrary, has increased taxes, user fees and hydro rates on the backs of seniors and working families. How can you justify those increases in taxes when you have almost a billion dollars owing in sales tax?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I appreciate the question. Of course, as did all members of the government, I appreciated and welcomed the comments and observations of the Auditor General. I've met with the Auditor General and have assured him of our commitment to

following through on his recommendations. What was clear, when I spoke to the Auditor General, was that the previous government made next to no progress on addressing the auditor's recommendations on the RST program as far back as 2000. Standing in stark contrast to the Conservative record, the McGuinty government has moved the yardstick forward light years. As I discussed with the Auditor General, and as he is well aware, we are implementing a new information technology system that will ensure that no vendors will be left off the system. We are also implementing a new information technology system that will make the timeliness of collection activities more up to date, and we are going to have ongoing follow-up action to collect returns and defaults.

Mr. Tim Hudak: As the minister well knows, the Auditor General points out that the increase in accounts receivable is some 65% since his last audit. So if she thinks an increase in taxes owing is moving forward light years, that certainly does not bode well for the taxpayers of the province of Ontario. Minister, Dalton McGuinty created this new golden oldie of a ministry: a minister, a limo, new political staff and stationery. Please tell me, though, that you're actually going to take concrete action and get to the bottom of this, and when you've found out, please tell me whose heads are going to roll.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I appreciate all the gratuitous comments from the member from Erie—Lincoln, the good old days that you were only too familiar with.

Under the McGuinty government, revenue collection has actually increased by 7%. Of course, there are always opportunities to improve the timeliness of collections, and we have introduced several initiatives that are currently being rolled out that will add to the timeliness and really improve our collections. The collections risk management project will prioritize audits. We are also introducing a risk scoring methodology that will be used to move the right accounts to the right collector for the appropriate collection action. We think that those initiatives, together with the other information technology system that we are putting in place, will greatly increase our revenue collection ability and we will see a vast improvement.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I certainly hope the new minister will be an activist and not an apologist for the mistakes that have been made by your predecessor, and it's seen as a 65% increase in taxes owing. At the same time that you've let almost a billion dollars in sales tax go owing, you're cracking down on small ethnic campus and community newspapers. In fact, one particular newspaper has a million dollars in back taxes that you have now assigned. They do excellent work. Why are you cracking down on these small businesses instead of going after those billion dollars in back taxes?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: As I have noted in my previous response, we are introducing a new information technology that will allow all of our businesses a greater opportunity to pay their taxes in a more timely and easy fashion. I had a briefing this morning with my ministry

staff, who advised me of a new accounts receivable program where we outline for our taxpayers the accounts payable that are still due and owing. It will bring it to their attention on a monthly basis so they will be able to take that into account when they're making their monthly remittance and pay back those accounts receivable that are still outstanding. Together with the information technology, we see a real program in place that is being rolled out through 2008 that will allow our taxpayers greater opportunities to meet their obligations to the province of Ontario.

MANUFACTURING AND FORESTRY SECTOR JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Deputy Premier. The Deputy Premier should know that under the McGuinty government over the last five years no less than seven paper machines have been shut down and thousands of forest sector workers put out of their jobs in the Thunder Bay area. While the loss of thousands of good jobs is bad enough, the human toll in terms of the number of broken families and, sadly, the number of laid-off workers who have committed suicide is far worse. In tomorrow's economic statement, will Ontarians see any new, effective, concrete action from the McGuinty government to sustain Ontario's threatened manufacturing and forest sector jobs?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Of course, I can't comment on specifics that will be in the fall statement tomorrow. Let me say this: The government has already taken enormous steps to assist those communities and families that are not fully participating in Ontario's prosperity. When I reflect on the forestry sector, I think of over \$1 billion that we have invested in that particular sector. That's not to say there isn't more to be done and there isn't more that we can do. We will continue to work with those communities and families that are affected. We will continue to make the kinds of investments that are necessary to help that sector through these difficult times, a sector that, I'll remind the member opposite, is experiencing difficulties throughout North America, a sector that we're prepared to continue to work with in a very positive and proactive way.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The McGuinty government continues to try to pretend that somehow they've put \$1 billion into the forest sector. The fact of the matter is, most forest sector companies look at your so-called program and simply say: "We'll pass. This doesn't address our needs." The minister says that this is an issue affecting everyone. What's really happening is this: Forest sector jobs are leaving communities like Thunder Bay and they're moving to Quebec, they're moving to Manitoba and they're moving to the United States.

But there are some things that this government could do. This government has control over the industrial hydro

rate. That is something which could help to sustain not only forest sector jobs but other resource sector jobs and manufacturing sector jobs. Will we see—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Will we see, in tomorrow's economic statement, an industrial hydro rate that is reasonable and allows manufacturers to continue to sustain jobs in Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Let me just first address the premise of the question, because you suggested that nobody in the forest sector sees our actions as being particularly effective. Jamie Lim, the president of the Ontario Forest Industries Association, said, "Today's announcement is a home run by a government that has done more for the forest industry than any other government."

Interjections.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The leader of the third party laughs at that industry. We're not laughing; we're working hard with—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Would the minister speak through the Chair, please?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Jim Lopez, CEO of Tembec: "Premier Dalton McGuinty has stepped up and done more for this industry than anybody in recent memory. He's lowered wood costs, lowered electricity costs, reduced regulation, and he's been willing to listen."

As long as one family in that sector or any sector is looking for a job, this government will not rest. We will continue to invest and we will continue to receive the support that we have—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The McGuinty government cites Mr. Lopez from Tembec. This would be the same Mr. Lopez who, the next day, announced that they were shutting down a paper machine in Kapuskasing and a mill in Cochrane; the same Jamie Lim who, later on, after that quote, said, "McGuinty government policies are devastating the forest sector and destroying thousands of jobs."

But it's not just the forest sector. Yesterday, I met with representatives of Xstrata, which has very big and substantial mining, smelting and refining operations in Sudbury and in Timmins. They came here for one specific reason: to deliver the message that if the industrial hydro rate goes any further, they will be looking at transferring—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I was wondering if the honourable member could get to the point of how that relates to his initial question in his supplementary, please.

Mr. Howard Hampton: It's about an industrial hydro rate—that if industrial hydro rates go any further, they will be moving jobs out of Ontario.

So I say again to the minister who thinks he can claim credit for everything and blame somebody else for the problems: Are we going to see a reasonable industrial

hydro rate which will allow manufacturers to sustain jobs in Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The fact of the matter is that the price of electricity has gone down under the McGuinty government. In the case of—

Interjections.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Well, I'll also remind the member that in the mining sector the regulated price cap was maintained. But here's what another expert had to say about industrial energy price subsidization. He said, and put it in writing, "Industrial energy price subsidization can be attractive in theory, but tricky in practice. I think it far better to work with industry to lower its energy costs through greater efficiency, not through a"—his word—"scheme of subsidized rates." That was written by a Mr. Howard Hampton in a book called *Public Power* on page 251.

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HOME CARE

Mr. Howard Hampton: To the Deputy Premier: No one is talking about a subsidized rate; we're talking about a reasonable industrial hydro rate.

But I want to ask the Deputy Premier about 200 Hamilton home care workers—who work for the Victorian Order of Nurses and St. Joseph's Home Care, not-for-profit agencies—who found out today that they're going to lose their jobs. Even though their organizations have 100-year reputations of providing good-quality home care, these workers are now going to be out of a job under the cutthroat competition formula for home care that the McGuinty government seems to want to implement now.

Hon. George Smitherman: I thank the honourable member for the question. In the last several years, our government has been in the privileged position of investing billions of dollars in Ontario's public health care system. That has resulted in substantial increased employment. When you employ more than 300,000 individuals, it is possible from time to time that there can be a disruption in their employment relationship. But I'm very, very confident that ongoing opportunities in health care will be available for those individuals.

In each and every one of the 14 community care access centre areas, we have a local board which conducts its processes and asks a variety of players in the local community to offer suggestions about how they would deliver the services. That's an independent process, but at the heart of it, employment in health care is on the rise, particularly related to service delivered in the home as we seek to enhance the capacity of our system to support those who are aging in place.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The Victorian Order of Nurses and St. Joseph's have a 197-year record of credibility of providing good-quality home care in Hamilton. But now the McGuinty government says that their services are no longer needed.

What we're seeing is that under the McGuinty Liberals, just like under the former Conservatives, profit-driven companies are taking over home care, with devastating results for patients and workers. My question is this: Why is the McGuinty government so infatuated with a Conservative, cutthroat-competition model that you used to criticize and say was wrong?

Hon. George Smitherman: It shouldn't surprise individuals who are listening in that the honourable member's story hasn't evolved with the times. He's in the same place that he has always been on this issue, especially when he speaks incorrectly and makes the suggestion that in these relationships the not-for-profit provider always loses business share to a for-profit provider. The circumstances are actually dramatically opposite. In a wide variety of areas, the reverse has been true, where organizations like VON, which is active in a variety of spots in the province of Ontario, have found the opportunity for success in the new model.

We continue to see opportunities. We continue to make investments at the community level. We have every expectation, as we make greater investments, that organizations, including the one that was mentioned today, will find great opportunity for their valued mission to be continued at the community level.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The minister says that I'm wrong in questioning profit-driven, cutthroat competition in home care. At least my position is consistent, unlike McGuinty Liberals, who in 2004, before the election, declared that cutthroat bidding was "causing instability in the home care labour force and in the homes of patients." But after the election, the McGuinty government can't wait to endorse what the Conservatives introduced: cutthroat, profit-driven competition in home care, which reduces workers wages, benefits, pensions, and reduces the quality of care for patients. Can the McGuinty government tell us what is responsible for this sudden reversal after the election, your now infatuation with cutthroat, profit-driven competition in the provision of home care?

Hon. George Smitherman: The honourable member himself, in the question, confided that he was consistently wrong, and he's demonstrated that as he went on. Firstly, wage rates and benefits in that sector are on the rise; they're not on the decline. I did make the assertion, and I'm prepared to back it up in the second of his three questions, that it is not appropriate to suggest that not-for-profit players are losing out at the community level when in fact, in a wide variety of circumstances, they've won back business from the for-profit sector.

We believe in creating the circumstances which allow more Ontarians to receive the benefit of home care that's delivered at home, and that's from a nurse or another provider. They don't have a label on them about whether they're private or whether they're not-for-profit. It is the individual delivering care in the home who does so in an earnest fashion and with love alongside, and we'll continue to invest in the necessary services to support our

Ontarians, including delivering more and more services to them in their home.

1430

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP
AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I have a question for the Attorney General. Earlier this year, the House leader for the NDP, Mr. Kormos, and I sent a letter to your predecessor asking for a police investigation into the slushgate affair: 32 million tax dollars out the door, unaccounted-for, much of it to Liberal Party friends. As you know, the auditor confirmed financial misconduct and rejected every explanation given by the former Minister of Citizenship as to why the misconduct occurred. There has never been an explanation as to why the misconduct occurred or how the improper benefits were sought or bestowed.

The Auditor General, as we know, is limited in terms of what he could and could not investigate. Minister, there is a clear need for a police investigation. Will you call for one?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Indeed, I say to the Leader of the Opposition that you did—co-signed with Mr. Kormos, the member from Welland—send a letter to me. I wrote back as soon as I saw it indicating that I had no such information, that you and every other citizen would know that if you have any information, you know where to take it. I had none, and that's the end of the matter.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I'm not sure the minister read the letter Mr. Kormos and I sent to his predecessor. If he did, he would know there are references in there with respect to parts IX and X of the Criminal Code that deal with property crime and fraudulent transactions in detail, including wilfully supplying inaccurate or misleading information in order to receive funds that would otherwise not be forthcoming; equally, counselling persons or groups to engage in such conduct. Part IV of the Criminal Code also speaks to issues raised by the Attorney General with respect to his report.

Because of the nature of the misconduct involved and the rejected explanations provided to the Auditor General, criminal misconduct remains a potential explanation. Minister, as Attorney General, your duties are owed to the people of Ontario, not the Liberal Party of Ontario, and I ask you to call in the police.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Let me say, clearly and unequivocally, the allegations and imputations made by that member, if he does not have evidence to back them up, are very serious. If you have evidence, take it where you and the other member know they should go. But if you do not, do not suggest to this Attorney General that a letter signed by two MPPs should cause an investigation to be commenced. Do not suggest that this Attorney General will use the office to commence political investigations because you and the member for Welland suggest it. It's time to put up or move on.

FOOD SAFETY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Food. After 46 years, Karl's Butcher and Grocery on Roncesvalles will close, and it will be followed by hundreds of others across this province unless your government changes the 2001 Food Safety and Quality Act. I ask you, Minister, will you act, and will you act expeditiously?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm very happy to get the question from the honourable member, because it provides this government with an opportunity to clarify what we have done. We have placed food quality and safety as a priority. Also, as a government, we have provided additional resources to those facilities that do process meat to access funds, so that they can comply with the new regulations that will enable them to ensure that the product they provide is provided safely to the people and to their customers.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is a small company, not a big one. You are acting at the behest of big companies against small ones in this draconian measure. This small butcher shop would have to spend \$200,000 to renovate. Meanwhile, Toronto Public Health has given them a clean bill of health for 46 years. So I ask again: When will you stop butchering small business in this province?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: A couple of points that I think I need to make. First of all, there is a lot of noise coming from the opposition bench, and I would remind you that you were the government that passed, in the year 2001, this act that she's addressing right now. So you need to pay some attention to your own history—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): A reminder, Minister, to speak through the Chair, please.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: With respect to the issue that the honourable member has raised, I would say to her that the dollars that have been presented by the company—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I have asked that ministry officials contact this operation and indicate to them that as a government, we have set \$25 million aside to support operations—small butcher shops such as this. I have asked that folks at the ministry work with these owners to do all that we can and enable them to access the dollars we have set aside—

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

COMMUNITY AND ETHNIC
NEWSPAPERS

Mr. Vic Dhillon: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Minister, I watched with great interest this morning the press conference held by the coalition of

community and ethnic newspapers. There are many such newspapers in my community, and I know how much they mean to me, my friends and my neighbours. What is the status of the discussions at the government level, Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'd like to thank the member from Brampton West—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop for a moment. There was an exchange of a question and answer, question and answer. There were answers given; you may not be satisfied, and you can have that discussion outside. We have a new question. The Minister of Finance has the floor.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: These community and ethnic newspapers are very important, sir, to many Ontarians. They provide and are a great source of local news, community issues and events. The member will be aware that officials of my ministry have been meeting with these newspapers to try and find a solution, and in a supplementary, I will try to describe in more detail a proposal for the solution that we are looking at.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I thank the minister for his answer, and I agree that a proper balance has to be struck. I look forward to hearing about these details.

I was wondering if you would be able to share with us today what will be done to help these community and ethnic newspapers.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I thank the member for his question, and I'm pleased to announce that I will be recommending regulatory amendments to cabinet to further expand the definition of "newspaper" for the purpose of the RST exemption.

I want to thank the member for Brampton West; the member for Eglinton-Lawrence, Mr. Colle; and the member for Davenport, Mr. Ruprecht—who have worked on this issue ceaselessly. They were there with letters and at meetings. They were not conferences in front of the cameras—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The NDP caucus, please come to order.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: —but they continued to work ceaselessly on this. The proposed regulation will be published on our website tomorrow, subject to consultation, and I'm pleased to announce it will be retroactive, so those newspapers are not affected in a negative way.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Ontarians with developmental disabilities and their families were very unhappy to read the sections in the Auditor General's report dealing with the community accommodation program. The report found repeated examples of beds in government-funded agencies remaining vacant for extended periods of time, often ranging from six to 12 months. These are

beds needed for adults and children with developmental disabilities; yet, even though the beds were empty, your ministry was still paying for them with money that agencies then used for other purposes. Why is your ministry paying agencies for beds they never filled?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, let me thank the Auditor General for his good recommendations and for the work he has done.

Let me say that what happened is unacceptable and we will correct it. It's unacceptable that there are parents waiting to have their loved ones in group homes and that we have beds that are empty for six to nine months. It's unacceptable, and our government will move quickly to correct that and implement a mandatory reporting of vacancies so that they are filled in a timely manner. If you can turn a bed in a hospital in less than 24 hours, I don't see why we cannot do that there.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Thank you, Minister, for those comments. But I suppose the really important thing here is the fact that you would have known for some time through the auditor's reporting mechanism that these kinds of things were actually taking place. So I think it's really important for you to make it very clear what message you can offer to those families whose members then have been frozen out of accommodation that they are entitled to.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: The message I will be giving to the families is that this government, since our election in 2003, is cleaning up the mess you left behind. That's what we're doing. So, again, my ministry will make sure—

Mr. John Yakabuski: How long is it going to take?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Again, I'm saying that this is unacceptable and we will move quickly to correct that. There are families waiting to have their son or daughter moved into a group home, and there are empty beds there. So, as a start, the agency will have to submit a quarterly vacancy report immediately to the ministry. Ministry staff are also developing more stringent requirements for reporting vacant beds—

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

COMMUNITY COLLEGES COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. There are 17,000 part-time college staff, not to mention farm workers, who do not have the right to bargain collectively in Ontario. When will the minister and the McGuinty government put an end to that?

Hon. John Milloy: I appreciate receiving the question from my critic. I'm pleased to say, as the honourable member is aware, that the government intends to recog-

nize collective bargaining rights for part-time college workers as part of the broad review for collective bargaining at colleges that is under way right now. I'm pleased that Kevin Whitaker has been appointed to review the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act, as it has been almost 20 years since its last review. The review will consider the existing act and recommend ways to better serve the needs of students in the college system.

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Mr. Rosario Marchese: The minister can easily right this wrong, this week, on this matter and consult on the rest of the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act to his heart's content.

Ontario is the only province where part-time college workers do not have the right to bargain collectively with their employer. It would be very simple for the minister to change that fact. I could easily give you a copyright for the bill I introduced last year. It's only one page.

There is nothing to consult about on this particular issue. The Supreme Court has ruled on this matter positively. Seventeen thousand workers have been waiting for a long time. Why do you delay, procrastinate and deny college workers' basic rights to bargain collectively today?

Hon. John Milloy: As I said, I'm looking forward to reviewing Mr. Whitaker's report and moving forward on it. But I find it passing strange that the honourable member talks about the bill that he put forward a short while ago and he doesn't make reference to the fact that when the NDP were in power, they introduced legislation dealing with this but never allowed it to get past second reading.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, climate change is a real issue for the constituents of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and, indeed, for all Ontarians.

Right now, leaders, scientists and experts from across the globe, along with Ontario's Minister of Energy, are gathered in Indonesia for the UN conference on climate change. I know that our government has an aggressive and integrated strategy to address climate change. We set targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and we're taking real action to reduce our environmental footprint by investing in public transit, protecting green space, reducing emissions from coal plants, promoting renewable energies and supporting research and innovation.

Why is adaptation to climate change so important?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I thank the member for her question. If we all work together, we can actually make a difference and cut the greenhouse gas emissions that are affecting the future of global warming. Climate change can be less severe.

As was mentioned by the member, Ontario has a strong plan in place to cut our greenhouse gas emissions,

but the greenhouse gases already in the atmosphere will affect our climate. Adaptation is about preparing for how we cope with that change. Scientific experts have told us that anticipated impacts of climate change in Ontario include a drop in the Great Lakes water levels, increased risk to the province's northern forests and species, droughts or severe floods, more invasive pests and species, and increased incidence of poor-quality days.

The recent United Nations Human Development Report highlighted the importance of twin tracking, so not only do we look to climate change but we must mitigate the effects already in our atmosphere.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: Clearly, adaptation is an important element of an overall climate change strategy. I know my farm constituents certainly felt the impact of climate change this past summer. While we work hard at reducing our emissions in greening Ontario, we also need to be prepared for the impact of change on our climate in the future.

Would the minister tell this House what our government is doing to help educate the public and build the needed relationships to adapt to climate change?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: Again I thank the member. The first is that we are committed to a greener Ontario. We are cutting the emissions, but we also know that we have to be prepared for the consequences that we can't avoid. That's why today our government announced the members of the expert panel on climate change—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Toronto-Danforth.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: The panel consists of 11 leading scientists.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Toronto-Danforth, I would just ask you to take your seat, please. Allow the question to be asked and answered.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm going to warn the member from Toronto-Danforth.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Toronto-Danforth, I ask that you take your seat, please. The member from Toronto-Danforth, this is your last opportunity.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I have no choice. I'm going to have to name the member from Toronto-Danforth and ask him to leave the chamber. I was not looking forward to this.

Mr. Tabuns was escorted from the chamber.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would remind the members in the gallery that you are guests of this chamber, and we allow you to participate but not to fully participate by clapping.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to ask that the clock be stopped for a moment, please. I'd ask all members to welcome Mr. David Turnbull from York Mills, a member of the 35th and 36th Parliaments, in the west gallery. Welcome today.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a question for the Minister of Natural Resources. The Auditor General gave a fairly damning report on your ministry in his report yesterday. I quote:

"The ministry did not have complete and current data on moose populations.... Consequently, more hunting tags were issued than the harvest guidelines recommended."

He continues: "A number of our observations suggest that ... the ministry's difficulty in meeting its goal of managing resources for sustainability is reductions in ... financial resources."

In short, the Auditor General's report underscores your government's failure to properly fund the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Since 1996, hunter and angling licensing fees have been used to directly fund fish and wildlife programs. Will you today agree to match those funds and increase funding by \$35 million to ensure the sustainability of our natural—

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

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I thank the member for the question. It's fascinating the decimating—someone spoke a terrible word earlier about what you can do to an event. When you consider what the previous government did to MNR in terms of actually destroying a ministry, and then to have the audacity to turn around and say, "And by the way, you have to fix it"—well, we did. We put another [*inaudible*] into that ministry. And we are working with the stakeholders to make a difference.

There's no question that we have some work that needs to be done. There is a difference between what the population target is and what the estimate is. I've already requested a review of the moose tags and we will do that.

But really, it is unconscionable for that gentleman over there to suggest that since 1996 everything has been wonderful, because you know what? It hasn't been until—

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

Mr. Norm Miller: You've been the government for five years. How long are you going to keep blaming past governments? After four years, our natural resources are at risk because this government continues to deny that there's a problem.

The auditor went on to detail the sad situation you have created for our hard-working conservation officers. Despite your assurance that there are 300 COs, the

Auditor General says that there are only 190 conservation officers in the field. They are responsible for an average of 5,000 square kilometres each. That is an impossible task, particularly when they only get \$75 a week for gas and repairs. Patrols and enforcements are down; that's documented in the report.

If you will not provide more funding for the fish and wildlife program, will you at least commit to increasing direct funding for our conservation officers and to hiring more of them so we can protect our environment?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: As a matter of fact, I just met with the conservation officers in the north as well as recently here in the Legislature. I think the words I heard were, "Thank you. Thank you for restoring the funding that we didn't have before. Thank you for the \$1.6 million that enabled us to do our work. Thank you for finally recognizing the value of those officers and for protecting those officers. Thank you for increasing the canine unit."

There are things that have to be done; there's no question. There's more to be done. But the difference is, we won't leave them out of the equation as you did. We will continue to talk to them and ensure that we work together as we move forward protecting the natural resources of this province.

1450

CONTAMINATED SOIL

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est également pour la ministre des Ressources naturelles. The people of Ontario are proud of the beautiful and pristine French River, la rivière des Français. In fact, most of the river's shores from Lake Nipissing to Georgian Bay have been protected and designated as a provincial waterway park. So why is your ministry using contaminated soil from southern Ontario to cover the MNR landfill site in that area?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Tell me it's not crap.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: Actually, that's not a word I use, sir. It might be one that you would use.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I've heard you use it.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: No, you haven't.

I'm not aware of the situation but I'd be more than happy to follow through on behalf of the member. Sometimes it's really far more expedient if the member would just pick up the phone. Talk to me and I'll work with you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: That may be the difference between that side and this side, as we actually do listen when the phone call comes in.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I wouldn't have wanted to mention it, but there are lots of people from that area who have been calling your office and you haven't been returning the calls.

According to your ministry, contaminated soil may contain road salt which, last week, the Environmental

Commissioner's report documented is toxic to aquatic life. Instead of meeting with local residents and informing them of the nature and source of the contaminated soil, your ministry just hauled it in from southern Ontario, all the way to the French River, as if there wasn't soil still to be found in northern Ontario. I know that northern Ontario is far, but the telephone works and those people are waiting for you to call them back.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I'd like to thank the member for the question. As a matter of fact, the phone does work on this side. Pick up the phone and talk to me. You did not pick up the phone and talk to me. Instead, you thought it would be easier to do the embarrassment thing.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members, speak through the Chair, please.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: The fact of the matter is, I will work with you. I have a track record of doing that. I have not received those phone calls. I'm well known for returning my phone calls and I would have returned them. So I'm quite prepared to sit down with you and work to resolve this situation. All you needed to do was ask.

LAYOFFS

Mr. Bruce Crozier: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. The minister knows that I, like many of my colleagues, am committed to bringing new industry to my area. The high Canadian dollar and global competition have resulted in many manufacturing jobs being lost to places like China and Mexico.

While it's important to encourage new opportunities in the Essex-Windsor region, we must be sure to take care of those who have recently lost their jobs. Over the last 30—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Opposition bench, please come to order.

Mr. Bruce Crozier:—small and medium-sized companies in the area have made employment decisions that have resulted in 1,100 employee layoffs—hard-working people who only want to be able to provide for their families.

Minister, what is our government doing to help these individuals get back on their feet and learn the skills they will need to secure new employment?

Hon. John Milloy: I'd like to thank the member for the question and for his concern about his community.

It's never easy to hear about plant closures or layoffs in any community, but I'm pleased to be part of a government that has successfully implemented the rapid re-employment training service in the member's community. This service provides immediate assistance to workers hit by layoffs and plant closures by responding within one hour of a public announcement of a major downsizing or closing and working with the community, the company and employees to address the situation. This

includes the development of individual action plans for each affected employee to help them return to the workforce as quickly as possible through things like job search assistance, skills upgrading, training and educational counselling, to name just a few. Through this program, the ministry was able to fund the establishment of a comprehensive adjustment committee and action centre for the Windsor-Essex area to provide a single point of entry for laid-off employees from the companies the member referred—

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

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I've been noticing a variety of reports, over the last while, that talk about the future demand for a skilled workforce in Ontario. Despite the shift away from manufacturing in some areas, current trends in Ontario suggest that, like the rest of Canada, we will experience a need for skilled tradespeople in the years ahead.

According to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, over half of Ontario's skilled labour force is expected to retire within the next 15 years. Without a skilled labour force to meet the future employment demands of Ontario's industries, the province's prosperity, and the average Ontarian, will be impacted. What is the government doing to ensure that the province has the skilled labour necessary to support and attract investment?

Hon. John Milloy: Our government has made higher education and training a priority. Through the Reaching Higher plan, we've invested \$6.2 billion, one of the largest investments in post-secondary education and training in 40 years. In terms of the apprenticeship issue—allowing for more apprenticeships—some of the measures we have introduced include the apprenticeship training tax credit, which has been extended to January 1, 2012; expanding academic upgrading options for early high school leavers; an apprenticeship scholarship; an employers' signing bonus; an expansion of the pre-apprenticeship program; continued increased participation in the Ontario youth apprenticeship program; and combined industry-supported apprenticeship training with college education through the co-op diploma apprenticeship program. We are on target to increase the number of new apprenticeship registrants to 26,000 in 2007-08.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. The Auditor General's report reveals new information on a problem that commuters from Thornhill and neighbouring GTA-905 communities are all too well aware of: The GO train system doesn't work. The Auditor General's report states that during the audit period, 160 trains were cancelled and 3,400 were delayed. The government says its Ontario-doesn't-move-until 2020 plan" will fix GO Transit, the subway system and gridlock. The truth is that this plan only comes into effect in a meaningful way in 2011. This government

operates on the absurd notion that promising something is the same as doing it. But it's not. When will this government turn promise into action and do something about the state of gridlock rather than talk about it?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I should tell members in the House that I heard a rumour from somebody—a very reliable source—that the member wanted to be the transportation critic. But may I say that the member for Durham is very competent at that, and I think he would feel he was being pushed aside. However, that has nothing to do with the question.

May I say in my answer that you will no doubt recall, in your long history in the Conservative Party, that the previous Conservative government got completely out of public transit, totally abandoned public transit, refused to put dollars and cents into it when that was required. As a result, it fell into disrepair and went back several steps. Our government has taken several actions to ensure that it's improved, and I will certainly expand upon that in my supplementary answer.

Mr. Peter Shurman: The truth is that as this government dithers, problems facing commuters in Thornhill and throughout the GTA-905 on GO Transit and the subway get worse. Approximately 2,000 of GO Transit's 3,400 delays occurred during peak hours and affected roughly 2.6 million riders. Furthermore, expansion of service is being based on year-to-year funds from provincial, federal and municipal governments rather than on sound long-term planning based on ridership demand. Will the minister take the necessary action today to fix GO Transit, or is your plan to wait until 2011, when you can pass this province's woes on to your successor?

1500

Hon. James J. Bradley: I want to say first of all that since 2003—and I know you'd like to hear this—this provincial government has invested \$4.9 billion in public transit, including \$1.8 billion in GO Transit. That's compared to the previous Conservative government abandoning GO Transit. The province is continuing to support GO Transit by committing \$457 million to its capital and operating costs. Go Transit opened four new stations in the province, for instance: East Gwillimbury, Mount Pleasant, Kennedy and Lisgar.

My friend the Minister of Health tells me that the previous Conservative government actually buried a tunnel where there was going to be public transit taking place. Our government is moving expeditiously and with cash on the table to ensure that GO Transit is improved, unlike the previous Conservative government—

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

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Health. A few minutes ago, I sent you over a copy of a letter which I wrote to you on February 16, 2007. Some nine months have gone by and we have not had a response to date, so I'm asking you here in the House.

The letter outlines serious concerns of a constituent who is in dire need of specific physiotherapy treatments. I believe you're aware of this constituent; she has met with your staff on numerous occasions. You have not responded, but ministry staff has communicated with my constituent and no resolution has been found. Are you prepared, as the minister, to intervene in this case and find a resolution for this woman who is living in pain?

Hon. George Smitherman: I appreciate the correspondence from the member, and I do apologize if an appropriate response hasn't been determined to date. I will, as a matter of immediate priority after question period, take that up and endeavour to get the honourable member an answer to the correspondence as soon as possible.

Mr. Michael Prue: My constituent is a woman who lives in considerable pain. She requires physiotherapy, but unfortunately, being the recipient of ODSP, she is not in a financial position to obtain it. She has gone to the LHINs and the LHINs have told her that there is money available, but when she goes to the hospital they tell her there is no money available. Can you tell me, is it your government's wish that an ODSP recipient, through no fault of her own, is being forced to live in pain to the point that she has now met with your government officials for the past 20 months—to no resolution at all?

Hon. George Smitherman: I haven't had a chance to examine this individual case. Obviously, with 13 million Ontarians, it would be somewhat challenging to be on top of each one of these. As I mentioned to the honourable member in my first answer, I will endeavour to get him an answer to the correspondence. That should address the other matters of content in his questions.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. As the new MPP for Kitchener–Conestoga, I know the strength of the people in the Kitchener–Waterloo region and in south-western Ontario. There are hard-working families, up-and-coming students, and seniors who have dedicated their lives to the region.

Sometimes, however, there are people who need our help. I know our government is providing this help: We're raising the minimum wage to \$10.25 by 2010, we introduced the \$2.1-billion Ontario child benefit, and we're back in the business of affordable housing.

Would the minister responsible for housing tell me, what has your ministry done to improve affordable housing in Kitchener–Conestoga and Kitchener–Waterloo region?

Hon. Jim Watson: Let me just begin by thanking the honourable member and congratulating her on her very first question in the Legislature.

I'm particularly proud of the work that we have done in the Waterloo region when it comes to affordable housing. Since 2005, under the affordable housing program signed by the McGuinty government and the previous federal government, \$27.7 million for 947 rental and

supportive housing units that have come into existence, \$2.2 million for 160 housing allowance units and \$1.2 million for 133 home ownership units. We have much more work to do, but I'm very proud of the strong voices for affordable housing that we've seen come from this member from Kitchener–Conestoga and the member from Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I'm pleased to hear the minister's response and I'm proud to be part of a government that is helping Ontarians in need, but I know, and I know that the minister knows, that there is more to do. That's why our party committed to a long-term affordable housing strategy in our re-election platform.

It seems to me that some members of this House don't seem to understand that we, as a government, are committed to building more affordable housing in Ontario. The member from Parkdale–High Park mentioned in a recent interview on Global Television that some issues were not mentioned in our throne speech. She specifically said that housing was not mentioned. I would like the minister to set the record straight and tell the members of this House and all Ontarians just what this government plans to do to provide affordable housing to those in need in our province.

Hon. Jim Watson: I'm glad the member pointed out to the member from Parkdale–High Park—I too was watching Focus Ontario and nearly fell off my couch when I heard the member say that housing was not mentioned; another example of the la-la land caucus over there. They just make things up time and time again, and—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask the member to take his seat, please.

The tone has certainly risen quite a bit in here today. Maybe it's everyone being anxious to get out of here, but I would just ask that you not use phrases that light a fire under the opposition side and bring the tenor in the House down.

Hon. Jim Watson: I know sometimes the truth hurts when it comes to the NDP, because in the speech from the throne it was clearly indicated, and I quote, “boosting the minimum wage to \$10.25 by 2010, increasing child care spaces and providing more affordable housing.”

Unlike the previous government and unlike the NDP, who did virtually nothing for housing, the McGuinty government is back in the business of providing affordable housing in Ontario.

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition that was sent to me from Susan's delicatessen and imported gifts in Markdale.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Grey Bruce Health Services–Markdale hospital is the only health care facility between Owen Sound and Orangeville on the Highway 10 corridor;

“Whereas the community of Markdale has been promised a new state-of-the-art hospital in Markdale;

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care announce as soon as possible its intended construction date for the new Markdale hospital and ensure that the care needs of the patients and families of our community are met in a timely manner.”

I've signed this.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It bears the signatures of quite a number of the GTA/905 Healthcare Alliance, and I would like to read it. It reads as follows:

“Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

“Whereas ‘day-surgery’ procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area, and enable greater access to ‘day surgery’ procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed.”

This is an important initiative for western Mississauga. I'm pleased to support the petition, affix my signature and ask page Simon to carry it for me.

1510

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. John O'Toole: I am pleased to present a petition which reads as follows:

“Whereas many vehicles on Highway 12 are continuing to travel at speeds exceeding the speed limit through the village of Greenbank;

“Whereas residents in the community are deeply concerned over the safety of pedestrians along this provincial highway in Greenbank because of the high speeds and volume of traffic”—the incident in May 2007 of the death of young Damon Fewer is a case in point;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request that the Ministry of Transportation proceed immediately with the following safety improvements:

“—repainting the crosswalk;

“—a new overhead flashing light crosswalk sign;

“—the installation of flashing lights at the entrance and exit to the village of Greenbank to the north and to the south alerting drivers to the reduced speed;

“—consideration for this area to be designated a community safety zone.”

I am pleased to present this petition on behalf of my constituents in the community of Greenbank in the riding of Durham.

BREASTFEEDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yesterday I presented a petition in support of breastfeeding, and today I'm presenting another one from a group from around Ajax. It goes:

“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 supports 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 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.”

Breastfeeding is a natural occurrence, but it is not easy. Women need help, and this is what these petitions are all about. I fully support and endorse them and add my signature.

REFUNDABLE CONTAINERS

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I promise that this petition will not read like a novel. It's addressed to the Legislative

Assembly of Ontario and especially the Minister of the Environment. It reads as follows:

“Whereas we find lots of pop cans and beer bottles in our parks plus children's playgrounds;

“Whereas it is therefore unsafe for our children to play in these parks and playgrounds;

“Whereas many of these bottles and cans are broken and mangled, therefore causing harm and danger to our children;

“Whereas Ontarians are dumping about a billion aluminium cans worth \$27 million into landfill sites every year instead of recycling them;

“Whereas the undersigned want to see legislation passed to have deposits paid on cans and bottles, which would be returnable and therefore not found littering our parks and streets;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, strongly urge and demand that the Ontario government institute a collection program that will include all pop drinks, Tetra Pak juices and can containers to be refundable in order to reduce littering and protect our environment” at the same time.

I'm delighted to sign this document because I agree with it 100%.

PROSTATE CANCER

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: A petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas prostate specific antigen (PSA) tests are frequently used to screen patients for prostate conditions, including cancer; and

“Whereas there is currently a double standard because men usually pay to have a PSA test as part of a routine medical examination, while women have all cancer screening tests covered by OHIP; and

“Whereas for Ontario men, prostate cancer is the most frequently diagnosed type of cancer;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, urge the province of Ontario to review its policy on funding PSA testing for men with a view to including this as a service wholly covered by OHIP.”

I have affixed my signature; I am in full support of this petition.

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.

“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 once again is 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 this discrimination against Ontario on the part of Stephen Harper is nothing new; and

“Whereas we’ve seen Stephen Harper take a dismissive attitude toward our cities by failing to heed the call of Canada’s mayors for 1% of the GST for municipalities; and

“Whereas the Stephen Harper government has demonstrated an apathetic attitude for the challenges the sluggish US economy and a strong Canadian dollar are placing on our manufacturing sector by failing to come up with a plan to aid the McGuinty government’s effort in this regard; and

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

“Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, congratulate the Premier for undertaking his initiative.”

I agree with this petition, affix my signature to it and give it to page Marisa, who is with me today.

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 agree with this and encourage the Liberal government to move quickly on this.

GYPSY MOTHS

Mr. Tim Hudak: I have a petition about protecting Ontario properties from gypsy moth infestation. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas gypsy moths are a dangerous pest because they can nest in more than 500 different native plant species; and

“Whereas professional arborists have estimated that thousands of acres in Ontario have been deforested by gypsy moths; and

“Whereas many properties in Binbrook, West Niagara, Haldimand and surrounding areas have been dramatically harmed by gypsy moths; and

“Whereas the province of Ontario has previously funded a cost-shared gypsy moth spraying program;

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

“That Ontario’s Ministry of Natural Resources immediately fund a gypsy moth spraying program to assist landowners and municipalities attempting to control further gypsy moth infestation.”

Beneath the signatures of Robert Rolfe and Diane Cormier, I affix mine in support.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: This petition is to the Parliament of Ontario. It’s about the universal right to health care and reads as follows:

“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 as well.

1520

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. John O’Toole: It’s important to recognize the tragic event that happened on May 22, 2007, in the village of Greenbank. The community has raised this petition, which I’m pleased to present on their behalf, which reads:

“Whereas many vehicles on Highway 12 are continuing to travel at speeds exceeding the speed limit through the village of Greenbank;

“Whereas residents in the community are deeply concerned over the safety of pedestrians along this provincial highway in Greenbank because of the high speeds and volume of traffic;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request that the Ministry of Transportation proceed immediately with the following safety improvements:

“—repainting the crosswalk;

“—a new overhead flashing-light crosswalk sign;

“—the installation of flashing lights at the entrance and exit to the village of Greenbank to the north and to the south alerting drivers to the reduced speed; and

“—consideration for this area to be designated a community safety zone.”

I'm pleased to present this to page Nikita to present to the Chair.

LOTTERY WINNINGS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I have a petition here that was drawn up by Madame Racine from Devonshire Avenue in Iroquois Falls. It has the signatures of some 119 people from the area, and it has to do with lotto winnings. I introduce that petition on behalf of Madame Racine and the people of Iroquois Falls.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: This petition has to do with employment insurance benefits. It says, “Fairness for Ontario Workers,” and it's to the Parliament of Ontario.

“Whereas the federal government's employment insurance surplus now stands at \$54 billion;

“Whereas the federal employment insurance program's eligibility rules are responsible for people slipping into poverty while the federal government uses the money to finance tax cuts for corporations;

“Whereas the employment insurance eligibility rules punish and discriminate against Ontario's unemployed;

“Whereas 70% of the province of Ontario workers are not eligible for employment insurance benefits; therefore, they are excluded from employment-insurance-funded training programs;

“Whereas 78% of people who lose their jobs in Toronto do not qualify for employment insurance benefits;

“Whereas a worker in Ontario has to work more hours to be eligible and also is unfairly entitled to less weeks of assistance compared to workers in other parts of Canada;

“Whereas the present employment insurance rules and criteria unfairly punish newcomers and are a major cause of poverty for immigrants;

“Whereas the Canadian Institute of Actuaries has called upon the federal government to create a new, independent body responsible for the employment insurance system modelled on the Canadian pension plan; and

“Whereas the employment insurance surplus should belong to its contributors and be managed as a social insurance program instead of a cash cow for the federal government;

“We, the undersigned, request that the members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support the creation of an independent arm's-length agency that would eliminate the unfairness to Ontario workers and ensure that employment insurance premiums go back to help unemployed workers and not be used to fund the federal government's tax cuts for corporations.”

I know this petition has been long, but I agree with this 100%, and I sign it delightfully.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Today during question period, we had the government ask ministers questions of two separate ministries. The answers appeared to be somewhat ministerial—ministry or regulation changes within those ministries.

I believe that the announcements, or what appeared to have been announcements, should have been more appropriately made during ministerial statements. I would ask the policy of the House in reviewing this and looking to ensure that the answers that ministers are making are not policy or regulatory or governmental changes and that they're actual answers to questions and not making announcements during question period.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I will take the member's point of order under advisement. We'll use this opportunity to review the Hansard for the specific questions, and I will endeavour to rule at my earliest convenience to the member.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HEALTHY FOOD FOR HEALTHY SCHOOLS ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 PORTANT SUR UNE ALIMENTATION SAINNE POUR DES ÉCOLES SAINES

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 11, 2007, on the motion for second reading of Bill 8, An Act to amend the Education Act / Projet de loi 8, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for London–Fanshawe.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the chance and opportunity to speak in support of Bill 8. Before I start, this is the first time since the election that I'm standing to speak and support any bill or any issue.

Before I start talking about the bill, I want to thank the people of London–Fanshawe for giving me the chance and the opportunity to represent them again for the next four years.

Hon. Jim Watson: They're good people, smart people.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Thank you, Minister of Municipal Affairs.

It's important in this place to bring issues concerning our people in the province of Ontario. Today we're debating a very important bill, Bill 8, An Act to amend the Education Act, which is proposed by our Minister of Education and supported by our Premier, Dalton McGuinty, to ban trans fats from high schools. I think that's a very important initiative.

As you know, in our first mandate, our Minister of Education banned junk food from elementary schools. I had the chance back then to visit the school with the previous Minister of Education, Gerard Kennedy, when we made the announcement. It was in London, Ontario. We talked then about the importance of banning junk food from public education. It was a very important announcement back then, and that announcement, I remember, had a lot of positive feedback from the public—parents, students and teachers—because it's important to educate our kids, our students, to learn how to eat properly and healthily.

Now this year, in the second mandate, we're expanding our initiative to go to the high schools. It's also an important initiative, because as you know, the majority of our students, our kids, tend to enjoy—like everybody else—chocolate bars, chips, pop and all junk food. I think it's not appropriate for them and not healthy for them. As you know, when people eat and become obese, they become unhealthier, and when they become unhealthier, it affects their ability to study and to be able and productive in the future.

As everybody in Ontario knows, we work hard to build the future of our province, and the future cannot be built by us because we're already—I'm middle-aged and some of us are older, but we have to invest in the future of our province, in our students, our youth.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Speak for yourself.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: It's the reality. We cannot escape from reality, member for Davenport. You know what? We've passed the era of youth. I guess now we are adults, and we have to invest in the future.

Investing in the future cannot be less than investing in our students, in our schools. Therefore, it's important for us to invest in our students by banning all junk food from high school cafeterias, by banning the vending machines that carry all the junk food, and replacing it with healthier food.

We listened to a lot of stakeholders, the people who make the food. It will affect their sales. As a matter of fact, maybe it will increase them. Also, the cost of this healthier product will be the same. There won't be any additional cost.

Educators will welcome this initiative because it will give them the chance and ability to control the students. As you know, when people eat sugar they become very hyperactive, and we'll be unable to control them. Also, when they eat a lot, they become lazy, fat and obese, and

that will affect their ability to study. So all of these initiatives are to create a good future for our students, for our province, because the future of this province depends very much on investing in our students.

1530

I think this is a great initiative. We listened to many different speakers who spoke about this issue yesterday. I was listening to my friend from the NDP Mr. Marchese when he was criticizing the bill. I don't know why. I read the bill in detail; I went through it step by step. I think there are a lot of positive issues in that bill; it's a very fundamental, important bill. We should all come out and support it, because no government in the past came forward and introduced such a bill that will affect our students, affect our future and invest in our students by creating good and healthy habits. If this bill passes, they're going to create a fundamental base of good habits for our students: to learn how to eat and be healthy—and be healthy in the future. Also, it will save our health care a huge amount of money.

Last year, the Minister of Education, with the Minister of Health Promotion—back then it was Minister Watson—came in with a good initiative in which many high schools participated, where a healthy day and a healthy meal was provided by many high schools in the province of Ontario to introduce healthy habits and healthy food.

I had the chance to go to many schools in my riding, and it was a good initiative. I went to—

Mr. Mike Colle: Name some of them. Let's hear about some of these great schools. What are the names of these schools?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Yes, Montcalm Secondary School in my riding and Clarke Road Secondary School in my riding. They both got awards from both the Minister of Education and the Minister of Health Promotion back then. It was a great initiative, where some schools brought apples, some schools brought healthy food, juice instead of pop, and milk instead of chocolate bars. All these habits have left a great impact on many of our students.

At Clarke Road Secondary School, they said, "We want to introduce a different program," which was supported by our government, to introduce a breakfast for all the students in the morning. It was a good breakfast, a healthy breakfast. If you provide breakfast for some people who do not have the chance to eat at home because they have to come to school early, or for some reason they have no money to buy food or buy breakfast, they get a chance to sit with their colleagues, their friends, and eat, socialize and get a healthy meal—

Mrs. Liz Sandals: And they learn better.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: And they learn better. When you have a full stomach, you have an ability to learn better.

I think it's a very good initiative. This initiative back then was welcomed by many different high schools across Ontario, I believe strongly. As recommended by many different high schools, our minister introduced that bill this year, to expand it to all the schools across the

province, as supported by the government. If this bill passes, it can eliminate all the trans fats from any high school in the province of Ontario—also from the vending machines. It's very important.

Mr. Mike Colle: I want to hear about some of the schools in London, elementary schools.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Elementary schools? Most of the elementary schools, the member from Eglinton—Lawrence, are doing excellent. They're happy.

Mr. Mike Colle: Name me some in London; I don't know any.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Many different schools in my riding—St. Francis School, Wilton Grove Public School—participated in this event. And guess what? The parents were very, very happy, and the teachers were even happier because lots of chocolate bars, lots of junk food, lots of chips and all this were replaced by healthier food. Instead of giving them a pop, we give them milk; instead of giving them chips, give them—

Mr. Mike Colle: An apple.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Maybe an apple. Instead of giving them something like a burger, we give them something healthier with less fat in it—

Mr. Mike Colle: Carrots.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Yes, a carrot, an apple, juice and all this stuff we've introduced. It's a great initiative because it's very important, as I mentioned, to control the students, control their behaviour and give them less chocolate, less junk. When they become less obese, they have the ability to learn more and to be healthier.

Mr. Mike Colle: Tzatziki is good for them, right, tzatziki and tabbouleh?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: All of that is healthy food; it's very important. I was listening to the Premier the other day, and he said it doesn't mean that we're going to ban all trans fat from every market in Ontario. No, we want to start in the institutions, in the places in which we raise our students, raise our youth, to give them good habits that they can take with them in the future, which gives them the chance to be healthier and stronger. There is also less of a chance to visit hospitals, which means that the parents will be happier because their kids are less obese, more active, and they go fewer times to the hospital. It also gives them a chance to be able to study and to be—

Interjection: London Health Sciences Centre?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Of course, we have a lot of good hospitals in London and great centres which provide service to almost 1.5 million people. We have good education centres in the University of Western Ontario, Fanshawe College, and we have great high schools in the city of London. They do an excellent and wonderful job, especially in my riding: Montcalm school, Clarke Road and John Paul II, and many other institutions that provide good service.

I think this bill is going to help them and give them the support to build a good fundamental basis for students in the future, to make them healthier, to make them able, to make them strong and to make them fit for their future.

All of us in this place are here to be great advocates on behalf of our youth, to build a good future for our kids, a healthy future.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. By the way, you look good in that chair. I wish you all the luck. Thank you again for allowing me to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, I'd like to respond to the member. The action, or lack of action, by the Liberal government over the last four years is easy to talk about, actually, because back in the last term of government they promised that they would ban junk food; in fact, the record speaks that they made the statement but they never made the change. Really, virtually nothing has changed. That being said, every person in the House, I can presume, would be in favour of making sure that children have proper nutrition, following the guidelines that are set by the federal government, and improving on that.

So the argument here is about announcing things and the Premier and others being at these photo opportunities and saying things. I think when you look at the detail—and I'll be speaking here shortly—you wonder, are they actually going to deliver anything?

Mr. Marchese from Trinity—Spadina spoke yesterday. I think it's worthy, people looking up the history. He follows that file very well and disclosed how little they've actually done on the nutrition side. The early start program and the breakfast program that was begun by the grocery industries—the GIFT program, I think it's called—was done by partnership of the government, when we were government, and the grocery industry, to start these nutritional breakfasts.

I just want to see one of these promises be demonstrated in a deliverable, something that our children, our youth, our teachers, our educators, can actually take hold of and say, "Here's a promise and here's an action plan." That's what's most disappointing here: to trivialize the actions and sincerity of members here in saying one thing and having the photo op and the press release—and then waiting helplessly, thinking something's changed and, indeed, nothing's changed.

We know that type 2 diabetes is on the rise. We know that the whole issue of health care, broadly, and the nutritional relationship with that, is something that there isn't much of a plan for, that I see, not in this bill and not in anything they've said.

M^{me} France Gélinas: This bill certainly would lead one to believe that great changes are about to come. We all recognize that the obesity epidemic within our youth and our children is something that needs action. But when the Liberals link a bill that has so little in it to an issue that is so important, it kind of lets the people of Ontario down. Really, all that the bill is doing is that they now have the power to set a target for the content of trans fats. That's it. That's all.

We all know that there are lots of foods that are very unhealthy, lots of junk food out there that has no trans fat content but is still very bad for the health of our children.

So to link the two and lead the people of Ontario to believe that by passing this bill we will have healthy food in our schools is completely false. The two are related a tiny bit, but very little.

Obesity needs to be addressed, and yes, we need healthy foods in our schools, but we need way more than what this bill is trying to address. We need to ban junk food completely. We need to ban trans fats completely from what is sold in the cafeterias and vending machines of our schools, and this is not happening. This is not in this bill. Again, it's like linking two pieces that have a small link but are not there.

1540

Child obesity is a crisis. My colleague was talking about type 2 diabetes, which is also a crisis. It is so easy to make the link between the lack of physical activity, the lack of nutritious food. Often stress and poverty are directly linked to type 2 diabetes.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further questions and comments.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Madam Speaker, and congratulations on your appointment. I know you'll do a wonderful job.

The member from London—Fanshawe articulated very well in his remarks that Bill 8 is a historic piece of legislation in the province of Ontario, banning trans fats.

I know when I get the opportunity to speak with Sylvia Terpstra, who's the director of education for the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board, Mr. John Mackle, the director of education for the Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board, and even my wife, Karan, who's the vice-principal in St. Anne's school in Peterborough—she just took over that job. She's doing a great job as vice-principal. I know she's still hard at work. She'll be there till 5 or 5:30 this evening, working with her students. When I've had the opportunity to chat with her in depth about this issue, and her fellow teaching colleagues within the separate school board of Peterborough, they're on board. They see this as a very progressive piece of legislation that is much needed in Ontario.

I took note yesterday and listened carefully to the member from Newmarket—Aurora when he made his remarks on behalf of the opposition. I rather thought that was the start of his leadership campaign. I know he's concerned because he's hearing the pitter-patter of a number of people behind him. He thinks he's going to be first out of the gate, but I could see he was taking that opportunity yesterday to articulate his leadership concerns and not really talking about this bill that is so important to Ontario.

Madam Speaker, if you just take the opportunity to look at the explanatory notes with regard to this bill, they lay out very clearly, in two paragraphs, what this legislation is intended to do. I really commend the Minister of Education and her parliamentary assistant, the member from Guelph, who has a lot of experience in dealing with school boards across this province. She knows instinctively why this bill is good for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further questions and comments?

Response?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I want to thank all members from both sides who commented on my speech. I want to repeat what I said in my speech: I think this is a very important bill. I want to compare, and when we compare, we have to compare apples to apples. I listened to the member from Nickel Belt who was talking about physical activities and compared it to banning trans fats from schools, which are two different issues. The minister and the Premier were very clear on this issue: "We're banning trans fats from schools." It has nothing to do with physical activity programs. That's a totally different, separate issue altogether.

When we introduced the first bill in elementary schools, we had almost 90% to 95% voluntary participation from schools across Ontario who were participating in that program. The parents were happy and on board. And you know what? That's excellent. That's why we expanded it to high schools.

I think it's very important to start in high school—where we educate our kids about many different things—and give them the education about how to be healthier when we ban all fat and trans fat and junk food from schools and introduce good, healthy food to them. Then when they get used to it, they can continue in the future to expand that habit to their kids when they get married.

I think it's good when we will build a healthy province. That's what it's all about, building a healthy province.

Madam Speaker, you know how much health care costs us in the province. So many people are obese in this province. Obesity causes diabetes and so many different illnesses and costs health care a tremendous amount of money. We're doing it for many different reasons: first, to build a good future with healthy, able people, and also to save money for health care, to support the education system, the transportation system, the infrastructure system in Ontario.

I think it's our duty in this province and in this place to introduce good bills and good strategies to protect people in Ontario. I think the Minister of Education is doing an excellent job. That's why I'm supporting the bill and I hope everyone from both sides supports the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. Further debate.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and again, I congratulate you on your new appointment as the Acting Speaker of the Legislature. I'm sure you'll do an excellent job. I know—your performance of the past is a predictor of the future—you'll certainly be firm and fair, which is good; actually, very firm today in question period.

That being said, I want to say at the beginning that the issue is not substantively that anyone I can respect here would be against reducing or, indeed, eliminating trans fats. I think it should be clear at the beginning of anything we say that we're supportive of the idea, the goal,

the laudable objective. Again, in the limited time I'm given, it's really more about process.

The process I'm referring to was very expertly addressed and responded to by our critic, Frank Klees, as well as by Mr. Miller, the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, yesterday. I may even refer to some of his notes to make the very points that we should repeatedly inform the people of Ontario that we're dealing with a situation of government by photo ops. They have the photo op and make the announcement, but there's no substantive delivery. I will get to the point of Bill 8—many members are making the same points, so it's important to broaden the address here.

The trans fat, obesity issue, we all agree, needs a consistent and well-researched plan. Let's say it's related to health care. It's a huge piece; I understand that. Whether it's on the side of obesity—the discussion around that—which is a contributing factor, or chronic disease—that's been talked about—this particular bill is just one small part of having a proper nutrition program.

How did they look at health care? When you look at the government in 2003, in all fairness, they felt there were some things that had to be addressed—having more money to spend to fix some of the problems. So they implemented the health tax, and \$2 billion to \$3 billion a year of revenue came in to the McGuinty government from the health tax.

Is health care any better? We're hearing about the Brampton hospitals, we're hearing about hospitals in my riding, there are fewer doctors, there are fewer nurses, and yet we're paying more and getting less. This is why it consistently seems that if you drill down and study what is delivered for what we're paying, you get seriously disappointed.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: I don't want to repeat things, but some of the members here are causing me some distraction, which is fine. What is troubling is that we're getting into a predictable routine and a predictable performance of a government in its second term, with a tone of arrogance about it. It makes an announcement that sounds good. It's got the polling support—people all support getting rid of trans fat—and other jurisdictions are doing it. They do the photo op with the Premier, the minister and other people. Mr. Marchese, from Trinity–Spadina, was there yesterday and said there was nothing in it. It was like opening up an empty lunch bag. There was nothing in the announcement. I think it's important for people to just relate promises made and promises not delivered. I don't want to be critical—it sounds so negative to point out the truth.

Here's what it says. In fairness, with your indulgence, I'm going to read the explanatory notes, and the people of Ontario will decide for themselves: “The bill amends the Education Act to add provisions regulating”—that's a key word—“the trans fat content of all food and beverages sold in a school cafeteria.” So they're going to initiate more red tape and regulation for principals who are already buried with keeping kids in school, testing,

blah, blah, blah—all that stuff. Very few teachers I know have 20 in the elementary grades. I saw one on TV Ontario the other night, saying they haven't met that 2003 promise of having 20 or fewer in the elementary grades.

1550

This goes on to say, “The Minister may make regulations exempting from the trans fat standards any food or beverage in which the trans fat content originates exclusively from ruminant meat or dairy products.” Ruminant meat is actually dairy cattle. Ruminants digest in their stomachs—and milk products, which is cattle. That could be hamburgers. It could be a lot of stuff and things; who knows? I'm just saying that dairy products are again something that we're encouraging children to have for the right calcium and other nutritious elements within them. So it's this idea of saying one thing and doing another, because, really, they're exempting by regulation ruminant meat and/or dairy products.

It goes on to say, “The bill also adds a requirement for boards...” Now, the school boards are downloading—that's what they used to tell us, “downloading.” They can't run what they've got now. They can't have enough special-ed resources. Kids with autism and other issues are still unresolved issues and they're adding more of these regulatory issues. They're downloading for boards to ensure that food and beverages sold in vending machines comply with the nutrition standards set out in the regulations.

Well, they said they were going to ban junk foods. You go down the school hall and you've got the chips and the pop. It's still there. Nothing has changed. They're going to eliminate this again. Many school boards are out fundraising millions of dollars a year across the province because there's not enough money in education. Some of the money they get is from those vending companies, whether it's pop or other things by vending, and they get a share of the profits. If you're going to force the school boards to take those profit-making vending machines out of the school, give them the extra money. Fix the problem. Don't just shuffle it off, and now you've got a bunch of red tape and people running around checking lunch bags. It makes no sense.

“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, they're going to have hotdog day; it will be an exemption for these special days. I think if you're really sincere about banning trans fats, give us the list, and as of this date, they can't be allowed in the school. Inform and educate parents and have a consistent implementation plan. I can't wait for the public hearings on this. The administrivia around this will cost more than the obesity program itself.

I would say that it's important now to put on the record here—I just took the time to look up some of the non-partisan comments on what trans fats are. We should all know that. What I'm charged and we're all charged

with doing is expanding our understanding of this untoward product.

Types of fats in foods: unsaturated fats, monosaturated fats, polyunsaturated fats. Then there's trans fats and there's omega 3, omega 6 and omega 9. Then there's saturated fat and there's interestified fats, and there's also fatty acids—

Hon. David Caplan: Spell it.

Mr. John O'Toole: I can spell it if the minister would like to know, because I know he has difficulty with the English language. But he's a very capable minister. He's actually here most of the time and reads the speeches that are written for him. But there's fatty acids and there's essential fatty acids as well.

Now, when you get to the one component there, the trans fat—we're trying to say that not all fats are bad for you. They say omega fats are good for you and they recommend it in eggs and other things, but the issue in one of the York boards now is that eggs have an allergy aspect to them like peanuts. Some children have allergic reactions and this whole food discussion needs to be expanded to allow boards—to help them, give them the resources to do the job to keep the schools safe for children to make sure that they have nutritious meals.

“Trans fat is the common name for a type of unsaturated fat with trans isomer fat acids. Trans fats may be monosaturated or polyunsaturated.

“Most trans fats consumed today are industrially created by partially hydrogenating plant oils, a process developed in the early 1900s” and first commercialized as the product known as Crisco. The goal of partially hydrogenating is to add hydrogen atoms to unsaturated fats, making them more saturated. These more saturated fats have a higher melting point, making them attractive for baking and extending shelf life.

Another particular class of trans fats is vaccenic acid, occurring in trace amounts in meat and dairy products from ruminants. These are the two trans fats that are excluded. It's a bit technical, so I think education is an important first step in all of this.

A very important step: depoliticizing that they're taking the lead in trans fats, because this is simply not the case. In fact, there are boards and jurisdictions in Canada and in Ontario that are already taking steps to deal with it. I think New York City has banned trans fats and given a timeline and a method for implementation. That's what I'd like to have seen here. But to leave the impression that they're banning, and tomorrow morning they're going to turn the lights on and there will be no trans fats of any sort found in the schools, is simply not the case.

This is the impression of often the McGuinty government—going back to first principles here—saying one thing and flipping the mirror around and the people are waiting for, “When is this change going to actually occur? Are there more doctors after the health tax? Do the hospitals have better budgeting?” I know Lakeridge doesn't. There are over 500,000, one million people, almost 300,000 children with no doctor. I have not seen any real, empirical ways of implementation here.

I look at the practical enforcement issues and the burdensome red tape for the teachers and other educating professionals in the schools: going around and looking in the lunch bags, finding out who baked the cookies, where did they come from, spending a lot of time researching Voortman's cookies or whatever, or even home-baked cookies: Did they use Crisco? Phoning home. Just imagine the administrivia, the trivia and stuff here, without having a concrete plan and implementation, working with all the partners.

The partners would include the children themselves. The children in older grades—we see here the pages from all over Ontario, most of them grade 7 or 8 students. Look, they want to be healthy. What do they think? Engage them. I think there was a report that was encouraged by one of the schools where they did do just that.

I'm trying to make two points: first, that we in the opposition—and the Hansard record will prove that our two speakers yesterday, Frank Klees as well as Norm Miller, made it very clear—do support the initiative here. We think it's a bit populist in the way it's being managed or communicated here, because there's really no plan. There's a framework for the minister to set up a bunch of red tape and to force school boards into doing a lot more administrivia, and yet at the end of the day I'm so disappointed. I hope I'm not disappointed again, because this whole issue deserves much more serious consideration and debate, and I hope there will be public hearings, as it's my understanding there will be.

The dangers of trans fats are becoming more widely known, thanks to the advocacy of many health care professionals. There are people in the community, the Heart and Stroke Foundation and others, who have done an admirable job of making the public aware. The federal government has also taken steps. They've had a panel that has looked at this.

We know that trans fat raises bad LDL cholesterol. Someone in my age group—all persons over 50 should be tested for having high cholesterol. There are a bunch of medications you take. I think that is very important to monitor. But I'm not a big medication person. I think that the body has response mechanisms, and once we start tinkering around with those—I'm not a pharmacist or even qualified, but my approach is that nutrition comes back into this. Looking at diet, looking at exercise: These are the fundamental pieces that should be looked at first. Lifestyle issues, of course—whether it's smoking too much, drinking too much and other kinds of things that people do. Some of these things are bad for you. Living itself could be considered bad for you, because it's dangerous: what you eat, what you drink, what you read, often, and your lifestyle choices. These are things that we should all be careful of.

In my case, I look at these things from a practical sense. Cholesterol: At my age, I should have it checked. First thing I ask the doctor for is not a prescription but if there are some recommendations on some changes in behaviours that I have. I do listen to them. This can increase the risk of high blood pressure, narrowing the

arteries, heart attack and strokes. You can't legislate against free choice. I think that there are some things here, and it includes eating. Obesity is a growing problem across all age groups. I'm almost 65 and I do take great interest in my own personal health.

1600

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Really. I still play hockey; I still ski. I stay very active. I walk every day in every week. I walk from the Union Station to here. I don't take the subway; I walk. I see other people who take the subway who should maybe be walking.

There can be no better place to encourage healthy eating than our schools. So the schools are a good place where the formation of children's thinking and their values and priorities are influenced—no question. Teaching children to eat well is one of the ways to prevent pain, suffering and shortened life span in the future. The quotation, "Let food be your medicine," is attributed to Greek physician Hippocrates, who lived about 2,500 years ago. It was good advice then; it's good advice today.

When I think of it, in my own riding, one of the issues I've dealt with on trans fat and other issues and healthy eating and obesity is the issue of eating disorders. The Ministry of Health—there should be a sub-part to this whole thing of eating disorders; it is very important. Young people—others included, but often women—have these anorexic and other types of eating disorders. I have constituents, as I'm sure some of you do, who have come to me to find out that there are no resources. In fact, many of them were sent to the United States—out of Canada, out of Ontario—for treatment. It is a tragedy that we're talking about this in the Legislature. I look to see a sophisticated, government-initiated plan that we could talk about, and there's simply no plan. There's no plan here, and that's discouraging, especially with the young pages here and the young people who may look at the Legislature to see what actually we're doing here.

I am not trying to politicize the discussion here. The Minister of Education and the Minister of Health have a long road to walk here, and these are the first few weeks and months of their mandate. Let's do what they would do with someone who had a temperature; let's take tests. Let's take the test on this. The real test of this is: Where are we going to be in 2008, 2009 and 2010? Where are the benchmarks? What are the goals? I don't see any of that here, and that's discouraging.

The background is what I've said before: not just the lack of plan for eating disorders for young women, but no plan in our hospitals that I can see generally, except arguments about, "We're going to send in a supervisor" in a P3 hospital that's smaller than originally planned, and the community is outraged. That's the proof. The proof is right there. I look at Lakeridge Health and the Oshawa hospital specifically. They have an \$8-million problem. Wrapping up this year, they have an \$8-million problem.

Yesterday, the GTA/905 Health Care Alliance was here to tell us that we're underfunded in the GTA, the

905 area, which is my constituency and others, by \$200 or \$300 per person. That's simply unfair. Look at the mortality rates in hospitals and the other information issued by CIHI, the Canadian Institute for Health Information, which, by the way, has been around for eight years. They've been tracking the wait time stuff. No one wants to admit it. They've been tracking that stuff for years, not just mortality rates but also wait times themselves.

I can also say, just looking at the practical debate around health care—the eating part is important to it; I get that. We've already crossed that road and admitted that we're prepared to work with the government. But Uxbridge Cottage Hospital, which is part of Durham region geographically but partnered with Markham Stouffville Hospital, which happens to be in the Central LHIN—local health integrated network. So it's physically in the Central East LHIN but administratively is in the Central LHIN. This hospital has no anaesthesiologist. They've lost their surgeon. Their medical staff and recruitment are in a shambles because the team is falling apart. I think it has gotten worse in the last two years, and it's worse now than it was in 2003. The proof, to me, is that there are no results. I put to the people on this bill: Let's track what they say they're going to do and track to see what they've done. The proof will be in the results at the end of that time.

Thank you for my opportunity to speak on Bill 8.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I have listened carefully to the contribution to this debate by the member for Durham, and I'm pleased to be able to comment on some of his speech making.

Far more important is the fact that in this rotation of questions and comments, in a few minutes from now we'll be hearing from our newly elected member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Paul Miller. Even more exciting, of course, is that when the 10 minutes of questions and comments are completed, we'll be having the opportunity to listen to the inaugural speech of the new member for Nickel Belt, the NDP health critic, who brings some incredible expertise in very broad and general terms but also very specifically with respect to the subject under debate in Bill 8.

I'm very pleased that our critic Rosario Marchese, the member for Trinity–Spadina, yesterday in his lead comments in his hour on this was able to point out the fact that the bill does, in so many respects, oh so little. If there really were a concern and an effort on the part of this government to address the issue of youthful obesity and developing an environment where children learn about healthy nutrition, one would think—and it seems to me the public has an incredible appetite—that there would be a legislative structure that would ban junk food, and that would not just ban trans fats but also encourage healthy eating. I'm reminded of what Alice Waters, the restaurateur and chef, did in the United States in terms of working with schools and developing relationships with

schools and local agricultural producers, getting kids involved in understanding where food comes from and getting kids to understand that you should be eating fresh food and, more importantly, eating food grown by your neighbour. I'm looking forward to Ms. Gélinas, the member for Nickel Belt, and her comments.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you very much, and congratulations on your appointment as Acting Speaker. I think this is the first time since I've been here that I've been able to say, "Madam Speaker."

So, Madam Speaker, I would like to comment on what is actually in the bill. We seem to have had a decided lack of conversation about what's in the bill. First of all, the bill will ban trans fats from school cafeterias. Those could be either elementary or secondary, and the ban will apply in both of those kinds of schools. The definition will be the one that Health Canada uses for trans fats or trans-free. I'm really disappointed to hear that the member for Durham is opposed to supporting our dairy, beef and lamb farmers, because what we have exempted are those products which have naturally occurring trans fats. That is quite simply because the scientific evidence is not there that naturally occurring trans fats cause the same harm as trans fats which are industrially produced, artificially produced.

Second, the legislation will extend the existing ban on junk food in elementary vending machines to secondary. So there will be a legislated ban on junk foods in all school vending machines, and the details of how we recognize junk foods will be set out in regulation. Currently there is a guideline and we'll be working with stakeholders to refine that, to bring it in line with the new Canada Food Guide. But then, because we do understand there are other things that we need to talk about more broadly, we will be working with Heart and Stroke Canada, with dietitians and a variety of stakeholders to set up a broader regulation which will set up nutrition rules for all food available on a routine basis in—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'm pleased to stand up and, first of all, support the bill because it is a good beginning, and also to say that there is much left to be done. I think what is really necessary is the awareness component that we need to include in a much stronger way in order to make this effective. Just banning something is almost superficial. The effect that you want from it may or may not be there. I think what we need to do is educate the kids from the time they are school-aged to the time they leave school, and perhaps we will have healthier adults. But simply to ban trans fats from all school cafeterias and vending machines will not have the effect that I think the member expects.

1610

My feeling is, as with any educational program, it's best to start with children as young as possible. They take the messages home to their parents, in fact. Who can

argue with the fact that trans fats are bad? It's a proven fact; it's medically proven. We have people in medical care because of bad diet habits, bad eating habits. What better time to start to educate adults than to do it with their children? I know that that was effective when my children were small, when they brought information home and they imposed their new ideas on us. As parents we listened because we respected what they had learned and we respected their opinion.

I think that we're moving in the right direction, but I don't think that we're moving far enough. I think that the education component of this issue is really where we're going to get our effect.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and congratulations on your appointment. It's a pleasure to see you there.

This discussion on trans fats, in my humble opinion, is a no-brainer. Trans fats have been proven to be bad for anybody, especially for young children, who are developing situations of obesity. This continues into teenhood and adulthood. This creates a burden on our health system, with various physical impairments developing in younger adults.

We are constantly promoting exercise, health and sports on one hand and feeding our kids junk food on the other. This seems to be a no-win situation for our province. All vending machines except ones containing wholesome drinks that are good for our youth should be banned in our schools. This is a good first step, but it doesn't go far enough.

I myself have lost childhood friends to various problems that I'm sure could be attributed to their eating habits. Maybe if we build more sporting facilities in our province and more arenas, more gyms for our youth to exercise in and have different venues to attend, to improve their health situation, to promote sports, promote health, it would be beneficial to us as Ontarians.

There's a big problem in all of North America, from Mexico to the Canadian Arctic, a problem of obesity in our youth. It's creating such a burden on health systems throughout this whole continent that it's alarming. The numbers are alarming. It's time that we started moving in the right direction to build a healthy, strong, youthful base in all our countries which will benefit us all in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Response?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to thank the member from Welland—always entertaining; the member from Guelph, who gave a great speech yesterday but the content wasn't quite there; the member from Burlington; and the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek for their comments. I look forward to the new members and their maiden speeches. Perhaps they'll find some content in Bill 8 to speak about.

I think what's being said here is that we're all in favour of this. It's simply a first step. There's a lot of

administration. If you look at section 4 of the bill, the regulatory section, there are seven sections specifying where the minister will make regulations. So the devil is in the details. The objective is laudable, and I'm very suspicious at the end of the day because history is the best predictor of future behaviour.

That being said, I want to extend a season's greeting and a merry Christmas to all fellow members from all sides of the House, as well as you, Madam Speaker, and the table and staff. This is a season where we should be less than critical, but it is our role to be critics—on this side, certainly. To all members, have a restful season and come back—I hope the House returns in January sometime, early January, and some of the committees will do some important work. The government has had a slow start here, only being elected in October. We never came back, and it's now December 12, so it's only a few months, and then we're going back out to our constituents again. It's at that time of year, for the next few days, that we'll be celebrating the festive season. It's my privilege to extend season's greetings. Merry Christmas, happy new year, good health to all.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate? The member for Nickel Belt, for what I believe is your inaugural speech.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Merci, Madame la présidente. I'd like to congratulate you on your new nomination as Acting Speaker. I think you look really good in that seat.

I am the new representative for the riding of Nickel Belt, the riding that had been represented by Ms. Shelley Martel. Ms. Martel worked for this Parliament for 20 years. I think she was fourth or fifth on the seniority list, at age 44. Shelley was first elected in 1987, when she was 24 years old. She served in opposition as well as on the government side, and she was Minister of Northern Development and Mines. She was a pioneer.

During our orientation for all 19 new MPPs, she was mentioned as a role model for the way that she handled committee work, and basically we were encouraged to follow her lead. During my meeting with the Integrity Commissioner, she was mentioned again as an MPP who had always been very diligent and brought a high level of integrity to everything that she did.

In our riding of Nickel Belt, she is a legend in her own time. So I'm starting this new job in the shadow of a giant. Although I have no aspirations to even try to replace her, I intend to follow her lead for the integrity, ethics and hard work that she brought to this job.

As I mentioned, Shelley Martel served our riding for 20 years, and her father, Elie Martel, for 20 years before that. I want to extend my sincere thank you to both of them for their hard work during my campaign. Shelley campaigned like it was her own campaign. She worked long hours every day and so did her father, Elie. Their wealth of experience and deep knowledge and understanding of the issues in our riding were a big asset. I compare them to having Wayne Gretzky and Mario

Lemieux on your team. Again, thank you, Elie, thank you, Shelley. I appreciate everything you did.

Nickel Belt is located around Sudbury. The Honourable Rick Bartolucci, Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, represents the riding of Sudbury. My riding, Nickel Belt, is like a big doughnut all around Sudbury. So here's my link to trans fat—no more doughnuts.

You probably know Sudbury for its mines. Actually, most of the mines are located in Nickel Belt. The riding is very large. It's about 400 kilometres from the south to the north. The south starts with Alban in the French River area, which is an area I talked a little bit about today, and it goes north, almost to the level of Timmins but a little bit to the west of it, to Foleyet, Gogama and those areas. From the east to the west it's about 200 kilometres wide, and it goes from Walden at one end to Capreol and Coniston at the other end, for those of you who are from my riding. Let me tell you that during the campaign I needed three oil changes, that's how many kilometres I covered.

Nickel Belt is home to about 3,045 First Nation people living in and off recognized First Nation reserves. We have Whitefish Lake First Nation, Wahnapiatae First Nation and Mattagami First Nation. As well, we have 2,560 Metis people who live in my riding. When one visits the First Nation communities and takes a closer look at the health and the health needs, the only thing that comes to mind is that we're treating the First Nation people in Ontario as second-class citizens. This is something that is shameful on all of us and this is something that I cannot accept, and I intend to push for change and improvement.

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Nickel Belt also is home to—42% of the population knows how to speak French.

La communauté francophone de Nickel Belt est très présente et visible. En plus d'avoir nos écoles primaires et secondaires de langue française, nous avons également le Collège Boréal, l'un des deux collèges de langue française en Ontario, et l'Université Laurentienne, ainsi que ses collèges affiliés, qui offrent une vaste gamme de programmes d'enseignement en langue française. L'ACFO du grand Sudbury est très active, ainsi que plusieurs organismes communautaires et culturels. Je souligne entre autres La Brunante, qui aura lieu au mois de février, suivie par La Nuit sur l'étang, qui aura lieu le 28 et 29 mars de cette année. Je vous invite tous à venir participer à cet événement typiquement franco-ontarien, qui dure une bonne partie de la nuit. Comme on dit par chez nous, « Passons la nuit ensemble ».

Nous avons également le Carrefour francophone qui gère tout un réseau de garderies francophones, la Slague, qui organise des spectacles et le Centre Alpha-Culturel pour l'alphabétisation. L'analphabétisme est très commun chez les francophones, étant donné que l'accès à l'éducation de langue française est quand même relativement nouveau. Je souligne également les clubs d'âge d'or, et en particulier le club de la vallée à Hanmer, le Club 50 à Chelmsford et le club d'Azilda pour leur

engagement envers la francophonie locale et la vaste gamme d'activités qu'ils organisent pour la population francophone et leurs membres.

The main industries in Nickel Belt are mining and forestry. Base metal prices right now are going through the roof, so mining is booming. This is good news for the people of Nickel Belt who work for the mines and the multitudes of businesses that support the mining sector. But we all know that mining is cyclical, and we all know that after the good times comes the drought. So we have to be prepared for that.

On the other hand, the forestry sector is at an all-time low, and right now things don't look good for the future either. The trees are still being cut and the pulp mills are still running, but all of the paper mills and the lumber mills are shutting down. Ontario is not competitive anymore. Our natural resources are being shipped out of the province, and all of the value-added transformation that takes place—all the jobs associated with the value-added transformation—is being shipped out of Ontario. That has come with massive layoffs from good-paying jobs. This is devastating to the people of northern Ontario, where hard-working families find themselves with no work and no hope in sight.

Things could be different. The government could take steps. Every day in this House our leaders talk about a new hydro rate for the businesses of northern Ontario. That would make a big change. There are concrete steps this government could take that would make life a lot easier for the people of Nickel Belt and northern Ontario.

I started my career as a physiotherapist in a hospital in Sudbury. At the time it was called Laurentian Hospital. It has now been amalgamated and is part of the Sudbury Regional Hospital. Working as a physiotherapist gave me a front-row seat to the challenges and hurdles that people with disabilities have to face. I provided physiotherapy services to a lot of people who became disabled and helped them regain their lives, their independence, their dignity. But I soon realized that there were a lot of hurdles that were placed in front of them by government and by society's hurdles. The bureaucracy made things really hard for people with disabilities, and sometimes insurmountable.

A lot of people with severe disabilities depend on ODSP, the Ontario disability support program. I cannot tell you strongly enough that the level of income of people on the Ontario disability support program is not sufficient. Those people are disabled. They are forced to live in poverty and they are forced to depend on charity to survive. This is shameful for a province like Ontario that has too much. It is despicable and unacceptable. Things have to change. ODSP payments need to increase to include the cost of the healthy food basket as calculated by health units throughout Ontario. It also needs to take into account the real cost of accommodation so those people have enough money to pay rent, then have a premium for living allowance and then index it to the cost of living. It is not acceptable to have people with severe disabilities living in poverty in a province like Ontario.

On December 3, our first day in this House, we celebrated the International Day of the Disabled Person. Wouldn't it be a real celebration if we can make real changes to the ODSP? This is something that they would celebrate for a long time.

After working as a physiotherapist, I went on to do a master's degree in business administration. Up until October 10, the last election, I was the executive director for our local community health centre, le centre de santé communautaire de Sudbury. During my years as a front-line health care worker and as an administrator, I developed a pretty good understanding of how our health care system works. One of my personal heroes is Tommy Douglas, the founder of medicare. Like millions of Canadians, I support the value behind our public health care system. Some of the Conservative and Liberal members are putting forward ideas that erode the public nature of our health care system, and it is not acceptable.

Yes, there is a link between a private, for-profit hospital and poor levels of health and poor levels of care. Hospitals like Brampton and the mental health hospital are two examples where they're having a lot of problems maintaining quality health care, and it is directly linked to the fact that they are private, for-profit hospitals. This has to stop.

Of course, I am aware of the serious problems and challenges in our health care system, as well as the health and social justice challenges that we face in Ontario, but solutions do exist. All that is needed is the political will to stand up to those who want to make a profit on the backs of the people of Ontario who are sick. This is not acceptable. Solutions exist. We must take the route of the public system.

Un de mes principaux motivateurs pour devenir députée est mon désir d'améliorer la santé de mes concitoyens et concitoyennes.

I am interested in enhancing the health and well-being of all Ontarians. I believe that the development of a comprehensive social policy is the right first step in building a healthier and more equitable province. It must build on the various social and environmental factors that contribute to poor health. We need to refocus our energy on preventing illness and promoting health. This can be done by addressing the several key social determinants of health, such as poverty, income distribution and education. Often things that have nothing to do with our health care system will help keep the people of Ontario healthy. Only by linking social policy, economic policy and resource allocation to a vision of health and well-being will we see the types of changes needed to achieve my goal of enhancing health and well-being for all Ontarians, and this is what I'm here to do.

We already have some of those tools. I already talked about the Ontario nutritional food basket. This info is already being collected by all of the health units in Ontario, but yet it is not part of our action plan on poverty illness reduction when it should be.

The NDP has put forward Smile Ontario. For sure the time is long overdue to bring dental and oral health

services to all Ontarians, not just those with insurance or money. Dental and oral health services have to be part of the continuum of primary health care services. We have to include a holistic and preventive approach to dental and oral health, not just the emergency services that are presently available to people on Ontario Works or ODSP. Treatment after the fact is not enough. Every child in Ontario should have access to preventive care, and everybody who doesn't have coverage should have access. I still don't understand to this day why our mouths and teeth were excluded from medicare. That makes no sense. This has to be reversed. The NDP had a plan: Smile Ontario. The solutions are there. Let's move forward.

In order for all Ontarians to be healthy and productive, we need to support our newcomers to Ontario and eliminate the discriminatory and counterproductive three-month OHIP waiting period for landed immigrants. To force immigrants to forgo routine preventive care is not in the interest of a productive economy, a stable health care system or a societal equality agenda. I know that one of the first bills that this government brought forward was to eliminate the three-month waiting period for the people serving in the armed forces, but this is not enough. There are lots of groups in Ontario that are still facing the three-month waiting period. This is not the way we should do things in Ontario.

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When we talk about quality health care and support, we need to recognize the role that government plays. Community participation in governance of health care organizations contributes to more responsive services and better health outcomes. I would add to this that Ontario needs a complete network of community health centres that are community-governed, not-for-profit organizations to serve all of the people of Ontario.

My community health centre ran a homeless clinic called the Corner Clinic, Clinique du coin. I credit the wisdom and hard work of one of our health promoters, Mrs. Lorraine LeBlanc, for starting this program. Ten years ago, people did not know that there were homeless in Sudbury. But they were there, and she knew they were there. So she started a program on the porch of the soup kitchen in Sudbury, and started treating people who otherwise had nowhere else to go. This grew into the Corner Clinic.

Sometimes, when I wonder what really motivated me to become an MPP, I remember the quote that one of our homeless clients told me. He said, "You are going there for us. Don't forget the little people that don't have a voice, because this is why we want you to go there." So I'll make sure that I remember this every single day that I come into this House, to give a voice to the little people that don't have a voice.

I live in the north because I choose to live in the north. It is a choice that is right for me and for my family. I intend to represent the people of Ontario to the best of my ability. And I will always have an interest in the issues that affect and touch the residents of northern Ontario.

Anyone who has been in the health care business for as long as I have realizes that our health is both personal and political. I decided to run in my riding for these reasons. I believe that much can be accomplished at the personal and community level to keep oneself and the community healthy, but at the same time, I realized that politicians have a role to play to keep people in the community healthy. This is what I'm here to do. I want to make sure that the serious hurdles and challenges that our health care system in Ontario faces will be met by public solutions supported by sound public policy.

In closing, I wish everyone health for the coming year and a happy holiday season. J'aimerais souhaiter mes meilleurs voeux à tous ceux de mon comté et bonne santé pour l'année qui s'en vient.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Hon. Jim Watson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Congratulations to you on occupying the Chair.

Félicitations à la nouvelle députée de Nickel Belt pour son premier discours.

It's my pleasure to congratulate the member for Nickel Belt on her maiden speech.

I'm very pleased to rise today in support of Bill 8, the Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act. I had the pleasure for two and a half years of being the Minister of Health Promotion, and I worked closely with the Ministers of Agriculture and Education on putting together a comprehensive plan that would deal with the ever-increasing challenge of obesity that we're facing in our society. There's been a 300% increase in obesity rates amongst children in the last 15 years, according to Stats Canada. Think about that for a minute: a 300% increase in obesity rates amongst children. We know what that is going to mean to the health care system in terms of type 2 diabetes, heart disease and certain forms of cancer. That's why it's incumbent upon the government to work in partnership with parents, school board officials and students themselves, to encourage young people to eat healthy.

I know our pages here, if they had a choice between spending the dollar in their pocket on a chocolate bar or an apple, I suspect they'd do what I did and probably take the chocolate bar. That's why we have to take some of the temptation away from kids, and that's why we got rid of junk food in vending machines in elementary schools and we're going to move it forward to high schools. Schools in my riding like J.H. Putman Public School and Frank Ryan Catholic Senior Elementary School, which were recipients of the healthy school recognition program, are leading the way in encouraging other schools to become healthy places to live, to work and to learn.

I very much look forward to the passage of this bill. It's going to affect high schools, which I think is a good thing, and it is also going to supplement some of the good work that has been done in the past in health promotion, agriculture and other ministries, so that we can encourage healthy eating in the province of Ontario.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Madam Speaker, I'll echo the sentiments on your appointment that have already been directed to you this evening. I also have to say how nice it is to have Madam Speaker here.

I want to compliment the member from Nickel Belt on her inaugural remarks. I think her commitment to the ideals that have prompted her to make the decision to enter public office is very clear.

In making a few comments on Bill 8, I'm somewhat torn about the fact that it seems that after so many others, particularly in the private sector and particularly in the food industry, have recognized the issue around trans fats, this government seems to be coming to the table, if I might use that phrase, rather late in this public conversation. I suppose it's better to look at trans fats late rather than never; however, I think that people in the community are generally way ahead of them.

The question of this being, or that this should be, part of a very much broader conversation is, I think, really the important issue. Parents need to have a sense of their responsibility in providing for their children in a way that gives them the sense of what is a healthy lifestyle and what are healthy lifestyle choices. Obviously there is a role for the school, but it is really parents.

Mr. Peter Kormos: The member for Nickel Belt has demonstrated very clearly that she is going to be a formidable force in this Legislature, and I look forward to working with her over the course of the next four years and hopefully the four years after that, and who knows?

The minister across the way talks about youngsters making choices. Well, here's the choice that youngsters, and even adults, make between healthy food—a raw carrot—or, dare I say it, a Crispy Crunch or a Mars bar.

Page, take these Crispy Crunch and Mars bars over to Minister Watson. Come on up here. Let's go; we've got a shortage of time. Over to Minister Watson, and see what he does with them. There's your choice.

Look, the message from the member for Nickel Belt was very clear. You can't talk about nutrition and health without talking about poverty. You can't talk about nutrition and health without talking about adequate housing. You can't talk about nutrition and health without talking about people having real jobs with real incomes; jobs that are safe, where they have some control over the safety of their jobs. You can't talk about health without talking about education and ensuring that young people and adolescents have access to quality education. That's where this legislation falls short, because it is oh, so piecemeal.

The reality is that it bans trans fats, but the bill does nothing to ensure that, as an integral part of the elementary and secondary school systems, young people are learning and practising good eating habits; that they're eating fresh food—fresh fruit and vegetables—grown within close proximity to where they're located; that they're eating in a school cafeteria and taking those good eating habits home with them to sustain them in their own right and to educate their families about them. This bill fails miserably. Ms. Gélinas, the member for Nickel

Belt, has offered solutions. This government would be well advised to listen and adhere to them.

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Mr. Joe Dickson: Madam Speaker, it's a pleasure to wish you well again.

I'm very pleased to hear the honourable member from Nickel Belt. She spoke well, she spoke eloquently, and it's a pleasure to be sitting so close to her while she does that.

In Ajax, Ontario, we have an unusual situation. We have the second-largest secondary school in the country. When you put both Notre Dame and J. Clarke Richardson schools under the one roof, which they are, you have some 3,600 adolescents. We can talk gibberish all day long, but let's just focus for one second on the research, and the research is that the rate of obesity in children has tripled over the past 25 years. The most obese children become overweight adults, putting them at a higher risk for diabetes and heart disease. Sixty per cent of Ontario adults and 28% of children are overweight and obese. That translates, in this one school alone, to some 908 students who qualify as overweight and obese.

We fully support Bill 8. It's time we get on and get the job done, and I'm willing to stay until midnight because, as they say, "Let's work."

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Response?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank the members who have said kind words about me and my inaugural speech. It is a kind of nerve-racking moment, but thank you for your kind comments.

Coming back to Bill 8, the Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act: If you have listened to my inaugural speech, you can't help but see the link between the different determinants of health toward the healthy schools that we are trying to achieve. Children who live in poverty, children who go to school hungry because there are no healthy foods, never mind no food in the house to eat before they go to school, are not going to make healthy choices because they cannot afford to make healthy choices. I agree that obesity is an epidemic. This government, this House, has to act. We all have a responsibility toward our children, but Bill 8 is way too small. It's such a tiny step that I can't believe we are spending that many hours talking about it.

We should be talking about the real issue: that a lot of children in Ontario live in poverty. Ontario is the child poverty capital. How could that happen? And Toronto happens to be the epicentre of this poverty crisis. We're talking about setting guidelines for trans fats; oh, my God, how disconnected could we be from reality? The children in Ontario need to be living above the poverty line—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: So they can afford healthy food.

M^{me} France Gélinas: So they can afford healthy food, absolutely. This is not going to do anything to help achieve that. Yes, the children who live in Ontario should have access to healthy foods in their schools. This bill is

not going to do that. It takes a tiny step—way too small for the long road ahead.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate?

M. Shafiq Qadri: Avec la Loi 8, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation, l'Ontario prend des mesures pour faire des écoles des lieux plus sains d'apprentissage en éliminant les gras trans du menu des cafétérias scolaires.

La santé de nos jeunes est trop précieuse pour qu'on la mette à risque. Les gras trans n'ont pas de place dans les écoles et nous devons agir dès maintenant.

Le projet de loi qui sera présenté demain permettra d'éliminer les gras trans du menu des cafétérias et des machines distributrices dans les écoles. Il mise sur les mesures déjà prises contre la malbouffe dans les écoles élémentaires et les 20 minutes d'exercice quotidien.

Les gras trans se retrouvent bien souvent dans les frites, certains biscuits et d'autres aliments de cafétéria. Ces huiles traitées peuvent contribuer à l'obésité infantile. Au cours des 25 dernières années, le taux d'obésité chez les enfants a triplé. La plupart des enfants obèses deviennent des adultes qui ont un surplus de poids, ce qui les place dans une catégorie de risque élevé pour devenir diabétique et cardiaque.

La réduction de la consommation des gras trans traités pourrait permettre de sauver des vies et d'économiser bien des dollars en soins de santé.

Madam Speaker, I would, with your permission as well, like to address some particular remarks on a number of different fronts, speaking of course in a number of different capacities, not only as the MPP for the great riding of Etobicoke North but also a father, as a physician, and of course as a citizen of Ontario.

I hope with the time remaining—eight minutes and counting—that I'll be able to address some remarks in a number of different areas. They are coronary artery disease, risk factors, diabetes, the treatment targets that are changing and evolving according to our advancing scientific understanding, waist measurement—as in one's belly measurement—as the new vital sign, and some commentaries in terms of the ethnocultural focus or the ethnocultural bias in all of these particular areas.

The thing to mention at the outset, hopefully to set some context for, I think, the very commendable and perhaps overdue ban of trans fats in our school system, is the continued burden of coronary artery disease, or plugging up of blood vessels or heart disease—or atherosclerosis, as we physicians would call it. To this day, this remains the number one killer in Canada.

I have to tell you that we used to think that an individual had to be over the age of 40, and considerably over the age of 40, to actually develop, manifest, show, declare symptoms of coronary artery disease—typically death, heart attack, chest pain, shortness of breath, compromise on exercise, and of course the list goes on. What we're learning now in medical science is that, unfortunately, the threshold for manifesting these diseases is all the time being lowered. It's no longer over age 40, no longer even over age 35, but younger and younger. There

are now, for example, individuals in their teens who are being admitted to coronary care units in Canada for vascular procedures, for blood vessel bypass surgery and so on.

This is, I think, just a signal to us of an epidemic, of an entire wave that is coming forward, and of course that's why it's very important to support this ban on trans fats.

Mention has been made about the elevation of the bad, evil cholesterol, LDL, and the diminishment or the decrease of the good HDL cholesterol. That is, of course, something that we as physicians struggle with on a regular basis, whether it's involving diet and exercise or the prescription of appropriate medications and appropriate follow-up. I must say that the number of people who could benefit from this wise advice, from being more stringent and more rigorous in applying the science to their day-to-day affairs, is very small, just a subset, a handful of the number of individuals who could actually benefit. That's why I think it's extremely intelligent and, as I say, long overdue and welcome that the McGuinty government begins attempting to remedy this situation, this long-term development of these areas at source—at source, of course, being our school systems.

We have spoken about risk factors. If I might introduce a term that perhaps many of my colleagues here may not be too familiar with, that is something that is circulating now in medical circles, what we call the cardiometabolic syndrome, or CMS. Essentially, it is about the evil of obesity, of visceral obesity or central obesity, abdominal obesity. It's basically talking about how an individual who is overweight, especially if it's over time, of long duration, beginning in early childhood, essentially predisposes themselves over time to a long list, a long cluster of diseases, including heart disease, diabetes, even things like Alzheimer's, kidney disease, and of course the list goes on.

What's important to understand, as I mentioned in my remarks earlier in French, is that we no longer have to wait for the typically middle-aged individual—say, 40-plus—to develop and show these conditions. That's why we must become proactive. That's why we must support this ban of trans fats at the earliest stage as possible.

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I'll give you a specific example. In Canada, as of this moment, as we speak, something on the order of about three million Canadians have diagnosable diabetes by criteria, by doctor's criteria, by blood test. The problem is, only about half of them have actually had it diagnosed. There's this huge group of individuals who are entirely oblivious, who essentially haven't been alerted to this fact. That is a huge pool of individuals who are moving through a system who are allowing themselves to have a lot of end organ damage, as we say: kidney damage, heart damage, eye damage and so on. That's why we need to sound the alarm and sound this alert. I think that as we ban trans fats, as we put forward this messaging, as we perhaps contribute to the Ontario conversation on health and health promotion, it's very im-

portant that we hopefully benefit from some of these remarks contextualized.

That's speaking about diagnosable diabetes. Similarly, a new term that is still new to fellow physician colleagues is what we call pre-diabetes, or diabetes in training. That is, of course, those individuals, often beginning in childhood, who develop the bad behaviours or the misbehaviours that predispose them over time: excess stress, lack of physical activity, poor dietary choices, continued consumption of trans fats and the developing of that ever-present waistline. That group of patients who are pre-diabetic actually exceeds, even, the number who have diabetes, probably by a factor of two. What I mean is, there's probably something on the order of about four to five million Canadians who are, as of this moment now, pre-diabetic, having basically diabetes in training, which will develop over time unless we sound that alert. That's why, very simply, things like—not even a blood test measurement or a measurement of some of the more fancy biomarkers or blood tests that we have, but even something as simple as measuring one's waistline—measuring one's waist is considered now the new vital sign, along with things like respiratory rate or blood pressure and pulse. But that alone, the measurement of abdominal obesity itself—which, by the way, is kind of an indication of perhaps how many trans fats you've had over your lifetime—is itself a very powerful marker for downstream risk and downstream disease. I think, as I say, as we move forward with Bill 8 here, as we move forward with this important legislation and add to and enhance and energize and juice up the Canadian conversation on health and health promotion, hopefully we'll be able to benefit from these particular aspects.

Lastly, in closing I would also like to bring to attention some of the very important work that's being done by a number of institutions, including the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario, the Canadian Diabetes Association, the south Asian chapter of the Canadian Diabetes Association, and so on. That is—particularly remarks that are appropriate to Ontario, given the diverse multicultural ethnocultural populations that we have here in Ontario and here in this Legislature—that certain populations are particularly prone to developing these conditions. Of course, there's a whole long list of reasons why, whether it is earlier diabetes or a predisposition to having the ill effects of trans fats, earlier development of obesity and so on. I would simply encourage all the individuals and various institutions and school communities and school boards listening that, as we move forward with this very important initiative on banning trans fats—for which we salute Minister Wynne, the Minister of Education—that it also be part of a larger context of health promotion on all these different fronts: coronary artery disease, awareness of risk factors, the ever-present burden of diabetes, the target changes, waist measurement as a new vital sign and, of course, focusing in on, particularly important to Ontario in the Ontario context, the ethnocultural milieu. Merci, Madame la présidente.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Merci. Questions and comments? The member for Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. I listened, of course, to the member for Etobicoke North. I didn't find his comments particularly pleasant. I became very self-conscious at several points, but I listened, indeed, very carefully. His comments were downright depressing, but I accept them very much in the manner that they were intended. Indeed, the member from Etobicoke North, Dr. Qaadri, has the capacity, because of his background, to make a significant contribution to this whole debate, and I wish he had used the whole 20 minutes available to him because he was at the diagnostic stage—if I may borrow medical language—but then he wasn't at the, dare I say it, treatment stage. He told me that I should be concerned about the girth that I have acquired, and I accept his admonition in that regard. Several other members of this Legislature and I exchanged glances with each other, in mutual acknowledgment.

The interesting thing is that the Minister of Finance, the other day when he was ranting on about the supply bill, made reference to this bill, applauded it and said he wished that there was with a bill like this, that there was a ban on trans fats in school when he was a kid, and I don't agree with him. I had no problem in elementary or high school; I was skinny in elementary and high school. I only got fat here at the Legislature. So from my personal perspective, if we need a ban on trans fats, it should be here at Queen's Park. But I suppose one has to understand that for some individuals, because the doctor made it very, very clear that the most dangerous profile is the young person who acquires an overweight profile and who carries it with himself or herself into their teenage and then adult years. So dare I say, Doctor, that having only become fat after reaching the age of 40, I have somewhat more hope than perhaps some of my colleagues here.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I thoroughly enjoyed the comments of my colleague from Etobicoke North, whose remarks were, as always, not only delivered in both languages but were interesting to listen to for their own sake.

To follow up on the comments of my colleague for—what is it, Peter? Niagara Centre?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Welland.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Welland. He was asking, "What's the next step in this?" In our house, we saw that earlier in the spring. When you see our Christmas card with our cat, Obi-Wan—Obi-Wan was diagnosed with diabetes. It was exactly the same syndrome that we're looking at here. We discovered that, in fact, it was high-fat cat food and his lifestyle. So we had to get a grip on his diet. We had to reduce it. We got him back to a high-fibre diet, and he's on insulin and indeed, his diabetes is very much under control. But this points out to all of us how important it is to get rid of those trans fats because as an animal, he would just dive right in and he would eat the junkiest cat food that he possibly could. We face, as

adults, pretty of the same responsibility with our children. It tastes good, it feels good, your peers are doing it—

Mr. Mike Colle: Are you talking about cat food?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm talking about junk food for kids, say I to my colleague from Eglinton–Lawrence. I haven't actually tried cat food.

This is part of our responsibility as legislators: We have to lead by example. In our family, part of that example was brought home when we discovered that Obi-Wan had diabetes.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I appreciate this opportunity to respond briefly to the member for Etobicoke North, and I want to thank and congratulate him for bringing his professional expertise forward this afternoon and entering into this debate on Bill 8.

It's hard to believe, but it's two months ago—more than two months ago, actually; two months and two days—since the people of Ontario went to the polls on October 10. I recall with surprise the comments of the Premier on the Global TV program Focus Ontario, right after the election, when he indicated he wasn't sure whether or not the House would be called back into session before Christmas; the decision had not yet been made. In other words, "We just got re-elected. We're going to put our feet up, take our time and relax. We wouldn't want to go right back to work. After all, we've had a tough campaign, and the people of Ontario have rewarded us with a second majority. So everything is great. Don't worry; be happy."

1700

So here we are today. Of course, we're debating Bill 8, which is an important symbolic statement that the government's making for sure to try to discourage kids from eating unhealthy foods in schools and try to discourage schools from allowing those kinds of foods to be sold in schools. But when you look at the exemptions, when you consider the fact that special days are going to be designated—in my kids' school I think they have pizza every week. Once a week they have pizza day. Is that going to be an exemption? I suspect it is, according to the bill.

The fact is, this bill makes an important symbolic statement, but really doesn't do what the government is selling it as doing as such, I'm afraid to say. I think that in spite of the fact that we have our best efforts going forward to try to discourage unhealthy foods in our schools, this bill isn't going to do what the government would lead to us believe. Again, you sort of wonder what the next four years are going to be like if this is the highest priority on the government's agenda. When we come back after the election campaign, we're only sitting for two and a half weeks and here we are debating a bill that's really symbolism and probably should be dealt with at private members' hour as opposed to taking up the time of the Legislature on a Wednesday afternoon.

Mr. Paul Miller: I must say it was a wonderful presentation by my colleague across the floor. It was very enlightening and well thought out.

However, I think one of our biggest problems is we're a product of our own doing. For instance, if you take Halloween—and I'm not a party-pooper, but on Halloween we give out, right across our country, tons of candies full of trans fats to our kids. Maybe this society should start moving in the direction of giving out healthy treats on Halloween night to our kids. I firmly believe I was guilty of handing out treats myself this year, and maybe I should take a look at the things I'm feeding my neighbours' kids. Maybe I should look at healthier products that are out there that do the same thing. Splenda is an amazing contribution to the sugar situation. It doesn't do the harm that some of these other sugars may do. There are other products that could be good to make things sweet that kids can enjoy that aren't going to hurt them.

We talk about banning it in schools. We talk about taking out vending machines in schools and theatres and all the things that are fun, but I think we could replace all those types of products with other products that aren't as damaging. I really believe we could move in that direction to the point where kids would not miss it; they would be happy with the new product lines that are coming out. I know in countries like Sweden, Norway and Finland, they have these products that they give out to their kids on traditional holidays. The kids are fitter. They have a better system, and I believe that we could start there—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. Response?

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I'd like to thank my colleagues from Mississauga–Streetsville, Wellington–Halton Hills and Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

I think all of us can embrace this particular legislation on the ban of trans fats and understand that it's part of a larger initiative to make our schools healthy, to make our schools places where people will develop good habits over time, whether it's with regard to physical activity or to socialization and interaction with a broad cross-section of the world, as well as healthy eating habits and really lifelong habits that will serve them well over time and hopefully contribute to the betterment of Ontario society.

I'd like to thank my colleague as well from Niagara Centre and, indeed, all my colleagues for their very kind remarks, because I think this is certainly an issue—children's health, the health of Ontarians, the health of families over time—that all of us can support and, hopefully, in a reasonably non-partisan manner move forward to steady passage of this particular bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm pleased to be able to have a modest 20-minute opportunity to participate in this debate. Look, let's be fair to the minister. At the very least, she's put this bill forward so there can be this discussion. While the bill is going to be criticized from all quarters, just wait until it goes into committee. You haven't heard nothing yet. The paucity of substance is

going to be exposed in a very dramatic way. But the bill does generate this debate.

I'm grateful to our health critic, the member for Nickel Belt, because she brings to this debate, as she will to others over the course of this Parliament, insights from a professional health treatment person who has a strong understanding and whose approach to health care is a progressive one. It's not traditional by any sense of the word, but it's progressive. But being progressive doesn't mean that it's new.

I recall any number of biographies of Dr. Norman Bethune, the great Canadian. One of the many things that Bethune is credited for is identifying the relationship between poverty and disease, particularly tuberculosis. People were being sent to sanatoriums; the proverbial iron lung. This is in the 20th century. It's remarkable that it was well into the 20th century before Dr. Bethune understood that it was people who came from industrial areas that used soft coal—the air was full of discharges from industrial pipe stacks—the workers in those environments, who disproportionately suffered far greater incidence of lung disease and tuberculosis. He, Dr. Norman Bethune, a great Canadian, understood and identified for the first time, in the first half of the 20th century, the relationship between these two things. That was a progressive, enlightened approach to health care, because once you understand that, you understand preventive health care.

That's what our member for Nickel Belt—as I say, she's a progressive, but the progressive perspective of health care is not necessarily a new one. There's a long tradition of progressive health care that dates back in Canada—and I cite Dr. Norman Bethune.

As I indicated earlier in the brief two minutes, it is impossible for us to isolate the issue of health and youthful child and adolescent obesity from issues like poverty. It's an inescapable conclusion and observation that a family with low income or no income is hard-pressed to be selective about purchasing the foodstuffs that allow them to eat healthfully: fresh vegetables, fresh fruit. I emphasize those because I come from the Niagara region. Heck, most of Ontario has agriculture as a core industry, but I come from a part of the country that's blessed with land that produces good-quality fruits and vegetables, and again, because of greenhousing and the methods of storage available, almost year-round.

To be fair to the farmers, let's make it very clear: Even with what many perceive as costly food items, the farmers are still very much subsidizing the consumer in this province.

Poor folk can, too, be forced to live on processed foods that in and of themselves are, sadly, far less tasty, and also not only far less nutritious but actually have content that contributes to ill health. Our member for Nickel Belt has been most helpful to me in explaining that trans fats are the types of fats used in processed foods. Those trans fats are not, in and of themselves, causing obesity, but are an integral element of processed foods that do contribute to obesity, because you're talk-

ing about loads of gratuitous calories—junk food. But also, the impact of trans fats on the body is the major contribution to cardiovascular disorders. Dr. Qaadri, the member for Etobicoke North, was speaking to that just a few minutes ago.

So here we are with a bill that bans trans fats in the cafeteria and then makes some mention, without being anywhere near that complete, with respect to vending machines in the school. And the observation made by careful readers of this legislation is that while the cafeteria may not contain food prepared with trans fats, there's nothing in the bill that's going to reduce—never mind abolish or eliminate—junk foods in the cafeteria; it's just that they won't be made with trans fats. Do you understand what I'm saying? The french fries are going to be fried in a frying oil that doesn't contain trans fats. Trust me, that doesn't make french fries any healthier for you. The breaded processed food and the processed food which contain all sorts of elements, chemicals amongst other things—artificial flavouring—none of which can be good for you, is still going to be served in that elementary or high school cafeteria, except that it's not going to be fried in trans fat oils.

1710

The mayonnaise on the sandwich is going to be mayonnaise with all of the gratuitous, high-calorie content—with a wonderful taste, of course. And nothing is as good as homemade mayonnaise, to be fair. I mean, the dried egg yolks and other food processing elements that are in the store-bought mayonnaise—although Hellmann's is surely the best. But the mayonnaise in the school cafeteria is not going to be made with trans fat oils. So there won't be trans fats, but we'll simply see the gratuitous, high-calorie content of mayonnaise. So this is really bothersome.

The other element that's surely missing here—because, look, one would be far less frustrated and exasperated if the government would simply acknowledge that this is the tiniest, teeniest of steps, rather than trying to declare that somehow this is a major breakthrough in encouraging healthy eating by our young people, or anybody else; far from it. As a matter of fact, what's sad and dangerous about this—this bill is dangerous, and I'll tell you why. If we fixate on trans fats and leave the impression that if you don't eat foods made with trans fats, then you're fine, well, El Gordo can just gobble down big bags of ripple chips all night as long as the label says "No trans fats," thinking, "Oh that's just fine." But El Gordo would be sadly mistaken. That's the danger of the bill.

Look what the high-priced advertising firms are doing with food packaging now. You see it, don't you? No trans fats. I see that "No trans fats" on those Vachon cakes filled with the fake cream, the ones that stay fresh for two years in the plastic. Surely there's something wrong with food that doesn't spoil. Think about that. It's very scary. I don't buy them anymore, but I've come across Vachon cakes that have an expiry date of 2003 in my apartment, hidden away in various places, and I can't

help myself; they're still edible. But surely there's something wrong with food that stays edible for four years in a package. That causes me great concern.

I just read a fascinating biography of Alice Waters, the American cook/restaurateur at Chez Panisse, in the San Francisco Bay area. It was a wonderful restaurant—apparently it's still there—that acquired celebrity status. What she did in terms of American restaurant food preparation is she brought that European movement of using food—she wanted those eggs that she used in her restaurant to still be warm from the chicken's body when she broke them for cooking. She wanted the carrots, the vegetables, to still smell of the fields that they were picked from. She didn't want fruits and vegetables that were transported across the continent. So in this San Francisco-area restaurant, she developed this philosophy about eating. But then what was the complement? Like down in Niagara, small agricultural producers began occupying that niche production of producing very high-quality, specific products: broccoli, asparagus, what have you—a very small volume, with the farmer getting a good return on his or her work because people are prepared to pay for that, but fresh and local. So her work revived some dying agricultural communities around any number of urban centres in North America because of the demand for fresh local produce.

So here we are. Why don't we have from this—as they would call themselves—oh, so enlightened government a piece of legislation that is holistic, as Ms. Gélinas has told us, that would not only ban dangerous and inappropriate foods but also teach and encourage good eating habits?

I say good eating habits include things like eating the produce that is manufactured or grown by the farmers around you. That's smart. It's smart nutritionally, it's smart in terms of the agricultural economy and it's smart in terms of the environment. These environmentalists who would be oh, so politically correct in terms of the environment but who don't protest shipping strawberries from California to Ontario—leaving however big a carbon footprint along the way—are missing the boat. Do you understand what I'm saying? I'm trying to be as clear as I can. We all should be very concerned about this.

I grew up in an old-fashioned kind of house, households that are rare now, households where people cooked at home, households where families had meals together. All of us were out there campaigning in various ways, shapes and forms a few months ago. We learned that people are never home; they aren't. You can go at 7 in morning, go at 7 at night; nobody's home. You go on weekends; nobody's home. If you go on Sundays—I know some people don't campaign on Sundays; some do—knock on the door, nobody's home. There isn't even a Sunday dinner routine or tradition. It has nothing to do with the Christian faith. It has to do with a tradition, a convention of families at least getting together and eating a good meal, a meal that's prepared from raw foods rather than processed foods.

So what kind of culture is that? It's a culture that increasingly is dependent upon the food processors, the fast food purveyors. These are dangerous, dangerous corporate entities who could give a tinker's damn about the health or welfare of their consumers. You know the author of the book, and then the movie *Super Size Me*, a remarkable insight into that industry in a very amusing and humorous way, although very frightening in terms of the context.

Read some of the stuff that's been written about the meat processing industry in the United States. Read some of that stuff—the meat-packing industry—and start to understand how, again, the advertising world has had us buy into some of the unhealthiest eating that humanity has encountered since the days of starvation, where it was a matter of unhealthy not eating. It's amazing.

We condemn and prosecute the tobacco industry for poisoning bodies, don't we? Very much. The world has changed in 40 years, from when doctors were endorsing various brands of tobacco; they were. Dr. Qaadri is too young to remember, but I remember in the 1950s doctors on television; the Lucky Strike ad would have a doctor endorsing this as the best cigarette to be had—not the least harmful, but the one that provided the most comfort and satisfaction. It was true—medical doctors. It was in the early 1960s that the American Surgeon General revealed the first alarming and broad-spread information about tobacco and cancer and other diseases.

So here we are. We've come along enough that we can take a dramatic critical approach to the tobacco industry and tobacco consumption, yet we somehow still think because McDonald's and Burger King and the whole nine yards of them can wrap themselves up with fluffy, fuzzy animals and Ronald McDonald clowns, and can pay blood money, like McDonald's houses that accommodate parents of kids who are getting treatments in hospitals in big cities—yet we say these people are somehow good corporate citizens. I say bullspit. Bullspit.

1720

Why should we not be taking the same critical approach to those corporate entities that could care less about your health or, for that matter, the health of your kids and grandkids? Why should we care any more about their well-being and longevity than we do about the tobacco industry's? We actually talk about them as being good corporate citizens.

And, of course, the argument of choice—oh, yes, the old choice. Well, you know that there are still smoking advocates, tobacco advocates, shills for the tobacco industry in the United States and Canada, and internationally. They say, "Well, we don't tell people to smoke two packs a day. People have to show moderation and only smoke one cigarette a day or maybe a cigarette a week." Bull spit. Because do you know what? If smokers only smoked one cigarette a week, the tobacco industry wouldn't make any money.

It's just like casinos who say, "Choice: We don't tell people to blow their paycheques. We want people to show moderation. Just come to the casino once a year with \$10 and gamble that." Once again, bull spit. If

gamblers only spent \$10 a year in the casino, the casino industry would be bankrupt, wouldn't it? The casino relies on people blowing their brains out at that slot.

The booze industry: Take a look at the advertising that is geared 100% toward young people, particularly for so-called soft beverages—beer and coolers, the stuff made out of cheap wine or bad rum or vodka and sweetened up. Talk about bad processed food. The alcohol would be far better for you if you just took a shot. It would be, wouldn't it? You throw in all sorts of sugars and fruit colourings and, again, gratuitous calories. Ms. Gélinas is such a moderate woman; she's worried about people drinking alcohol. I suppose we all should, but it's Christmastime, and I'm sure that any number of us on Christmas Day will gather around with our families and have a modest one ounce of spirits, in good spirit.

But again, take a look at the advertising with beer and coolers. Because, you see, if beer drinkers only drank one case of beer a year, the beer industry wouldn't make any money. It can't survive on beer drinkers drinking one case of beer. The beer industry requires the heavy drinker; it's inherent in the industry.

The advertising is focused on young people. They need new clients. It's the image of the drug dealer hanging around the school yard giving kids free ecstasy or free cocaine or free crack, amphetamines, so that they like it and then, of course, start buying it. The parallels between that drug dealer and the spirits industry and the cigarette industry and the fast-food industry are profound—and we've given the fast-food industry the red carpet into our schools, into our hospitals.

I find it mind-boggling that there's a McDonald's franchise in the hospitals just down the road on University Avenue. What are these people thinking? Spit for brains. Think about it. What are they thinking? Incredible. Here we are: Just down the road we've got a row of Canada's most expensive hospitals on the most expensive real estate providing some of the most specialized treatments to some of the most hard-to-treat cases, and those dumb SOB's have McDonald's in the lounges of the hospital, so that either the guest or the patient—yeah, the patient—can go down, pulling their intravenous, and get themselves a Big Mac. Unbelievable.

I say these things not to be melodramatic, not to be alarmist, but to point out the paucity of policy in this bill, to try to demonstrate to you and maybe to some others that the bill just doesn't cut it.

Choice? You're not doing very much to influence it with this bill, are you? In terms of this government's regard for the health of our children, when you see this is all they've got to put forward, apparently the government doesn't give a flick about the health of our children—thanks to Ms. Broten, of course, for the word “flick.”

So I tell you, I will be guided by our critic, the member from Trinity–Spadina, and other colleagues of mine as to whether or not I support the bill. I haven't heard all the debate yet. I'm reluctant to because I don't want to be endorsing this sort of pap when the crisis requires so much more.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on the Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act legislation. I'm saddened to hear that the honourable member for Welland is reluctant to support legislation which takes the right initiative, the right step to ban trans fats from our schools to ensure that we have healthy lifestyles for our kids.

Let me remind this House again what this legislation is about. This legislation is about ending the selling of food with trans fats in school cafeterias, this legislation is about banning junk food and trans fats in all public school vending machines, and this legislation is about healthier menu choices in cafeterias based on the new Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide. This legislation is not about vending machines in Queen's Park. If the honourable member has problems with that, I'm sure he can take that up with the Speaker.

What we need to ensure is that we take the healthy initiative, a responsible initiative such as this legislation, to ensure that our kids do not face obesity. This bill is moving in the right direction to ensure healthy lifestyles for our kids.

This commitment was very much present in our party's campaign platform. While campaigning just a few months ago, when I was talking to the parents in my riding of Ottawa Centre, every single parent was in support of such an initiative. They want the government to take active measures to ensure that schools are safe and healthy places. That is why I'm supporting and our government is supporting this piece of legislation to ensure that our kids are living and getting an education in a healthy school.

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to compliment the member for Welland because I was out in the lobby on a phone call and I saw when he was speaking. He's so passionate when he speaks and so informed in terms of some of his references to the restaurant industry and initiatives. But the truth of the fact is what he said, that it just doesn't do it. It's like an empty dream, an empty promise, or waking up and realizing you couldn't really remember your dream except that you had one. The problem with the new member for Ottawa Centre is that he's drinking all the Kool-Aid they are pouring for him. He's reading those notes that Dalton has written and he's starting to believe it.

The truth of this thing is in the outcome. We're all in support, and this is a first step. In my view, the member for Welland was quite right when he said that the substance isn't there. There are exemptions. Section 4 has seven different areas where they can initiate regulations and those regulations can exempt hotdog day or pancake day or wherever else it is. All of these things are exempted, if someone brings in stuff and shares it on bake day or something like that—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: The problem is I'm suspicious. I'm suspicious of the motive to sound like they're doing

the right thing but not wanting to create any controversy with some of the food suppliers.

Now, work with the stakeholders on this file and you'll see that the industry itself is responding to Canada's food guidelines as well as the thrust of the debate around obesity in our children, and they should work with an active lifestyle and they should work with the real things they can do in our schools. I'm all for the education component that this debate is about, and the information that will be present in our schools about what is healthy eating. Nutrition is so important; we are what we eat. I'm waiting for the rebuttal from the member for Welland to finally put this to rest, but don't be fooled that because there's a bill before you they're actually doing anything.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I, too, would like to congratulate the member for Welland, Peter Kormos, for his presentation. He certainly was able to make the link between taking a low part and leaving people to believe that you're doing a whole lot more. The bill does not ban trans fat. And even if did, it does not ban junk food in school. This is what Mr. Kormos was trying to say. If you lead people to believe that if it says zero trans fat, it's healthy, you are leading them toward poor health. You are leading them toward disease. What we would like is a very progressive agenda toward health promotion: primary, secondary, tertiary prevention, like some of the examples the good doctor gave earlier today. This would make a difference in the crisis in obesity among our children and be a real concrete step.

1730

All the bill does is give the government the power to regulate trans fats; it does not enact a ban on them. And it treats trans fats differently from other junk food. Here again, it will lead parents to believe that the food the cafeteria is now offering is healthy, but the cause and effect is not there. Because you have banned trans fats does not mean you have nutritious foods. There are a lot of steps in between. Mr. Kormos has given plenty of examples to show us that you can have Oreos, Cocoa Puffs, Nestlé Crunch ice cream bars, Dunkin' Donuts, Kentucky Fried Chicken. Can anybody think of anything more greasy and unhealthy for you than Kentucky Fried Chicken? Well, rest assured, because Kentucky Fried Chicken is now trans-fat-free. Does that make it healthy?

Mr. Charles Sousa: I stand proudly in support of this bill. I recognize that the opposition has a few concerns, but this is a start in the right direction in terms of trying to ensure that our children eat healthy and recognize what's important, and teaching them eventually, later in life, to take on proper habits.

I speak personally of my three children who are in school. They already recognize the difference between junk food and healthy food. They recognize that there is a need for them to concern themselves with exercise.

We take it for granted that the bill may have wrinkles in the process, but in the end it's a beginning, and it's in the right direction.

When we talk about trimming trans fat, it can easily be substituted in the schools with other products. Certain restaurants have already implemented just that.

It's an important bill and it's a safeguard. It's a means by which now we can ensure that future generations will have an opportunity to look back at what we've done to ensure the safety of our citizens and our children.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Response?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you to the members who chose to make comment on my comments. I've got to tell the member from Ottawa Centre, for whom I have regard, that making a two-minute comment during questions and comments really isn't participating in the debate. It really doesn't cut it. What I find remarkable is that here's a bill, the first bill this government has had before this Parliament for second reading, and so few government members want to participate in a meaningful way in the debate. I find that truly remarkable and of great concern. Even the learned doctor from Etobicoke North, who knows so much about this subject, who could have gone on literally for hours, all with new information, was clearly ordered to cut it short at 10 minutes. Then other members, rather than standing up during the rotation and making what could be meaningful commentary on this bill and this most important issue, sit on their hands and in fact are allowed to be deluded into thinking that making a two-minute comment is participating in a debate.

That's not what your voters sent you to Queen's Park for. That's not why you're making the six-digit incomes—some of you more money than you've ever made before in your lives or ever will again. People expect more than this. People expect more of you. People expect you to show some interest in this legislation and not to be following the marching orders of your Premier's office.

If obesity is a crisis among young people—and I believe it is—if obesity is putting untold expenses on our health care system—and I believe it does—if obesity is taking lives at an early age—and I believe it is—then we should be attacking this with all of the force that we can muster, not a tiny first step. Incredible.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: It's my pleasure to spend a few minutes today talking about the Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act. As we talk about what the government is doing with this act, it is really about helping families ensure that we teach our kids how to eat well and that we make sure that all of our children make good lifestyle choices and good choices as they grow up.

I can think only about my own circumstance. Obviously, my kids are not old enough. Zachary and Ryan would probably be getting ready to have some dinner pretty soon at home. They are just over two years old, but I can think about the fact that in their early years of life, I had an incredible focus as a mother on every tiny little bit of food that was going into their bodies. I made sure that

it was all organic and that I was making it at home. I'd get home late at night from meetings and speeches and I'd be making baby food. My husband would say, "Why are you doing this?" I said, "Because I really want to be sure what is in this food."

Now, as they grow up a little bit, obviously there are days where they happen to see something in the grocery store and maybe they want a can of food that has Shrek on it because, Lord knows, every child loves Shrek. The decision, as a mother, that I can make is that I choose how often they get to have that. We are not trying to be the cupcake police and say that kids can't have a hotdog or a piece of pizza at school on a special day, but we, with this bill, want to make sure that our cafeterias in schools serve more than French fries and gravy because, to be frank, Madam Speaker—and you might have been in high school around the same time as I was—there were a lot of days when there were a lot of French fries and gravy being eaten in those cafeterias.

Parents did not know what their children were eating. That is the critical point: making sure that there are alternative choices and that if a parent gives their child the \$2 that it takes to participate in a pizza or hotdog day, they are making that informed choice with their child. They know what their child is eating that day. But on a regular day, in the cafeteria in our schools, without any healthy choices, a parent has no idea what their child might be eating. You're not able to say, "Well, this is a special treat. Let's have pizza night on a Friday night." How many families do that? Lots of families do it. Lots of my constituents do that; we do that at home. But it's a decision that you make for a special night, a night when you know that the next day you'd better eat a lot of salad and vegetables. We want to make sure that kids have those choices.

If you look around the world, you see some other jurisdictions that are really moving aggressively on this point. We see very famous chefs around the world who are tackling this issue, for example in the UK. What they're finding is, that's a real struggle, but once those healthy choices are provided, students are taking their lunch money and buying that good, healthy food. If the contrast is something yummy and greasy like poutine versus something that looks horrible like a dried-up, very wilted salad, then, of course, none of us would make that choice. We are all of us susceptible to making those decisions, of being drawn by something that seems would be very delicious in the instant.

But when you have those healthy choices—and we're seeing a transition here in our own cafeteria in the Legislature. It is much easier this year to eat healthy in this building than it has been in the past. That's helping all of us make those good decisions.

When we look at how you start your life and you make your health decisions and your food habits, your eating habits develop so early in life. I have a pilot project for that development right in my own kitchen because, with two siblings exactly the same age, one will want to eat something totally different than the other.

What I offer is always healthy, but I have one who will always pick meat and one who will always pick vegetables. In fact, sitting on their high chairs, they'll exchange foods. They'll trade off who wants to eat what. So those habits of what you want to eat are formed early.

1740

We know in the province that we are seeing that the rate of obesity in kids has just tripled over the past 25 years. You really only need to spend some time outside a schoolyard, around your community at a children's festival or something to see first-hand how significant that challenge is for us. Obviously, during the month of September, all of us in this Legislature were out and about in our community.

One of the things that I do is, I really make sure that I talk to parents at school drop-off and pickup times. I talk to them about how we can help families better make sure that their kids are ready to learn. That's been a huge and significant real love that our Premier has worked on so hard, making sure that our kids are ready to learn, whether it's going to be full-day, early learning initiatives in our schools for our kids who are in SK or JK, having that envelope around them of extra care and health—and I see that already. Kids are ready to learn if they are well fed and if they've eaten something that's healthy. Every single person in this room and all of our constituents and TV viewers know full well that if your child is hungry and you give into that little treat that they're looking for, the behaviour is not going to be the best. Every mom knows that. That is just a tiny little snippet of how, if we make sure our kids have protein, they've eaten something healthy, they're going to be ready to learn in that classroom when they get back from lunch.

Mr. Mike Colle: They don't fall asleep.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: They don't fall asleep. They haven't had a big unhealthy lunch and they've eaten something healthy.

That's the premise of breakfast programs that were started in schools on another spectrum to make sure that our kids are healthy. In my own riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore, people work so hard across the community. John English school has a fantastic breakfast program. They feed a lot of kids there and make sure they're getting a healthy breakfast. They want to make sure the kids have a healthy breakfast, get the day off to a good start and then choose only to have something unhealthy and laden with trans fats in the cafeteria.

What this bill does is put an end to the selling of food with trans fats in school cafeterias. It is the starting point of picking one element of unhealthy foods, saying the inclusion of trans fat is often a component of a very unhealthy food product and let's get that out of there.

When it comes to junk food—and I know we've heard a lot from the opposition with respect to what we're doing with junk food. Let's remember, we already banned junk food in our elementary school vending machines early in our last mandate. It's been very successful. Again, it is getting at an element of the sale of food where there are absolutely no controls. Very

anonymously, a child can get up to that vending machine, buy that junk food and make a decision to throw—maybe their mom or dad or maybe they made it themselves; maybe there was a healthy lunch sent to school that day and it got tossed in the trash because a bag of chips and a can of Coke was seeming a lot more interesting. We're going to make sure you can't get that in a vending machine, whether it's an elementary school or a high school, because it's a real attractive draw.

How many of us have been in our places of work at 4, 4:30, 5 o'clock and you're starting to get hungry. All you really want is something to eat to get you through to that dinner. If all there is are chips and pop, that's what you will eat. That is exactly what we are trying to eliminate in our schools.

I think the other important element and a real significant component of the Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act that cannot be underestimated is the healthier menu choices in cafeterias based on the new Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide. So taking instruction from Canada's Food Guide, finding ways to reflect our multicultural heritage in this country, making sure there's all sorts of interesting foods to eat and that they're healthy.

It is quite amazing to see my own children in their garderie where they are, that they're eating tabbouleh and couscous and every kind of multicultural food that exists, and it is great to start that early on. If you don't start it on the home front, you can start it now in your school cafeterias when we get those healthier menu choices. When we see those healthier menu choices start to be in place, we will see a development of a palate, a desire to eat healthier because, if you eat a healthy lunch, you feel better that day.

Mr. Mike Colle: And more chick peas. You've got to eat chick peas.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: Chick peas, beans and black beans are very healthy components. My colleague from Eglinton-Lawrence and I were down in the cafeteria recently. We got ourselves a great salad filled with all sorts of protein elements, and it was a good start to an afternoon. It will help our kids make sure they are ready to learn and that is, for our government, a critical, critical component.

We are making sure we're improving all elements of the education system, and our Minister of Education and our Premier have done an incredible job moving the yardstick forward.

Mr. Mike Colle: What's the Japanese word for soybeans?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: Edamame.

Mr. Mike Colle: Kids love edamame.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: Edamame is a favourite. For all moms who are watching out there, one big trick around my house, if no one will eat any protein, is to offer them edamame. You can buy them frozen in the grocery store. You just get them a little bit warm, soft—and pure protein; they love them. It's a great healthy eating trick and they actually think that they are a treat,

so you can also convince kids that all of these great, healthy alternatives are treats.

I want to pick up on something the member for Welland was talking about: families having meals together. There's no doubt that in this modern, busy age families aren't able to have those meals together as much as they would like. I know that that's the case right across the province, right across the country and in many parts of the world. Parents are working hard to make ends meet and they're struggling to sit down for that meal. But the fact that families aren't sitting down for dinner does not mean that the mom or dad cares any less about the food that is going into that child's belly. We want to make sure those options are available and that we're helping our kids learn to be good eaters, because it will set them off on a path. If they set off on the wrong path, and when we see childhood obesity rates soaring, we know that those obese children are going to be adults with a lot of health issues.

That's why people like the heart and stroke association and others very much support what we're doing with respect to this bill. They know that those health issues will follow our children for their entire life and they will struggle with those issues. If we eat things that are high in calories and we are not focused on good, healthy eating, we will have health problems that will last us for many years. That is at the root of what this is about: making sure that our kids learn how to eat well, that we give them those choices, that we have them understand what it means to eat healthy. Let me just give you a very depressing statistic. The Heart and Stroke Foundation estimates that the consumption of processed trans fats may account for 30,000 to 50,000 heart attack deaths every decade in Canada.

To see a linear connection between something like trans fats—no reason to have it in our food. We do not need it except for those tiny, rare instances when it's in that food naturally and we have made an exemption for that type of food, what is essentially healthy food but with a minor component of trans fat. We need to do everything we can, as a government that cares about the health of our society, the health of our kids, that they are ready to learn and to work, to make sure we tackle those heart attack deaths. Adults who suffer a heart attack may then choose to really improve their fitness and they're going to start working out. All of us, as we age, know lots and lots of people who are starting to do that. Why would we not try to do that early on? Why would we not try to set Ontario's young people, Ontario's students, on a path where they will not have to have a mid-life revelation that they need to eat healthy?

I'll just give a little story about my own dad. My dad was a real health food guy when I was very young, and one of the things I struggled with was how healthy my lunches were that he would send to school with me. Sandwiches made out of meat—cheese sprinkled with sunflower seeds was often a component of the lunches that I was sent with, and there's no doubt I probably would have been prepared to trade that with somebody.

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But what was driven home to me by my parents, regardless of whether they were with me or with me only in my head, was that you need to eat healthy because if you are a healthy person, if you are an active person and you eat well when you're young, you will not have many, many other health issues and challenges that you might encounter later on. You should take your vitamins, you should drink your milk, you should eat your protein and your whole grain bread. We never had anything other than brown bread when we were growing up.

So despite the fact that our kids are going to school, as they should, every single mom and dad wants to know that the government is their partner in making sure that they're there ready to learn, with healthy food ready to eat. That's what this bill is about. It is our symbol of partnership with parents across the province. We're there with you. We want to make sure your kids have those healthy choices. We're going to do what we can to partner with you in that regard so we will have healthy foods for healthy schools, and that will mean we will have healthy kids.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Tim Hudak: It's a pleasure to rise to comment on my colleague from Etobicoke–Lakeshore's comments—interesting remarks. I do want to say, though, after we had a general election and we had almost a month-plus pause before the assembly was actually called into session, the bill that the government puts on as their main priority—their big change, their big vision for where Dalton McGuinty wanted to take the province of Ontario for the next four years—has to do with regulating high school and elementary school cafeterias. It just seems such a bizarre set of priorities.

We see standardized testing, for example, falling far short of what Dalton McGuinty promised. I know that's sort of redundant and all. We've given up on meeting promises in the first place, I suppose, from the government, but my goodness, you'd think we'd see some initiatives around the quality initiatives. How are you going to raise the quality in the classroom, how are you going to ensure our students succeed and compete with the best in the world? All the students we know in York, in Hamilton, in Niagara, now in portables, the biggest expansion of portables, I think, in the history of the province of Ontario due to their malfunctioning cap policy—nothing on that. Trying to expand deteriorating schools like Central Public in Grimsby, Blessed Trinity in Grimsby—not on the agenda.

Instead, let's talk more about regulating cafeterias in the province of Ontario because, my goodness, that's the number one priority with parents in the province of Ontario. They want to know that the Colonel Sanders Kentucky Fried Chicken is not coming through that school door. I can imagine those poor students hovering outside of the doors of the school, trying to scarf down those trans-fat chips because they dare not take it into that school. Meanwhile, guns and knives and violence hap-

pening across the province of Ontario—never mind that; let's go after that bag of chips.

I am just shocked that after an election, after a long pause, this is the meagre offering of the Dalton McGuinty government when it comes to improving quality in our classrooms.

Mr. Paul Miller: I must say, that was a wonderful presentation by my colleague from across the room. She touched on a lot of areas that are of concern to people in our province about our children and what they eat.

However, if this government really wants to make a difference on this particular bill—I agree with the former speaker that this probably isn't the major priority in our province, but it definitely has to be dealt with. If you look, most trans fats consumed today are industrially created and are partially hydrogenated plant oils, a process developed in the early 1900s and first commercialized by Crisco in 1911. If you really want to address this bill, then maybe you should go to the industries that are continually putting these things into the food. You can't just ban a cafeteria chocolate bar or a bag of chips and say that that's going to end the process. You have to go to the source. The source is the industries that put this stuff into our food. Why isn't the government going after that? This is just a small step towards the major problem.

“Trans fats, in their common name, are unsaturated fat with trans isomer fatty acids. These fats may be mono-unsaturated or polyunsaturated.”

These are the types of situations that they have to deal with. They have to go after the content which is being produced in our province and put into these foods. If they did that, they wouldn't have to worry about what's in the vending machines, because the contents would be healthy.

This is not going far enough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Certainly, the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore did a wonderful job in presenting the key elements of Bill 8. It was a masterful job in pointing out why we need to bring in Bill 8: to provide that positive platform for students in our schools, in elementary and secondary schools, so that they could succeed at learning each and every day, grasp those fundamentals of reading, writing and arithmetic, and participate in phys ed and take on music and acting courses. This is why this is such a substantive piece of legislation that we want to get through this House in short order.

I want to talk about a manufacturer in my riding of Peterborough, Quaker Tropicana Gatorade, that employs 600 employees, all members of CAW. Our good friend Buzz Hargrove endorsed our platform in the last election because he knows who stands up for working families in this province, and it's this government. In fact, they've done a lot of research in developing snacks, granola bars, that they've eliminated trans fats from. They're to be congratulated as a good corporate citizen in Ontario and Canada to develop a whole series of snacks.

I take the opportunity, when I'm home in Peterborough, to pack my kids' lunches—my son, Braden,

who's nine; my daughter, Shanae, who's eight—and I make sure that when I pack their lunches they have these healthy Quaker snacks that they can have each and every day. That's important—important to the economy of Peterborough; important to the economy of Ontario.

I salute the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, who has made the case this afternoon to get this bill passed in the province of Ontario.

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore—I congratulate her on her new role. There were some trans fats that she missed tracking when she was the Minister of the Environment. I don't mean that in any harmful way except to say that she's missing the point.

She did read the notes that were provided to her well. Those notes were pretty much that this is a substantive bill, which it isn't. The opposition, both ourselves and the third party, have made it clear that it's an important topic. It could easily have been done more or less in private members' business on a Thursday. We would have agreed to it and it would have set up a regulatory framework to achieve some of the laudable objectives.

The truth that we've said all along—we need to know the starting point so that we can measure that there's been some degree of success. There should be some disclosure of what it's going to cost to enforce and administer this in the schools. Who's going to be checking these things? How are they going to be doing it? Some of the service providers, as was mentioned—I know the member from Peterborough, those treats he's putting in from Quaker—I hope he's disclosing those to the Integrity Commissioner.

The only thing is, in all sincerity, we agree. But what we've got to be clear about here is, you're really not doing anything. There are so many exemptions in this

process. I'm worried about fundraising in schools today. That is a large deal. Often, it's about selling chocolate bars or chips or bake sales. Are they going to shut this down?

There's some stuff here, real operational questions that are going to be problematic. If there's a problem, I'm sure McGuinty will be just like with the licence plate; he'll just say, "No, we won't do it."

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Response?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I guess in response what I would say to my colleagues across the House is that our kids' health is worth it, and we are prepared to take whatever steps we need to do to ensure that we start tackling those obesity rates, that we make sure our kids are healthy and are eating healthily. That's what this bill is about.

As I said, Madam Speaker—and I know you're a mother—this is about partnering with mothers and fathers across this province to let them know: "We want to work with you to make sure that your kids are in school, ready to learn." This is one of the steps that our government is taking in addition to making sure that our kids get more exercise and that they are in schools that are safe and healthy with all the components to make sure that that educational experience is one that ensures that generations to come will thrive and prosper. That's what this bill is about: healthy food for healthy schools for healthy kids.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): It being 6 o'clock, this House now stands adjourned until tomorrow, December 13, at 10 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1801.

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Randy Hillier, Lisa MacLeod, Julia Munro,
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Lou Rinaldi, John Yakabuski, David Zimmer
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Joe Dickson, Kevin Flynn, Sylvia Jones,
Norm Miller, Mario Sergio, Peter Tabuns
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

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Norman Sterling, Maria Van Bommel, David Zimmer
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Règlements et projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Paul Miller
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Gerry Martiniuk, Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch,
Michael Prue, Tony Ruprecht, Mario Sergio
Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecek

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Helena Jaczek, Dave Levac, Shafiq Qaadri,
Khalil Ramal, Laurie Scott, Peter Shurman
Clerk / Greffière: Katch Koch

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