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of Ontario

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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 14 April 2008

Lundi 14 avril 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Monday 14 April 2008

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Lundi 14 avril 2008

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO WINTER YOUTH GAMES

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to announce to the House that the Sport Alliance of Ontario has unanimously chosen the region of Muskoka to host the 2010 Ontario Winter Youth Games.

The Ontario Winter Youth Games are held every two years and bring together athletes, officials, supporters and volunteers. The winter games help the province's amateur athletes sharpen their skills for future national and international events. Not only will the games showcase great competition, but also highlight the outstanding community spirit and exceptional beauty of Muskoka.

This announcement follows on the heels of a very successful inaugural Paralympic Winter Championships in 2006 and the selection of Huntsville and Lake of Bays as the host of the Ironman 70.3 triathlon this year in September.

Muskoka's success in attracting and running sport tourism events is bolstered by thousands of volunteers who give selflessly of their time and energy. To those volunteers, I say thank you.

Muskoka has proven its year-round appeal and versatility once again. I congratulate the Muskoka members of the bid committee on its success. They are Cheryl Kelley of the town of Bracebridge; Kelly Haywood of the town of Huntsville and the Huntsville/Lake of Bays Chamber of Commerce; Jody Somerville of the town of Gravenhurst; Walt Schmid from the township of Muskoka Lakes; Marianne Braid from the Southeast Georgian Bay Chamber of Commerce; and Jennifer Schnier from Lake of Bays.

I invite you all to join me in supporting our young athletes and the Muskoka communities that will host them in the winter of 2010.

**CANDLELIGHTERS CHILDHOOD
CANCER FOUNDATION**

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: It is my pleasure to rise in the House today to highlight the good work of the Candlelighters childhood cancer support program in my riding of Ottawa Centre.

Each year, approximately 400 children are diagnosed with cancer in Ontario. More than one child per week will be diagnosed with cancer in eastern Ontario, 70 of whom will receive treatment at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario.

The Candlelighters organization offers tremendous support to families coping with the daily realities of childhood cancer, while undertaking local activities to promote an awareness of childhood cancer. They provide the simple things that mean a lot to families in need. Whether it be cafeteria vouchers or money for a wig or paying their utilities at home, Candlelighters offers financial assistance to families in crisis.

In addition to financial assistance programs, Candlelighters also offers programs that help families cope with the emotional issues surrounding a cancer diagnosis. The organization provides informal weekly drop-in sessions for parents and caregivers, holds workshops and seminars, and facilitates a support group for bereaved parents.

In the month of September, Candlelighters undertakes to raise awareness about childhood cancer. To that end, I am pleased to be able to support this organization as they work diligently to have the month of September recognized as Childhood Cancer Awareness Month.

I want to extend my sincere compliments to chair Brian Heaney, executive director Jocelyn Lamont, and all the staff and volunteers of the Candlelighters childhood cancer support program in my riding of Ottawa Centre for their commitment and dedication to the community.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I appreciate the opportunity to speak on behalf of residents of Durham region who attended a public meeting last Thursday. The meeting, held by the hospital board and the Central East LHIN, was to address public concerns regarding the forthcoming closure of the in-patient mental health unit at Rouge Valley Ajax hospital. Almost 1,000 Durham residents attended this meeting, which went almost an hour over its allotted time. The residents expressed their concern about the consolidation of in-patient mental health beds at Rouge Valley Ajax and Centenary hospitals and the elimination of those beds from the Ajax site.

Residents expressed a number of concerns. One major issue was transportation and the need for someone experiencing a mental health crisis to be seen immediately by a professional team, not one up to 30 kilometres away. Another concern expressed repeatedly at this meeting addressed the issue of the rapidly growing population in

Durham region. It's been reported that Rouge Valley Ajax and Lakeridge Oshawa both run at close to 100% capacity as it stands now. The movement of these beds would place undue stress on the Lakeridge Oshawa location, as those patients aware of the Ajax closure are more likely to access emergency services in Oshawa in order to avoid being sent to Scarborough.

I would like to quote the member for Ajax-Pickering, who said, "This is our hospital. We've worked on it and supported it for 53 years. I can't see a significant amount of savings from moving the mental health beds from one hospital to the other."

I hope that he will continue to express his concerns to the Minister of Health.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Paul Miller: A group of grandparents in my riding are performing a significant service for their children, grandchildren and their community. They have taken on the responsibility of raising their grandchildren when their own children are incapable of doing so because of drug abuse, mental health or other issues. But, as with so many aspects of our social services in Ontario, they've been running into brick walls when asking the province for appropriate support.

To try to raise awareness of their plight and to provide a place for grandparents to come for help, they have formed an organization called ROCK, which stands for Raising Our Children's Kids.

This group in my riding has been meeting with my staff to find ways of getting the government to provide assistance that the children and grandparents need, particularly when the grandparents are on fixed incomes.

For years, these families were receiving the minimal help of TCA, temporary care assistance, through the Ontario Works program. Since 2006, various municipalities, including Hamilton, have been cutting off these families from TCA support; the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Social Benefits Tribunal have upheld the decision of the municipalities to do so. The only outcome of this is a severe financial strain on these families, which are already going through enough turmoil.

Through meetings that my staff and ROCK have had with the Hamilton Ontario Works staff, they have come to the conclusion that the Ministry of Community and Social Services needs to make a change to the Ontario Works Act, 1997, to ensure that these care providers receive the full benefits that they need to raise their grandchildren.

In the meantime, the ministry needs to clarify their directives to those municipalities that have cut off the grandparents from temporary care assistance and to ensure that this is available for all grandparents throughout Ontario who are raising their grandchildren.

PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Mr. Joe Dickson: I rise in the House today in support of individuals and families affected by Parkinson's

disease, which was eloquently introduced this past week by the member from Whitby-Oshawa.

This past Friday, April 11, was Dr. James Parkinson day. For everyone in Ontario, it was a day to recognize Dr. Parkinson, who defined the disease, and a day for us to reflect on the challenges that face supportive families and individuals living with Parkinson's. They face hardship every day, and I feel like we owe them much more than one day a year.

1340

Therefore, I'm pleased to acknowledge that today, some very important people involved in this cause are being honoured. Today, the Parkinson Society will be presenting awards to their top volunteers. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the 300-plus members of the Durham region chapter of the Parkinson Society for all of their hard work and their volunteers on raising awareness of this devastating disease.

Furthermore, I recently had the opportunity of meeting with Jean Keary, who chairs the Ontario advocacy committee of the Parkinson Society. Jean raises awareness not only through her work with the Parkinson Society but also through supporting her husband, who suffers from Parkinson's. On behalf of Jean, her husband and all of those who are suffering, I urge anyone who has the means to volunteer your time, make a donation and help build a better understanding of Parkinson's disease.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: We already know that the McGuinty Liberals are silent when it comes to human rights policy in China. Now the McGuinty Liberals are following in China's secrecy footsteps, first with the economic development minister's covert junket to China and second with the secret meeting with the Premier and a Chinese governor. What's next? Are the Liberals going to start silencing protestors at Queen's Park just like they did this morning when members of the Queen's Park press corps showed up to interview the Premier? Unfortunately for comrades McGuinty, Papatello, Duncan and Smitherman—our very own Gang of Four—Ontarians can't be silenced and neither can our press.

Ontarians expect transparency, not closed-door meetings and not secret trips with the regime that is right now being repudiated for its human rights abuses. Will the Premier lift the veil of secrecy? Will he let the world know that Ontarians value human rights, peace and a free press? Will the Premier stand here today and make a statement that human rights do matter in this province? Will he clarify that human rights are not just a federal matter? And when he does, will he condemn human rights abuses in Tibet, in northwestern China with North Korean immigrants and in China and abroad against the Falun Gong, or will he just sit back in secret?

JEFFREY BUTTLE

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I rise today to commend the achievements of Jeffrey Buttle, Canada's gold medal

winner in last month's World Figure Skating Championships. On Saturday, I had the pleasure of attending a skating gala presented by the Pickering Skating Club in which Jeffrey Buttle performed his brilliant gold medal routine in front of an enthusiastic crowd of admirers from Pickering and Durham region at the vast Pickering Recreation Complex.

It was just recently that I also had the privilege of attending another significant event at that very same complex, an event announcing a new partnership between the Ontario government and the city of Pickering. The Pickering Recreation Complex is recognized across Canada for its award-winning design and program-filled agenda. On this occasion, the province of Ontario, as part of its municipal infrastructure investment initiative, presented the city of Pickering with a grant of \$1 million to expand the Pickering facilities. The expansion of this terrific facility will add to the city's ability to provide further programs for the enjoyment of all who use it, including enhanced fitness facilities and programs.

I would like to once again congratulate Jeffrey Buttle for his outstanding gold medal achievement and for coming to the city of Pickering and allowing its proud residents, including myself, the pleasure of seeing what the world saw when he captured the hearts and minds of skating enthusiasts the world over.

POVERTY

Mr. Charles Sousa: As the famous saying goes, "Those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it." I use it today to distinguish how the McGuinty government chooses to invest in Ontarians rather than follow the steps of the Conservative government's call for drastic and unsustainable tax cuts. These Conservative cuts led to devastating consequences to our social programs and initiatives, and usually hurt lower-income families the most.

One of the most substantial ways that this government is investing in Ontarians is with the development of the Ontario poverty reduction strategy. The cabinet committee on poverty reduction will build the strategy around the Ontario child benefit, with measures and reasonable targets by the end of 2008.

While working to complete this strategy, this government has taken the early steps with investments of \$135 million over three years to provide dental services to low-income Ontarians. We have doubled the funding for student nutrition programs—now \$32 million over three years—which help to provide nutritious meals and snacks to children and youth in Ontario's schools and community settings. This government will also provide a total of \$100 million to all 47 municipal service managers to repair existing housing stock, which will enable repairs for about 4,000 units.

We know there's more work to do to alleviate poverty in Ontario. We acknowledged this with the creation of the cabinet committee and its work on a poverty reduction strategy. But we're not giving up. We will continue

to work with many community organizations and individuals who share our goal of investing in all Ontarians.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It's my pleasure to rise in the House today to speak to the recent funding announcement of \$667.2 million for Ontario's hospitals. This funding, which is a 4.9% increase over last year, targets new beds, more surgeries and lower wait times. This means that we will see increased access to hospital services in Ontario's fastest-growing communities. It means continued funding for surgeries and MRI and CT scans as part of Ontario's wait time strategy. This announcement marks the earliest-ever detailed allocation of hospital funding, allowing hospitals and the local health integration networks, or LHINs, to know how much money they can count on for the year.

I am more than pleased to let you know that the Central LHIN, which covers my riding, received a 5.53% increase in funding with this announcement, resulting in over \$973 million in base funding for 2008-09.

This announcement falls in line with what this government is doing to revive Ontario's health care system after nine years of drastic and damaging Conservative cuts and closures. Since 2003, we've increased hospital funding in Ontario from \$10.9 billion to \$14.4 billion in 2008-09. Since 2003, over 100 new hospital projects have been completed or are under way.

Ontarians want their government—

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

RED TAPE AND REGULATORY REVIEW ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LA RÉVISION DES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES ET DES DISPOSITIONS RÉGLEMENTAIRES

Mr. Hillier moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 57, An Act to establish political oversight over legislation and regulations to reduce red tape and unjustified regulatory burdens / Projet de loi 57, Loi établissant un régime de surveillance politique des lois et règlements afin de réduire les formalités administratives et les fardeaux réglementaires injustifiés.

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. Randy Hillier: It is my pleasure to introduce my very first bill, focused on red tape and regulatory review. For far too long, the nameless have created a red sea of regulations from their ivory towers without scrutiny by

this assembly. This bill empowers all members, from the back row to the front, to remove regulations that provide no value, regulations that infringe upon freedoms and reduce competition.

It is imperative that we in this House do our homework before enacting regulations. It is time to get back to basics—

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

ONTARIO MEDAL FOR CIVILIAN BRAVERY ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LA MÉDAILLE DE BRAVOURE DES CIVILS DE L'ONTARIO

Mr. Yakabuski moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 58, An Act to create the Ontario Medal for Civilian Bravery / Projet de loi 58, Loi créant la Médaille de bravoure des civils 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. John Yakabuski: Ontario currently does not have a medal for civilian bravery. The only medal the province has is one for police or firefighters. I believe that's an oversight on the part of the province, and this act would serve to remedy that.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. Michael Bryant: I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Monday, April 14, for the purpose of considering government business.

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.

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

The division bells rang from 1350 to 1355.

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

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Bradley, James J.
Brown, Michael A.

Duguid, Brad
Fonseca, Peter
Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kular, Kuldip
Kwinter, Monte

Phillips, Gerry
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario

Bryant, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chan, Michael
Colle, Mike
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
Dombrowsky, Leona

Mangat, Amrit
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McNeely, Phil
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Moridi, Reza
Naqvi, Yasir
Oraziotti, David

Smith, Monique
Smitherman, George
Sousa, Charles
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those opposed will please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bailey, Robert
Bisson, Gilles
DiNovo, Cheri
Elliott, Christine
Gélinas, France
Hardeman, Ernie
Hillier, Randy
Horwath, Andrea

Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Kormos, Peter
MacLeod, Lisa
Marchese, Rosario
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul
Munro, Julia

Murdoch, Bill
Scott, Laurie
Shurman, Peter
Tabuns, Peter
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakabuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 47; the nays are 23.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Agreed to.

1400

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

VICTIMS OF CRIME

VICTIMES D'ACTES CRIMINELS

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I rise in the House this week to mark National Victims of Crime Awareness Week. Our first priority is to do whatever we can to prevent people from becoming victims of crime. For those who have suffered from crime, we strive to support them with compassion and respect by building on the efforts of governments past, as well as individuals and organizations, to ensure they have the services they need.

Notre gouvernement offre aux victimes des services de soutien lorsqu'elles en ont le plus besoin, c'est-à-dire tout de suite après la perpétration de l'acte criminel, tout au long du processus de justice criminelle et, par la suite, lorsqu'elles tentent de reconstruire leur vie.

Tout au long de la semaine, je parlerai de la détermination de notre gouvernement à poursuivre les efforts passés en vue d'aider les victimes à se remettre du traumatisme qu'elles ont subi et à se construire une vie solide pour elles-mêmes et pour leur famille.

Our government offers services to support victims when they need help the most, be it in the immediate aftermath of crime, throughout the criminal justice process or as they rebuild their lives. Throughout this week I will be talking about our government's determination to build on our past efforts to help victims recover from

trauma and build stronger lives for themselves and their families.

Today, the McGuinty government is announcing the largest commitment to victim support ever made by an Ontario government. This government is making \$100 million available to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board to help more than 8,000 victims of violent crime and their families. It ensures that the board, which awards compensation to victims of violent crime, can meet all its current obligations to victims as quickly as the claims can be processed.

The need for additional resources was recognized by the Ombudsman's report on the board last year. Since then, 90% of the Ombudsman's recommendations have been addressed. Last year, we provided the board with an extra \$14.75 million to both compensate victims and hire more adjudicators and staff, modernize its operations and speed up the hearing process. As a result, the board has reduced its caseload by hearing 40% more cases than before, which means that over 1,000 more victims had their cases processed this year compared with last. Now, our \$100-million commitment will ensure that the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board can deal with its outstanding cases and meet victims' needs in a way that is both timely and respectful.

In response to the Ombudsman's report, we also appointed former Chief Justice of Ontario Roy McMurtry to study the role of direct compensation within the array of services now provided to victims of crime. The government is expecting his review later this year.

We've come a long way from where we once were when it comes to supporting the victims of crime. When the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board was first established in 1971, it handled a couple of dozen cases per year. It was one of just a few services available to victims at that time. A lot has changed since the 1970s. Over the years, many new and innovative services supporting victims have been created.

Back then, there were very few sexual assault or rape crisis centres. Now, 39 provincially funded sexual assault/rape crisis centres offering counselling and supports to victims and survivors of sexual abuse offer their services throughout the province of Ontario.

Back then, victims who were also witnesses of crime had little in the way of help to get them through our justice system. Today, more than 41,000 Ontarians benefit from guidance from our victim witness assistance program to make their way through the court system, including special help for child victims and witnesses.

Back then, in the immediate aftermath of a crime, there was little help available, but things have changed. Ontario's victim crisis assistance referral service helped 48,000 victims last year, with immediate on-site service available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Back then, victims of domestic violence, who are overwhelmingly women, came into contact with a court system that too often set offenders free. We can't return to those days. Our domestic violence court program addresses the complex issues of harm and fear found in

abusive relationships by helping victims and holding offenders to account. Specially trained prosecutors, victim witness staff and police work with victims, community agencies and the court to break the cycle of violence. The goal throughout is to break the cycle of violence by ensuring that those who commit domestic violence are prosecuted. Breaking the cycle of violence is essential to helping women rebuild their lives.

Without commenting directly on them, recent events remind us that from time to time, the law can challenge the best of motive, intention and system. Our determination is to meet the challenge and develop the necessary options that can respect a system of justice founded on the presumption of innocence while providing complainants in crisis with the support they need. Over the next few days, we'll be meeting with representatives of a number of organizations to find these additional options.

Our dedication and determination is clear. It's reflected in the new supports that we've developed. It's reflected in the fact that over the past four years we have invested an additional \$340 million in services to support victims, more than twice the amount of any previous government—

M. Rosario Marchese: Encore en français.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: —which has found favour, I understand, from members of the third party, specifically the one commenting.

Our major commitment to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board is just one of the ways our government is marking Victims of Crime Awareness Week. Throughout this week, we will be speaking to other initiatives. We will continue to improve services for victims of crime and their families. We will continue to work to make sure victims receive the help they need as soon as we can reach them. We will continue to work to help keep children safe when they visit parents who need supervision. We will continue the work to address the roots of women abuse, protecting victims and holding abusers accountable. We will continue working with individuals and organizations that support victims. We are all dedicated to ensuring that victims are treated with respect, compassion and sensitivity. Together, we'll seek innovative ways to provide victims with the support they need in the most challenging of situations.

Je sais que tout le monde voudra saisir l'occasion pour remercier ceux et celles qui travaillent d'arrache-pied pour aider les victimes de violence. Ce sont leur dévouement et leur compassion qui aident les victimes, ainsi que le système de justice criminelle, à surmonter les nombreuses situations difficiles qui surgissent.

I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has worked so hard to support victims of violence. It's their commitment and compassion that help victims and the criminal justice system, and all those involved in it need commitment and compassion to get through the difficult circumstances that arise. It's with their helping hands, compassionate hearts and much-needed guidance and advice that the real difference is made.

PREMIER'S AWARDS
FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE
PRIX DU PREMIER MINISTRE
POUR L'EXCELLENCE EN
ENSEIGNEMENT

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We know that across Ontario there are wonderful things happening in our schools. We know that these wonderful things happen because of the hard work and dedication of outstanding principals, teachers, support staff and board staff. It's their caring and individualized attention that inspire students to succeed and motivate them to reach higher. These are the people who keep our schools clean, healthy and safe. They are the individuals who nurture tomorrow's engaged and empathetic citizens. They challenge young minds, open up doors, and help each student learn to the best of his or her ability.

Today I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to recognize some of those exceptional individuals through this year's Premier's Awards for Teaching Excellence.

Ces prix nous donnent l'occasion de remercier quelques-unes des personnes exceptionnelles qui œuvrent dans nos écoles et conseils.

Fourteen individuals and one team of nine from across Ontario are being recognized in six different categories. These categories include Teacher of the Year, New Teacher of the Year, Excellent Support Staff, Excellence in Leadership, Team of the Year and Lifetime Achievement.

Les personnes qui recevront ces prix le méritent certainement.

They are role models, mentors and coaches. They are creative and innovative and demonstrate a real commitment to their professions and to their students.

This year's recipients include teachers who helped students learn by transforming classrooms into an arctic landscape or the Quebec Winter Carnival. They include teachers who took learning outside of the classroom to hike the Niagara Escarpment, explore the battlefields of Europe or cook a meal in a school café.

We're honouring custodians and secretaries whose pride in their work and caring natures have inspired staff and students. We're celebrating a team of education assistants who are helping some of the schools' most exceptional students reach their full potential in all aspects of their lives. We're also recognizing leaders who empower staff and students and who have made a tremendous difference in advancing student learning in their communities.

Ces personnes sont aussi des apprenantes et apprenants enthousiastes et des mentors pour d'autres membres du personnel. Nos écoles recèlent d'exemples d'excellence, et ces prix sont une très bonne occasion de souligner une partie de cette excellence.

I also want to say a special thank you to everyone who took time to nominate someone in their school community.

Le nombre et la qualité des candidatures que nous avons reçues de nouveau cette année témoignent vrai-

ment du calibre des personnes qui travaillent dans nos écoles et conseils.

I would like to offer my most sincere congratulations and thanks to this year's recipients. I'm looking forward to personally congratulating them at a special recognition ceremony during Education Week.

1410

UNIVERSITY FUNDING

Hon. John Milloy: Last Friday, along with my colleagues the members from London North Centre, London West and London-Fanshawe, I announced an important new investment by our government in Ontario's universities.

As part of our government's \$1.5-billion, three-year investment in post-secondary education and training announced in the 2008 budget, we are providing \$200 million in immediate financial support to universities across Ontario. In fact, to date this year, we have invested more than half a billion dollars in our universities, colleges and training programs.

Our announcement on Friday took place at the University of Western Ontario in their biological and geological sciences building. This facility houses some of Canada's best scientific talent. In this building, some of our brightest students are being trained. These students will be the leading scientific minds of their generation. That is what we are investing in today and that is in whom businesses will invest in tomorrow.

This new funding will help universities upgrade and renovate facilities and will provide a better learning environment for students. It will pay for things like new equipment, improvements to security systems, energy efficiency upgrades and accessibility projects.

These investments, coupled with \$200 million for university and college campus improvements provided in January, represent an important step forward for our students and an important step in building a better Ontario for everyone.

Our government does not believe that cutting services to support unwise tax cuts is the way to ensure a strong future for this province. We believe in investing in the people of Ontario. We believe in building a knowledge economy that will be the envy of the world. We believe that businesses want to invest in markets with a strong, well-educated, highly skilled workforce. And that is what our investments in training, colleges and universities are all about.

Our government's plan for post-secondary education is one with vision and one focused on helping individual Ontarians reach their full potential: \$6.2 billion in spending by 2010 through our Reaching Higher plan is already helping people across this province work toward their dreams and build a strong future for themselves.

By investing in our people, investing in our students, we are all building an Ontario strongly positioned to excel in the global economy. Ontario's strength is in our ingenuity and the drive to succeed that we all share.

The money we are investing in university campuses will have an immediate impact in communities across Ontario, creating about 2,000 construction jobs. It will ensure a strong learning environment for our students and it will help turn Ontario into a true knowledge economy able to compete globally.

Our government believes in the people of Ontario. Our investments in post-secondary education are designed to help each student unlock their true potential and achieve their dreams.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm pleased to rise today to respond on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus to the statement made by the Attorney General regarding National Victims of Crime Awareness Week. This is an extremely important topic and something that we in the Progressive Conservative Party take extremely seriously. I would like to note just for the record that during our mandate we were responsible for the Domestic Violence Protection Act, the Victims' Bill of Rights, the victims' serious action plan and the Office for Victims of Crime.

Let's take a look at the record of this government—not such a good track record in this respect, because the Office for Victims of Crime has been reduced to just an answering machine, virtually, not really doing anything to help the people of Ontario. The Criminal Injuries Compensation Board had to be the subject of an Ombudsman's report because the work of this board had virtually ground to a halt because of underfunding and understaffing, to the point that the Ombudsman noted in February 2007 that immediate action needed to be taken with respect to this matter.

Some money was dedicated to that, admittedly, last year; \$100 million today over two to three years, but I guess that's because you have to make some kind of an announcement and throw more money at it if you don't really have any other kind of plan, especially when you consider that Chief Justice McMurtry—a great choice, by the way—has not even reported on the role of direct compensation within the array of services now provided to victims of crime.

I would say that it's great to have more money; it's more important to have a plan. We need to have a dedicated plan to deal with the very important services provided by witnesses to crimes and also support the very vulnerable people who are victims of crime. I would say that it's great to throw money at it, but what exactly are you going to do, and how exactly are you going to help people without having the full picture, without having Mr. Justice McMurtry's report?

UNIVERSITY FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: In response to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities: It just irks me that the Liberal ministers continue on this mantra that tax cuts

somehow mean less money for government. We proved during the PCs' time in government for eight years that revenues went up every year as we lowered taxes and employed over one million net new jobs in the province of Ontario. Your best income is income taxes from working people, not 200,000 good manufacturing jobs lost in the last two years in this province.

Once again the government, without a long-term plan for infrastructure and universities, is dropping money, and students have been asking for years for their classrooms to be fixed up. But I say again to the minister this week, as I've said in each of the last three weeks, that there's no use throwing more money at the buildings if you don't hire the 5,500 new professors needed just to keep up with the increased enrolment in our universities.

The Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations has tried to get into your office. I don't know if they've had a meeting yet, but they've been trying for four months. You would think you would meet with the professors in universities in your first four days in office, but they've been waiting and waiting for months. That's complete arrogance on behalf of the Liberal government, and shame on you. You don't want to hear from the people who are teaching university students because you know that even after all of your announcements since your re-election, we're still dead last—10th out of 10—with respect to the student-faculty ratio in Canada and dead last in per student funding.

Dalton McGuinty in 1999 not only made a promise, but he signed a pledge as opposition leader that he would bring student funding per capita up to the national average in his first term in office. Well, your first term has passed. It's now four and a half years since you've been in office and we're still 10th out of 10, the laughingstock of Canada when it comes to funding our universities. You throw a little money for books and a little money for travel. You need to get tuitions in line and you need to get your funding up. Again, there's no sense building classrooms if you don't have any professors to put in them.

PREMIER'S AWARDS FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE

Mr. Jim Wilson: Just in the last minute I have, on behalf of John Tory and the Progressive Conservative caucus, I want to respond to the education minister and say that, yes, we too appreciate our teachers. Many teachers in my life, like June Merkly, Theresa Keogh, John Bertram and Mary Brett, had a profound impact on my life, and I know we can all name our teachers who had an impact on our lives.

Congratulations to those who were nominated. Congratulations to those front-line teachers who inspire our young people, who bring out their creativity, who help them to be the best they can be. I congratulate the Minister of Education for that program. It is one that the Liberals brought in and it's a good program. All the best to our teachers, and may you keep up the good work.

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr. Peter Kormos: Do you wonder if anybody out there—anybody—believes anything the Attorney General has to say when it comes to this government and victims? This government talks about treating victims with compassion and respect. Tell that to Noellee Mowatt, who, after getting a beating hung on her, called the cops and ended up getting tossed in jail. She did 10 days of time. That's the equivalent—think about it—to a 30-day sentence for being victim of a crime.

The Attorney General stands up and talks about support for victims in the immediate aftermath of the crime, throughout the criminal justice process. In the 10 days that this young, 19-year-old pregnant woman spent cooling her heels at the Vanier Centre, not one person from the crown attorney's office came to see her, not one cop came to see her and not one victim support person came to see her. This government should be ashamed—ashamed—of itself for victimizing the victim and turning its back on the victim.

By God, talk to Julie Craven and her dad. They're the mother and granddad of Jared Osidacz, murdered, but being denied the dignity of a stand-alone coroner's inquest and not being given access to the provisions of Jared's law.

That's the kind of absence and delinquency this government has when it comes to victims of serious crime. The witness protection program in the province of Ontario more often than not consists of a bus ticket to Belleville and a gift certificate to McDonald's. It is virtually non-existent, and it's more notable in its failures than in any of its successes. You inherited a Victims' Bill of Rights that the courts of this province told you wasn't worth the paper it was written on, yet victims still have to work with that fragile bit of nothing under your regime, hoping against hope that a non-existent victims' rights office will have any resources for them whatsoever.

You've got nothing to brag about when it comes to supporting victims, Attorney General. This government should be ashamed of itself. It should hang its head in shame.

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PREMIER'S AWARDS FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I would like to congratulate all the teachers and support staff who are receiving these awards for the fine work they do, often against enormous odds. I think of the custodians, secretaries and educational assistants who for the last 12 years have been doing a lot of work with fewer numbers every year. We're shifting a whole lot of work onto these support staff—the minister denies this—yet that is the reality of the school, and we honour them. Why? Because they're doing double shift for one salary.

We honour teachers who are no longer just educators, because we know today that they're surrogate parents,

social workers, psychologists, police officers, mentors and mediators. Yet when they have other social issues to deal with, such as poverty issues, they have to deal with that as educators. There is no extra support to the teacher to do her or his job as an educator. But there are a lot of poverty questions that impinge on education, and we give them so very little support.

How many times do teachers have to deal with kids who have issues of mental health? Do they get the support that they so desperately need in that classroom? No, they don't. How many times, when students have problems in their families—there is substance abuse of whatever kind and they bring that into the school system, do the teachers get the support they desperately need to educate, to teach? We say no, they don't. Would that they get the support to be able to do the job they do.

So yes, I honour them today, as the minister is doing. And yes, I honour the support staff, as she's doing today, because they do a whole lot of work with often so very little support from our governments.

UNIVERSITY FUNDING

Mr. Rosario Marchese: With respect to the statement from the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities: Often they announce infrastructure monies at the end of the year, where they have a sense of, "What do we have left?" And they throw it out the door to be able to balance their budgets. Is that planning? Is that how we do planning for infrastructure? That is the way the government does it. That is not the way it should be. But money is given for infrastructure at the end of the year once they realize how much money they have, and here's what goes out the door.

When we look at what Paul Genest, president of the Council of Ontario Universities, said—he told a legislative pre-budget committee that "universities need ... \$1.6 billion to improve existing labs, libraries and classrooms.

"University buildings are getting older and coming under pressure from the ballooning number of students, he said."

And what do we get? When I analyze the \$1 billion that's supposedly going out the door, when we analyze line by line, they're only getting \$45 million this year. That's not a whole lot to deal with—

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

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There are a few guests to Queen's Park today that we'd like to introduce.

On behalf of the member for Oak Ridges–Markham: A class will be visiting Queen's Park today—Pierre Elliott Trudeau High School, a grade 10 class.

On behalf of the member for York West: the fifth-grade class from St. Simon elementary school and Ms. Mini, their teacher. We hope they enjoy their tours of Queen's Park today.

On behalf of the member for Nipissing, we'd like to welcome Sharon Walker and Becky Walker in the east members' gallery. Becky's a student at Brock and Sharon is a founding member of the paddle program in North Bay. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

On behalf of the member for Hamilton Mountain, we would like to welcome Jennifer and Eric Fedes, the mother and the brother of page Kelsey, in the east members' gallery today.

On behalf of the member for Brant, we welcome Roz Rickettes and Sandy Wheller, who are participating in a charity lunch and are seated in the east members' gallery.

On behalf of the member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan: Dr. Tom Puk, a professor from the faculty of education, teaching ecological literacy, in the east members' gallery. Welcome today, sir.

On behalf of the Minister of Labour, we welcome to the Legislature today a group of new Ministry of Labour managers participating in a training session. Welcome to Queen's Park.

On behalf of page Adam Laskaris, his grandparents were here for a visit today, and we would like to have welcomed Robert and June Defries to the Legislature today.

On behalf of the member for Simcoe—Grey, welcome to the parents and grandparents and siblings of page Alex Ballagh: Dr. Robert Ballagh and Margot Ballagh; his grandparents John and Joan Douglas; and Joyce Ballagh and brother Cameron in the west members' gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

On behalf of the member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock and the member for Leeds—Grenville, we'd like to welcome the grandmother and mother of page Lucas Bongers, Mary Hall and Christine Bongers, in the west members' gallery. Welcome today to Queen's Park.

PREMIER'S COMMENTS

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: On Wednesday last, you called to order the member for Halton on the basis of something that he had said. You asked him to withdraw that, and he did. In fairness to the member for Halton, in fairness to this House, I said something at the outset of that question period very similar to what the member from Halton said, and I think I should withdraw that here and now as well.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is for the Premier. It seems that the controversy raised by the Minister of Economic Development's trip this week to China to cut a ribbon and the negative reaction to her attempts to get away unnoticed have had no impact on the Premier. We've now learned that earlier today the

Premier hosted a luncheon with Chinese officials and business leaders.

Premier, can you tell the House whom you met with today and what was discussed? Did you tell them about the resolution passed in this House last Thursday? Why weren't members of the public or even the Queen's Park press gallery allowed into this meeting?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to inform the House about the meeting I had earlier today. Several weeks ago, we received a request from the government of Jiangsu, a province with whom we've been twinned now for 23 years. They asked that we might meet with them when they came here with a trade delegation. We said yes to that. Today, I met with Vice-Governor Zhang. I specifically raised the issue of Tibet directly with him. I expressed concerns on behalf of Ontarians regarding human rights, the need for restraint and the importance of a continuing positive dialogue. I shared that directly with Vice-Governor Zhang, and I can say that he listened intently.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: We appreciate that information, but from the Premier's answer, it doesn't sound like there was anything top secret or privileged in what was discussed at the meeting today, yet the media were booted off the property. When they were asked if their removal was hotel protocol, they were told, "No, it's Liberal protocol."

It begs the questions: Why was the meeting held behind closed doors? Why are you afraid to face the press and the public on the issue of Tibet? Why are you shielding Chinese officials from being asked questions about their government's actions in Tibet?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: One of the things that I told Vice-Governor Zhang—he's the vice-governor of one of 22 provinces in China, so Ontarians had better understand what we're talking about here. I told him that immediately afterwards I was going to come to question period, that we had question period on days that the House sits, and that was an opportunity for the opposition parties to hold me to account. He was surprised at that process, but I embrace that process. So contrary to the intimation being made by the leader of the official opposition that somehow we have something that we're not prepared to share with Ontarians, I'm here today at question period. I met earlier today with Vice-Governor Zhang. We had a good discussion on a number of issues, economic and other, and I stand here today to report to the people of Ontario about that.

1430

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I think the Premier's responses raise concerns about the sincerity of the resolution tabled by the government in this House last Thursday.

The economic development minister tries to sneak away to China unnoticed, and when concerns were raised, the Premier's response last week was that human rights is a federal matter. And today, in the face of public protests outside this building, the Premier is holding closed-door meetings with Chinese officials.

We have to ask: Is this the Liberals' economic policy—trade at any cost, no questions asked, even if it means doing business with countries that run roughshod over human rights?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: First of all, I never said that human rights was a federal matter. I said that we look to the federal government to set policy direction when it comes to our foreign relations. Human rights is the responsibility of every single Canadian.

This is what it really comes down to: I guess I could have said we're not going to have a discussion, I could have taken an isolationist approach, but that's out of keeping with the Canadian direction that we have embraced for some 40 years now, which is to pursue constructive engagement. By virtue of having this meeting, I came much closer than any members of the opposition have to talking to somebody in a position of influence and to raising those concerns directly with that representative of the province of Jiangsu on behalf of the people of Ontario.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is to the Premier. Premier, yesterday's hospital funding announcement was a disappointment because it provided no new money to address the inflationary pressures or the growing volumes. Really, it was only a reannouncement of what was in your budget. Thus, the deficits remain.

We learned today that the LHINs have now directed the hospitals to do whatever it takes to balance their budgets and sign the agreements, even if this means firing nurses and other staff, closing hospital beds or cutting services.

I say to you, Premier: How many beds will close, how many nurses and other staff will be fired or positions simply left vacant, and how many services will be cut?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman: I was in the very privileged position yesterday to be announcing, on behalf of our government, an additional investment in Ontario's hospitals totalling \$667.2 million. And I do say that the characterization, just as one example, that was offered by the CEO of York Central Hospital did stand in sharp contrast to the characterizations offered by the critic from the opposition.

Further, the member would know that here we are, less than two weeks into a new fiscal year, and already in our province we've told hospitals, through local health integration networks, what they can anticipate for their operating resources.

We further know, therefore, that no hospital can have a deficit, as we are only two weeks into the fiscal year, and we further know that no nurse has been laid off. Until such time as the honourable member has the name of an individual who has been laid off, maybe she should lay off that speculation.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: To the Premier: It's not speculation. There is no new money. This is simply the money that was announced in your budget which was

allocated to the LHINs, and it doesn't meet the inflationary pressures and it doesn't meet the growing volumes.

We now hear that LHINs are suggesting to hospitals that have deficits, which will only worsen next year, that they go to the bank and get a loan to pay off their deficits. I say to you, Premier: Why are you directing the LHINs to direct hospitals to go and get a loan at the bank to pay the deficit?

Hon. George Smitherman: I know that the member is making that up—I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw.

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

Hon. George Smitherman: I know the honourable member has a very poor foundation in fact for such an allegation. What I do know for sure is that in two fiscal years this was actually the practice of her party while in government. They said to hospitals, "Run up your debts, and we'll cover them later," and they never did.

But in the order in which we're working, we do anticipate that each hospital will work within the resource that is available to them, because each and every one of us in our daily lives and in the way we work is obligated to do that. But for the honourable member, who is against the health premium and therefore proposes a \$3-billion cut to health care, it is a little generous to suggest that 4.9% is not above the rate of inflation in Ontario, and it's hard to suggest to Ontarians that \$667 million of their money is nothing but a paltry sum.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Premier, you probably know that hospitals are in dire straits today. In fact, you have more supervisors than we have seen in the past and you also have an investigator. There are very, very serious problems. I ask you today, as a result of the deficits, as a result of the fact that you provided no new money—this is the same money that the hospitals had before—how many nursing positions are going to be lost in this province, and how is patient care going to suffer as a result?

Hon. George Smitherman: Only the honourable member, a veteran of this place, would try to pretend that new resources allocated within two weeks of the beginning of a fiscal year are not new resources to those hospitals. Only the honourable member would pretend that an aggregate number given in a budget stands as all of the information that hospitals would need to know about their individual application.

On the issue of nurses, I'm very, very proud to be part of a government that has added thousands and thousands of nurses to date and that has a commitment to add, through a \$500-million investment, 9,000 additional nurses in the province of Ontario. No nurse has been laid off as a result of this process. Any discussion of deficits is highly speculative. We're very, very proud to be a government, unlike hers, that makes investments in hospitals—new money every year, each and every hospital.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Howard Hampton: To the Premier: Ordinarily, when the Premier meets with government leaders from other jurisdictions, the meetings are announced well in

advance and the McGuinty government spares no measure in promoting the event with the media. Can the Premier tell us why his luncheon meeting today with the vice-governor representing Jiangsu, China, was a closed-door meeting and why journalists who attempted to attend were forced to leave the building?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let me just tell you a bit more about the meeting. In 1985, Ontario entered into its first twinning agreement with any part of China, and we did so with the province of Jiangsu. When I was in China a couple of years ago now, I also had an opportunity to renew that friendship accord. We were pleased to receive this delegation from Jiangsu, and I was pleased to seize the opportunity to raise some issues of concern to all of us as Ontarians and as Canadians, issues concerning Tibet and human rights. I encouraged the government to practise restraint and to pursue a constructive dialogue. I think it was an important opportunity for me to give expression to those things on behalf of Ontarians, I seized that opportunity and I think I fulfilled my responsibility in so doing.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I can see the Premier tried desperately to answer the question. This is the question that people want answered. People saw the McGuinty government last week weave and duck and dodge and try every technique possible to avoid taking a strong position on human rights in Tibet. We all know that if the Premier meets with the governor of Michigan or if the Premier meets with someone from Europe or someone from India, the meeting is announced well in advance, the cameras are lined up; in fact the cameras are triple deep. But here we have a serious human rights problem in Tibet, and the Premier doesn't want any cameras and orders the journalists—orders the journalists—to leave the building.

My question again: What is the McGuinty government trying to hide? Why is the McGuinty government so afraid of taking a strong position in public—

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

1440

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to remind the leader of the NDP of the resolution, the motion that we moved last week, which he supported. I believe we were unanimous in this matter, and I'll just refresh his memory by telling him what the motion said. It said, "That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, as a longstanding friend of China, express concern with the current situation in Tibet and encourage the parties to engage in meaningful dialogue." As a direct offshoot of that, I seized the opportunity to speak with Vice-Governor Zhang today to bring these concerns directly to his attention and asked that he bring that home to his government as well, and relay our concerns. I think that's what Ontarians want us to do and that's why I did it.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Premier, it seems to me you're still trying to avoid the question. Provincial governments, state governments and national governments around the world are speaking out on human rights, especially the human rights situation in Tibet today—

except for the McGuinty government. Last week, you tried to say that the trip to China was announced well in advance. Then your own spokesperson said, "We didn't know anything about it." Then you tried to say, "Well, the federal government is really responsible for human rights. It's not a provincial responsibility." We know that's not true. We saw, again at the end of the week, sort of as an afterthought, a motion presented to Legislature. But if you now admit that human rights is important, tell us: Why was the meeting where you say you raised human rights held in secret? Why were the journalists and photographers ordered out?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, the leader of the NDP knows that Minister Papatello on at least two public occasions indicated that she was about to travel to China. As a part of our weekly practice here, on Friday afternoons we put out my agenda for the coming week. So that was made public as well—what I would be doing this week, including the meeting that I had today. The leader of the NDP also knows that together we supported a motion just last week expressing concern with the current situation in Tibet and encouraging the parties to engage in meaningful dialogue. He voted for that. I assume he adopts that approach that we have been bringing here in Ontario and Canada generally. I took the opportunity—seized the opportunity, in fact—to meet with Vice-Governor Zhang and to raise concerns that have been expressed by the people of Ontario.

POVERTY

Mr. Howard Hampton: Today, representatives from municipalities, unions, academic institutions and immigrant groups gathered here at Queen's Park to send the McGuinty government a strong message: that provincial governments can dramatically reduce poverty if they have the political will to implement tough anti-poverty measures—measures like an immediate increase in the minimum wage to \$10 an hour and \$11 an hour by 2011. My question: Will the McGuinty government act now to ensure that we have a minimum wage in Ontario that lifts all full-time workers out of poverty?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We've just raised the minimum wage once again; I think it was by close to 9%. We're raising it all the way to \$10.25 an hour, and I fully expect that before that point in time we'll have to put in place yet another plan providing for its regular growth so that it's in keeping with and somewhat relevant to the cost of living.

I want to thank, first of all, the group referenced by the leader of the NDP for the work they've been doing collectively and individually. We're going to need their help as we work together to embrace poverty issues. We like, in fairness, to think that we've made some progress. Notwithstanding this time of financial challenge, we invested, in our last budget just put out, an Ontario child benefit to the benefit of 1.3 million children; we have announced once again our support for nutrition—we're doubling funding found in that particular program that

will benefit 84,000 more children; and there's a new dental program for children and low-income families. There's more work to be done, but we are in fact moving forward.

Mr. Howard Hampton: And the fact remains that workers who work for the minimum wage in Ontario still fall below the poverty line.

Yes, the McGuinty government, with great fanfare, with yet another photo op, announced an Ontario child benefit. But behind the scenes, the McGuinty government reduces Ontario Works benefits, eliminates the winter clothing allowance and the back-to-school clothing allowance for the poorest kids in the province. Today, the 25 in 5 coalition called for enriching the child benefit and ending the clawback of benefits from families on social assistance.

The question is this: Will the McGuinty government take the advice of the 25 in 5 coalition and immediately stop clawing back benefits from the poorest kids in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I can understand the leader of the NDP's impatience when it comes to these matters. I only wish, when I had the opportunity to observe him at close hand when I sat in that seat from 1990 to 1995, that he expressed the same impatience at that point in time, when he stood on this side of the House.

The leader of the NDP is now saying that the Ontario child benefit is not enough, but he didn't support it; he voted against it. We believe that it's going to make a real difference and a positive difference in the life of a poor family in Ontario. It's going to grow to \$600 and ultimately to \$1,100 per child. We think that's very significant support for our families.

On the matter of the snowsuit, the Minister of Children and Youth Services indicated that we intend to address that issue. In fact, she has addressed that in a very specific way to ensure that no children and no families are compromised as a result of the program as it's been designed.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Premier, it's Campaign 2000 that says that social assistance rates in Ontario today are lower than they have been at any time since 1967. You have to go back to 1967 to see a time when social assistance rates were lower than they are today.

The 25 in 5 coalition, along with other anti-poverty activists and experts, understands that a greatly expanded child care system is essential to reducing poverty. Yet, when you look at the McGuinty government's latest budget, there is no mention at all of increasing the number of affordable child care spaces. Why is the McGuinty government turning its back on poor Ontarians by refusing to invest provincial funds in our child care system so we have affordable child care spaces?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Just to introduce a few facts, a single parent with two children is now receiving 27% more this year than in 2003. We think that's a significant increase. We think that is a very significant increase overall in terms of support of all of these families.

Look at some of the new things that we have invested in along the way to help out poor families in particular. In addition to the Ontario child benefit and our new dental program for children of low-income families, there are new investments in everything from insulin pumps for children with diabetes, free vaccines for 1.5 million children—that saves \$600 per child. We have a newborn screening program, up from two tests to 28. I assume that you could have purchased additional tests, but we've gone from last place to first place in Canada in terms of the number of tests. There's our nutritional support program. We've tripled funding for autism. We have in fact increased social assistance rates as well. The point that I'm making is, we've done much, but there's obviously still more to do.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Health. On March 25, I gave the minister a letter personally in which I asked him to look into why his ministry continues to deny approval for cone beam CT scanners in dental offices here in Ontario. It's a technology that's approved in every other province in this country. Denying Ontario residents access to that technology means that dentists have to refer their patients to the local hospital and have them queue in the CT lines there.

The proposal to approve this technology will cost the government nothing. It will remove patients from the local hospital's CT lineups and it will actually improve the health care because exposure to radiation is reduced by some 10 times with this technology.

Can the minister report to the House what steps he's taken to ensure that this approval will in fact be expedited, and when we can hear about the results?

1450

Hon. George Smitherman: The matter that the honourable member raised with me in the House by way of a letter has been forwarded to the relevant individuals within the ministry. I would anticipate that we'll be in a position to give the honourable member some information in due course. The honourable member has chosen to make this the number one priority for him, but we're working on a wide variety of them at the ministry. But in relatively short order, I should be in a position to give the honourable member some more information.

Mr. Frank Klees: While I'm encouraged about that, here's what I find somewhat passing strange: This will cost the government nothing. The approval has been given to every other province in this country. It will take people off of the waiting lists that the minister is so concerned about. Why would it not be as much a priority for the minister as it is for me and as it is for every dentist and patient in the province of Ontario?

I would simply ask that the minister move this item from wherever it might be on his list of priorities closer to the top so that we can get on with this. There's no cost to the government, it will improve health care in the

province of Ontario, and it will in fact not only afford the people of this province access to better health care, but will reduce the very waiting lists that the minister is so concerned about.

Hon. George Smitherman: In making the case for fast action, the honourable member says, “Well, there’s no cost to the government.” But the member himself, a former minister, must understand that the scarcest resource is not financial; it’s related to time. The Ministry of Health is a big place. We have lots of work ongoing and we will address this issue appropriately, keeping in mind that we have important priorities like addressing challenges in emergency rooms and the wait times for the people of Ontario and enhancing access to doctors and nurses. I will not be shunting them out of the way to prioritize the member’s initiative, but I will be working to address this initiative appropriately within the scope and size of my ministry, recognizing that it is a very specialized matter and accordingly does desire and require some advice—more highly trained and skilled than I am, certainly.

ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Today, parents of youth with addictions and mental health problems have come here to make their voices heard. They’ve not been heard before. Their struggles are shocking. There are only 44 beds for affected youth in the entire province and zero in Toronto, forcing families to spend tens of thousands of dollars of their own money on private care for their kids at risk. Worse, OHIP covers treatments in the United States of America costing, again, tens of thousands of dollars per month. Canadian treatment centres in other provinces are not open to Ontarians in need.

When will the minister commit himself to overhauling a system that he has known for five years is broken and does not work?

Hon. George Smitherman: It’s rather unfortunate that the honourable member has not been able to keep pace with alterations and investments to the system. I am certainly sorry that it has failed to meet the expectations of some of the parents who were here. As I understand it, the cases they were raising, at least in some circumstances, were from several years past. I can tell the honourable member that our capacity in Ontario has been expanded to 86 beds, and since August 2007 we have introduced 23 additional beds at Pine River in the Shelburne area. As a result, I can confirm to the honourable member and to the House that the number of people in the time since who have been sent out of country has been reduced to two. In fact, we repatriated two patients who were then receiving care in the United States.

I will be happy by way of supplementary to let the member know where future investments can be anticipated, as we are working on developing exactly the strategy that he calls for.

Mr. Michael Prue: Back to the minister: The minister will also know that Pine River is only about half full and

that the additional spaces that are there are for privately paying people, not through OHIP. He would know that, I would think.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: They can’t afford it.

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes. Sadly, so many of them cannot afford it.

Today, the group who call themselves Tragically OHIP have proposed a five-point plan to overhaul Ontario’s shameful youth mental health system. The families are here in the audience today, and they’re hoping against hope to hear something. They have never had an opportunity in all the years requesting to meet you to actually do that. They are here to tell their stories and demand action from this government. They do not want other families to have to go through what they have had to go through these past five years.

Will the government begin today by investing in youth treatment programs here at home in Ontario adequate to meet the needs?

Hon. George Smitherman: Apparently, the honourable member didn’t like hearing that we followed the advice, only we didn’t wait till now; we did it eight or nine months ago. We paid for 23 additional beds at Pine River, and since then, we’ve been able to address the circumstances where Ontario’s kids were being sent out of province.

Indeed, there are areas where more investment would be required. I would specifically note that we intend to work to address the gaps that are there, specifically for young women and individuals with eating disorders. In the Ottawa community, we know there is a glaring absence of capacity that we will also be moving soon to address.

I’m very happy to meet with the group, and I hope that the honourable member might send over to me the contacts of those individuals.

I’m very, very certain that building on the investments which we’ve already made at Pine River, with 23 additional beds, and with the additional capacity that we intend to implement, we’ll be able to enhance the capacity all across the breadth of our vast province, to the benefit of these patients.

ADDICTION SERVICES

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: My question is also for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, the NDP held a press conference today to highlight their concerns about funding for youth residential substance abuse and addiction treatment facilities.

Substance abuse is a concern for all Ontarians, and we want to make sure that people can get help when they need it. Would the minister please tell the House what you are doing to improve access to treatment for youth with substance abuse problems in Ontario?

Hon. George Smitherman: I think we had a good chance in the earlier question to identify some of those pieces of progress that we’re making with respect to residential treatment.

It's important to acknowledge as well that in an environment where a young person might be experiencing good supports at home and good connection to family and others, working through programs in local communities, not necessarily residential programs, is also important.

In the province of Ontario, we do have 46 substance abuse treatment programs that are designed and oriented particularly for youth. I mentioned that eight of those programs, representing 86 beds, provide specialized residential services and are addressing youth that are 12 to 24.

It's a little bit unfortunate that the New Democratic Party was not able to be current in the characterizations that they were making.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I know that there are some youths who have to travel outside of Ontario to receive residential substance abuse treatment services. Minister, can you please tell this House how you're helping to improve access to treatment so those youths can receive the help that they need closer to home?

Hon. George Smitherman: Obviously, it's a priority at all times to be able to offer the care as close to home as is possible because of what I just mentioned in the earlier answer: the need to have supportive families and other environments as part and parcel of the process.

I'm very pleased that with the additional \$3-million annual investment that we have made at Pine River since August 2007, there has been a very substantial reduction to two individuals who have been sent out of the province of Ontario.

As I mentioned earlier, our mission to enhance access to these services is not complete, mentioning particularly that young women—those with eating disorders and the Ottawa community stand as three examples, certainly, where we intend to make investments that will allow us to very substantially complete building the capacity necessary to support these young people in the province of Ontario, to address the very, very dramatic challenges related to substance abuse.

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TOBACCO CONTROL

Mr. Norm Miller: Last week, I asked the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship a direct question about what he was going to do to help small business owners comply with the new retail display ban for tobacco products. Instead of answering the question, he deflected it to the Minister of Health Promotion. So I ask the minister again: What specific measures has your ministry taken to help convenience store owners comply with these new regulations?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me thank the member for asking this question. First of all, we need to understand why we're doing this. This whole ban is about saving lives and improving health care costs. Every year in Ontario, about 13,000 people die because of smoking. So we want to make sure that these people are protected,

our young people are protected and our health care costs are reduced.

Answering your specific question, I want to tell you that we have been working very closely with the convenience store association and also the Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association. In fact, I just met with them last week, and they are very happy with the steps that our government has taken.

I will be able to elaborate more in the supplementary question.

Mr. Norm Miller: First of all, the question was not about the health aspects of this. We all support reducing smoking in this Legislature. Certainly I'm hearing different stories from the business operators.

This legislation was passed over two years ago, but the government waited until this January before it introduced any guidelines to help convenience store operators comply with this retail display ban. As a result of this government's lack of planning, many businesses are being given only a few weeks to completely redesign displays that, in some cases, have been in place for over 30 years.

Sonny Cho of the Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association said to CTV news, "Ontario's convenience stores, thousands of which are run by Korean-Canadians, are being pushed to the brink of bankruptcy by this government's anti-small-business policies."

Minister, why did your government wait for nearly two years before it introduced the guidelines to help the convenience store operators who continue to be ignored by this government?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: This issue is about health care costs and it is about saving lives in this province.

I have met with the Ontario Convenience Stores Association and also the Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association several times. In fact, just last week I met with them. Let me tell you what they said to me. David Bryans, who is the president of the Ontario Convenience Stores Association—this is what he wrote to me:

"I would like to take this opportunity to briefly thank you for all the help and support that you, your cabinet colleagues and the Premier have given to Ontario's independent, family-run convenience stores ... as I have said in the past, all OCSA members will comply with the Smoke-Free Ontario Act."

I really want to commend them for their co-operation and thank them for the contribution they make to this province.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Education. When the Toronto District School Board had local control of its own revenues, it was able to build and maintain community swimming pools across the city. Now that the McGuinty government controls the revenues, why is it that the Toronto District School Board is being forced to close these valuable community assets?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to off the top talk a little bit about what we have done with the Toronto District School Board over the last four years. The board has more than \$360 million every year, more than it had when we came into office. This year alone, there is a program enhancement grant. Across the province there's \$45 million, but the Toronto board gets \$5.4 million that could be applied directly to sports programs.

The point here is that the Toronto District School Board and every other board across the province has to establish its own priorities. Since we came into office, every year we have increased resources to the boards across the province, including the TDSB, to allow them to meet the needs of their communities. It is an anomaly that swimming pools in Toronto, historically, were built in schools. They are community assets. The Toronto board and the city of Toronto need to work together to keep those assets in place.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The swimming pools in the Toronto District School Board are assets that have already been built and paid for by the local communities. These communities have made the investment in the health and safety of their children. Will the minister assume the financial responsibility and keep these schools open, or will she be responsible for the closure of these pools come June of this year?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I am on record as a school trustee and as a citizen of this city supporting the community assets in this city, and I will not take the accusation from the member opposite that I don't stand up for the community. I am absolutely committed to increasing the support for the Toronto District School Board, which we have been doing for the last four years—\$360 million more on their bottom line every year; \$5.4 million this year that they could apply to their sports programs.

We will continue to work with the Toronto District School Board. I have spoken to councillors, the mayor and school trustees. This is a community issue that needs to be addressed, and I hope the Toronto District School Board will go back and look at its priorities.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Every one of us in this province has a fundamental right to safe, clean drinking water. It is essential that our water is protected from source to tap and that the rivers, lakes and groundwater that give us our drinking water are protected. I know that our government has been vigilant about protecting our drinking water and in planning for the future to ensure that we have clean, safe drinking water. I am proud that we have implemented every one of Justice O'Connor's recommendations.

Source protection committees in my riding are currently preparing their source protection plans under the Clean Water Act, which set out how they will protect municipal drinking water supplies. Minister, how is our

government helping these source protection committees as they work through these plans?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Let me first of all compliment this member for all the hard work he does not only in his riding, but he's truly concerned about the environment.

We know that through our source water protection committees that are operating throughout the province, they are there to protect water at the source and through the entire system. Our government passed the landmark Clean Water Act to ensure that the source of our drinking water is protected, and we are committed to funding the cost of source water protection planning. That's why we're investing more than \$23 million, of which his source water protection committee got some money as well to help conservation authorities and municipalities finish the technical studies they need to develop plans for protecting local sources of drinking water. That builds on our previous commitment of \$120 million that was spent between 2004 and 2008 for technical studies and capacity building.

It's all built on good science. Studies need to be done so that we know how to protect the sources of our water in our various communities. The work is being done—

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

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'm pleased to hear that our government is helping municipalities, conservation authorities and source protection committees to undertake this important work in source protection. I can tell you that the conservation authorities in my ridings were thrilled when I announced over \$2 million in funding to support source water protection in 54 municipal drinking water supplies within this region.

On Friday past, I visited the Lower Trent Conservation Authority, where representatives from all five CAs were present to discuss this vital source that we must protect now and for generations to come. But protecting our drinking water is a shared responsibility. Individuals too have an essential role to play in protecting the sources of our drinking water. Property owners and small businesses in rural Ontario are making changes that help protect drinking water sources, like upgrading wells. Is our government helping individual Ontarians to protect their drinking water sources?

Interjections.

Hon. John Gerretsen: The opposition may laugh about these matters, but we take the protection of our sources of water and our drinking water very seriously on this side of the House.

We listened to the property owners and small businesses in rural Ontario, and they told us they needed financial assistance in order to make the changes that help protect drinking water sources, like upgrading wells and septic systems or installing runoff and erosion controls. Last year—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask members to have some respect. There's been generally a good attitude in the chamber today of listening and allowing

questions to be asked. So I'd just ask the co-operation of the opposition benches. Minister?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, I cannot understand why the opposition doesn't want to listen to the good news of this government when it comes to our environment and our drinking water sources.

Last year we provided over \$7 million under the Ontario drinking water stewardship program for farmers, rural property owners and small businesses. The funding is there to help them put measures in place to safeguard drinking water sources and to provide education—the opposition can use some of that—and outreach as far as our drinking water sources are concerned.

We have committed an additional \$21 million over the next three years. We want to make sure that our drinking water is the best—

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

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TOBACCO CONTROL

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Minister of Revenue. Minister, on your website there are numerous news releases from your ministry that boast of your revenue investigators collecting taxes and seizing illegal tobacco products from vendors across Ontario. Each one of your news releases contains this line: "Vigorous enforcement of the Tobacco Tax Act is an important component of the Ontario government's smoke-free Ontario strategy."

As the Minister of Revenue, can you tell us if your government is collecting cigarette taxes on the revenue from the smoke shop located on government-owned property on Argyle Street in Caledonia?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I thank the minister for allowing me the opportunity to answer the question. Since October 2003, Ontario has taken many steps to attack illegal, contraband cigarette sales, including the Tobacco Tax Act. Convictions under the act have doubled between 2005 and 2007, and over the past two years 28 million contraband cigarettes, 177,000 untaxed cigars and a large quantity of fine-cut tobacco have been seized by Ministry of Revenue investigators and inspectors. Indeed, we are proud of the work the investigators and the inspectors are doing in the ministry.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary? The member from Thornhill.

Mr. Peter Shurman: The revenue ministry's website "discourages non-compliance through enforcement activities." Last year, this province lost \$565 million in tobacco tax revenue due to the sale of illicit cigarettes in smoke shacks and the inability of this government to enforce its own laws. Illicit cigarettes now count for 37% of all cigarettes sold in the province, and it's estimated to go to 50% of cigarettes sold by 2010.

Will the minister inform this House as to when the people of Ontario can expect this ministry to order the

seizure of tobacco products from smoke shacks and order the collection of all outstanding taxes owed from the sale of illegal cigarettes?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: The member talks about enforcement. Indeed, we are very, very proud of the collective partnerships we've formed with regard to enforcement. But in fact enforcement against contraband tobacco was strengthened in our 2004 budget, our 2006 budget, our 2007 budget and our 2008 budget. Sadly, both parties across the way voted against that enforcement.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Recently, at a town hall meeting hosted by parents of children with autism, the minister could not say when waiting lists for treatment would end for children who, as the parents described, were rotting on the vine, waiting for three years or more for treatment. What is this minister's plan and what is the timing for clearing the waiting lists for children with autism, or will the McGuinty government continue to leave children, as parents so heart-wrenchingly described that night, "rotting on the vine"?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question. I was delighted to have been at the town hall meeting with the Minister of Education to meet with parents of children with autism. I think both of us learned a tremendous amount from them, and it further fuels our commitment to providing better services for kids with autism.

Our commitment is well demonstrated. We removed the previous government's age-six cut-off because we don't think a child's treatment should be cut off on the day they celebrate their sixth birthday. We have tripled the spending on autism; we have almost tripled the number of children receiving IBI therapy, but we know that it's more than just IBI therapy that is important to families with children with autism.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It is unconscionable that the McGuinty government abandoned so many children with autism across Ontario by letting them languish on growing waiting lists. Notwithstanding what this minister says, the waiting lists are in fact growing for children with autism: 1,063 children as of December, plus another almost 400—381—just waiting for their assessment. Will the minister guarantee today that the government's new benchmarks for assessing children with autism are not going to result in a single child being cut off from their current treatment to make room for the 1,444 children on waiting lists today?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'd like to ask the Minister of Education to respond.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: When the Minister of Children and Youth Services and I attended the town hall, we talked about how probably the most important thing we can do for children with autism is to help them and their families get the placement that they need, get the service that they need when they need it; so, when

those children are very young, to get the IBI therapy. When they are ready to go to school and when they need a transition from that IBI therapy into a classroom setting, it's very, very important that we have the trained personnel in the schools to provide that service. We have instructed school boards to train students. We are providing money in the community and in school boards to train in ABA. There are thousands more people—principals, teachers, support staff across the province—who are able to deal with kids with autism in the school. That's the answer: to get them the right placement when they need it.

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Bill Mauro: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, it has been brought to my attention that the federal government is trying to pass legislation that will bring in changes to the Canadian Grain Commission. Bill C-39 will mean that as many as 220 workers will lose their jobs in Canada, and up to 100 of those may be in my community of Thunder Bay. I'd like the minister to tell me what kind of impact this bill will have on my community and others in Canada if it passes through the House of Commons.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: This is indeed an important question. While this is a federal bill debated in the House of Commons in Ottawa, it impacts not just all Canadians, but particularly in Ontario as well.

One of the parts of the bill would remove the requirement—right now, grain that is destined to be sold within Canada is usually shipped to either Churchill, Vancouver or Thunder Bay for inspection. This bill will remove that requirement. So there's a lot of concern within the agricultural community about the quality of grain and how it can be monitored as it is moved through this country.

The other part of that is what the honourable member has already identified in his question, in that a lot of jobs in Thunder Bay—100, to be exact—would be put at risk if in fact this bill is passed. So I think that at a time when, particularly in northern Ontario, we are looking for ways to support those communities and the very good work that they do, including work to protect our food products here in Canada and in Ontario, those are the kinds of jobs that we certainly should be supporting and not looking to remove.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I know this government has made investments to create and stimulate jobs in the economy. The rural economic development program helps rural and northern communities develop well-qualified workers, better jobs and an innovative economy. I understand that an additional \$30 million over the next four years was announced for the rural economic development program in the 2008 budget. These investments are very much appreciated, and we need more programs like this to help create jobs in northern and rural Ontario.

Minister, could you please tell this House more about these investments and how the McGuinty government is

standing up for the working people and creating jobs in northern and rural Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Excuse me. Explain how your supplementary related to your first question.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Absolutely, Speaker. It's all about jobs in northern Ontario.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Indeed, we are always looking for ways to support our rural economies, whether it's with inspecting grain that comes through various ports—and in this case Thunder Bay. I'm particularly happy that the member from Thunder Bay has asked about the rural economic development program, because it's a program that has worked very well for the Thunder Bay community, and it's because of the partnerships that have been forged in Thunder Bay that our government saw fit to continue to invest. In fact, we've doubled the dollars that we would intend to direct towards rural economic development. Some of the investments through RED in Thunder Bay were \$500,000 for the construction of the Thunder Bay region training complex and \$239,000 to help develop PARO Centre for Women's Enterprise in northeastern Ontario. So in total, since we came to office, 146 projects across Ontario have been supported through the rural economic development program.

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SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Transportation and it relates to a press release that his ministry issued today. The title of the press release is, "Ontario School Buses Get Top Grades: McGuinty Government Keeping Children Safe." I know the minister shares all of our concern for the safety of the children in this province. What I fail to see is how the rest of the release squares with the title. The release goes on to tell us that as a result of a two-day blitz, there were 12 buses taken off the road for significant repairs; 92 buses were under ministry orders for repairs. I want to ask the minister whether he feels that it's acceptable that even one bus should leave the parking lot and take on children if in fact there are serious repairs. Does this really merit top grades for our schools?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm glad the—I almost said "the minister," because he had the privilege of being the minister at one time. It's a good question. I think he and I would agree, and I think all members of the Legislature would agree, that we strive for perfection in this regard and that any deviation from the best of standards is not acceptable to anybody in this province. The 94% compliance—either being acceptable to or exceeding the rules and regulations of the province—I am told is high. Nevertheless, he and I would agree, and all members of the Legislature would agree, that 100% compliance is all that is acceptable in this province. That's why we conducted a two-week blitz of over 1,900 buses in the province to determine what the problem was and to

address those problems. I know he agrees they should be addressed.

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to hear the minister's response, and it was in fact a two-week blitz. Unfortunately, that blitz took place after the media exposed the fact that there were serious problems in our school busing industry. I know that there are responsible operators, but I would ask this of the minister: that he would tell us specifically what steps he is planning to take as the minister to ensure that we do get to the 100% compliance, that the operators will not dare to roll one of their buses off their parking lot and pick up children in this province without being absolutely certain of the safety of those buses.

Finally, I will ask the minister: Will he agree to publish publicly the names of the operators whose buses were pulled off in the course of this two-week blitz so that we know and so that the school districts know who is responsible for endangering our children?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I think first of all the member has agreed, and we both agree, on the importance of a blitz of this kind. He would know, again as a former minister, that on an ongoing basis we have these kinds of inspections taking place. What happens is that Ministry of Transportation officials—sometimes they can be police, if there's reason to believe that there's a major problem—go to the sites or terminals themselves. They examine the buses to determine the road safety record of those buses. They require the drivers themselves to do a daily inspection of those buses—I think it's a 46-point inspection, or something around that neighbourhood, that takes place. Our ministry officials will be meeting with the officials of the Ontario School Bus Association to underline once again the importance of perfection in this regard. Any information that we're permitted to release we will certainly—

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

MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, you almost ragged the puck long enough that time. That was good.

My question is to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. Minister, you'll know that in the late 1990s, the province downloaded to municipalities much of the provincial highway system. In fact, the city of Timmins saw 87 kilometres of highways downloaded to the municipality, which means to say, they've got to maintain these roads—they've got to re-asphalt them, they've got to replace bridges and do all the things that need to be done.

Part of that download was Highway 67. Just to give you a sense, Highway 67 is a provincial highway that connects Highway 11, the TransCanada, to Highway 101. This is not a municipal road we're talking about; we're talking about a provincial highway. On that highway is a bridge, and the province left the municipality with about \$1.5 million to replace that bridge and fix it when the

time came. We're now down to one lane on that bridge, and it's going to cost \$5 million to fix. Are you prepared to help the city of Timmins by coughing up some much-needed dollars to fix the bridge on your provincial highway?

Hon. David Caplan: I know that the member is well aware of the budget initiative, the road-and-bridge funding that was provided to all municipalities, and I know that the city of Timmins did share in that.

In fact, in relation to the municipal infrastructure investment initiative, I had a chance to speak with Mayor Laughren about a project that the city of Timmins did bring forward for approval by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Renewal and by this government. I am very pleased to let the member from Timmins—James Bay know that Timmins, in fact, was approved under the municipal infrastructure investment initiative. I know that they're quite pleased to be able to be recipients of that funding.

I know that we have a long way to go from the era of downloading, the downloading which began—court security and water testing under the third party, and other elements of downloading which occurred under the Conservative Party's watch. I can tell you, Speaker—

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That was almost twice they ragged the puck on me, but I got it in anyway.

I want to say in response that, yes, the city of Timmins got \$7.5 million, but that was for a water plant. We know that they got the money, but that was in order to fix their water plant. You know as well as I do that Mayor Tom Laughren talked to you specifically about this bridge, and his officials are talking to your officials about getting the dollars necessary to fix the bridge.

Here's the picture: We have a provincial highway that has a bridge on it and it's down to one lane. That means to say that if you want to go between Highway 11 and 67, either you detour by an hour or you go over a one-lane bridge, and for many trucks, that's not an option.

My question to you is this: Tom Laughren, mayor of the city of Timmins, and council are asking for your help. Are you prepared to put up some dollars to replace that bridge?

Hon. David Caplan: In addition to the \$7 million that was provided to the city of Timmins, \$1.1 million was provided to them for repair of roads and bridges in the recent provincial budget.

There are a number of tools, including the Ontario Strategic Infrastructure Financing Authority as well as others, which we are of course prepared to make available to the city of Timmins, as we would to any municipality. I can tell you that that relationship that we enjoy with Mayor Laughren and with council has been strengthened. It is much better since the days when court security and water testing were off-loaded by the third party on to the municipality. It's much better than the days when roads, bridges, land ambulance and public health were downloaded on to municipalities by the Conservative Party.

I can tell you as well that officials in my ministry as well as the Ministry of Finance are working on the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review and that we—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has expired.

Mr. Norm Miller: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to standing order 37(a), I wish to give notice that I'm unsatisfied with the answer received today, and I ask for a late show.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. You know to file the proper papers with the table.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from Scarborough Southwest, I just want to welcome the teacher and students of R.H. King Academy in the west public gallery. Welcome today, students.

PETITIONS

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition—which seems to be the concern of people from all over Canada, actually—from Guy Jobin from St. Joseph, Gatineau, Quebec. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from daily proceedings in the Ontario Legislature; and

“Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

“Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message of forgiveness and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

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“Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature.”

I've signed it and I will give it to Marcus.

HOME CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition from SEIU and the people of Owen Sound.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has continued the practice of competitive bidding for home care services; and

“Whereas the competitive bidding process has increased the privatization of Ontario's health care

delivery, in direct violation of the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004; and

“Whereas competitive bidding for home care services has decreased both the continuity and quality of care available to home care clients; and

“Whereas home care workers do not enjoy the same employment rights, such as successor rights, as all other Ontario workers have, which deprives them of termination rights, seniority rights and the right to move with their work when their employer agency loses a contract;

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

“We call on the government of Ontario:

“(1) to immediately stop the competitive bidding for home care services so home care clients can receive the continuity and quality of care they deserve; and

“(2) to extend successor rights under the Labour Relations Act to home care workers to ensure the home care sector is able to retain a workforce that is responsive to clients' needs.”

I fully support this petition. I affix my name to it and I will hand it over to Victoria.

LORD'S PRAYER

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I want to present this petition on behalf of the congregation of Reverend Richard VanderVaart in Dresden, part of my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

“Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty has called on the Ontario Legislature to consider removing the Lord's Prayer from its daily proceedings; and

“Whereas the Lord's Prayer has been an integral part of our parliamentary heritage that was first established in 1793 under Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe; and

“Whereas the Lord's Prayer is today a significant part of the religious heritage of millions of Ontarians of culturally diverse backgrounds;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to continue its long-standing practice of using the Lord's Prayer as part of its daily proceedings.”

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a petition on behalf of Reverend Randy Liedtke and the parishioners of St. Timothy's Lutheran church in Pembroke.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

“Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

“Whereas the Lord’s Prayer’s message of forgiveness and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

“Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord’s Prayer;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord’s Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature.”

I support this petition and send it down with Michael to the table.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I have a very large petition here presented by both W.A. Porter Collegiate Institute and R.H. King Academy. It’s made up of over 1,760 signatures and it’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“... We, the undersigned, are concerned citizens who petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to act now to stop the closure of our school pool.”

I present this large petition. It’s straightforward. I give it to page Adam here today to be filed with the clerk.

WYE MARSH WILDLIFE CENTRE

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre, located in the township of Tay, manages approximately 3,000 acres of environmentally sensitive land which is owned by the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas over 50,000 people visit the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre each year; and

“Whereas over 20,000 students from across Ontario visit the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre each year, receiving curriculum-based environmental education not available in schools; and

“Whereas the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre receives no stable funding from any level of government;

“We, the undersigned, petition the province of Ontario to establish a reasonable and stable long-term funding formula so that the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre can continue to operate and exist into the future.”

I’m pleased to sign my name to it and give it to Prakash.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Joe Dickson: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Central East local health integration network (CE-LHIN) board of directors has approved the Rouge Valley Health System’s deficit elimination plan, subject to public meetings; and

“Whereas, despite the significant expansion of the Ajax-Pickering hospital, its largest in its 53-year history,

a project that could reach \$100 million, of which 90% is funded by the Ontario government, this plan now calls for the ill-advised transfer of 20 mental health unit beds from the Ajax-Pickering hospital to the Centenary health centre in Scarborough; and

“Whereas one of the factors for the successful treatment of patients in the mental health unit is support from family and friends, and the distance to Centenary health centre would negatively impact the quality of care for residents of Ajax and Pickering; and

“Whereas it is also imperative for Rouge Valley Health System to balance its budget, eliminate its deficit and debt and realize the benefits of additional Ontario government funding;

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

“That the Rouge Valley Health System continue to provide the current level of service to our Ajax-Pickering hospital, which now serves the fastest-growing communities of west Durham; and

“That the Ajax-Pickering hospital retain the badly needed 20-bed mental health unit.”

I hereby affix my signature.

LORD’S PRAYER

Mr. John O’Toole: It’s a pleasure to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. This one is from the Bowmanville Baptist Church on Concession Road in Bowmanville, and one of the petition’s signators is Andy Black. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord’s Prayer from its rightful place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Ontario Legislature; and

“Whereas the recitation of the Lord’s Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

“Whereas the Lord’s Prayer’s message of forgiveness and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

“Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord’s Prayer;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord’s Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature.”

I’m pleased to sign this in support and present it to one of the new pages, Adam.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas innocent people are being victimized by the growing number of unlawful firearms in our communities; and

“Whereas police officers, military personnel and lawfully licensed persons are the only people allowed to possess firearms; and

“Whereas a growing number of unlawful firearms are transported, smuggled and found in motor vehicles; and

“Whereas impounding motor vehicles and suspending driver’s licences of persons possessing unlawful firearms in motor vehicles would aid the police in their efforts to make our streets safer;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 56, the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act, 2008, into law so that we can reduce the number of crimes involving firearms in our communities.”

I support this petition and affix my signature, and I’m asking page Marco to carry it for me.

LORD’S PRAYER

Mr. John Yakabuski: I table this petition on behalf of Wayne Kirby, the rector’s warden, and the parishioners of St. Barnabas Anglican Church in Deep River.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord’s Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

“Whereas the recitation of the Lord’s Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

“Whereas the Lord’s Prayer’s message of forgiveness and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

“Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord’s Prayer;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord’s Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature.”

I support this petition, affix my signature and send it down with Victoria.

1540

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that has been sent to me by a number of people in the Mississauga and Etobicoke area. 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.”

I’m pleased to sign and support this petition and to ask page Alex to carry it for me.

LORD’S PRAYER

Mr. Jim Wilson: “Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty has called on the Ontario Legislature to consider removing the Lord’s Prayer from its daily proceedings; and

“Whereas the Lord’s Prayer has been an integral part of our parliamentary heritage that was first established in 1793 under Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe; and

“Whereas the Lord’s Prayer is today a significant part of the religious heritage of millions of Ontarians of culturally diverse backgrounds;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to continue its long-standing practice of using the Lord’s Prayer as part of its daily proceedings.”

I want to thank Trinity United Church in Beeton for sending me that petition.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Joe Dickson: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Central East local health integration network ... board of directors has approved the Rouge Valley Health System’s deficit elimination plan, subject to public meetings; and

“Whereas it is important to ensure that the new birthing unit at Centenary hospital, a \$20-million expansion that will see 16 new labour, delivery, recovery and postpartum (LDRP) birthing rooms and an additional 21 postpartum rooms added by October 2008, will not cause any decline in the pediatric services currently provided at the Ajax-Pickering hospital; and

“Whereas, with the significant expansion of the Ajax-Pickering hospital, the largest in its 53-year history, a project that could reach \$100 million, of which 90% is funded by the Ontario government, it is important to continue to have a complete maternity unit at the Ajax hospital; and

“Whereas it is also imperative for the Rouge Valley Health System to balance its budget, eliminate its deficit

and debt and realize the benefits of additional Ontario government funding; and

“Whereas the parents of Ajax and Pickering deserve the right to have their children born in their own community, where they have chosen to live and work;

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

“That the Rouge Valley Health System continue to provide the current level of service; and

“That our Ajax-Pickering hospital now serves the fastest-growing communities of west Durham; and

“That the Ajax-Pickering hospital retain its full maternity unit.”

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have another petition that is important to the people of south Grey and all over Grey county and Bruce county.

“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 also signed this and will give it to Michael.

DRIVER LICENCES

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I have a petition from constituents of Scarborough Southwest. It’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

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

“Whereas we request the vision waiver package of the Ministry of Transportation to be amended to include a motorcycle endorsement. Under current legislation, a class G licence is all that is allowed.

“This is discriminatory in nature. Current licensing practice assumes that all who apply for licensing will meet the visual field requirement without undergoing actual field vision testing.

“We feel that all people should be judged equally and be required to pass the test given to the general public. Any single group, regardless of medical history, should require no special tests or standards.

“We feel if an individual passes the provincial written and road test requirements, it should be up to their own discretion to operate a vehicle of their choice.”

I submit this petition to page Prakash, who is here with me today.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (SPEED-LIMITING SYSTEMS), 2008

LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (SYSTÈMES LIMITEURS DE VITESSE)

Mr. Bradley moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 41, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in relation to the use of speed-limiting systems in commercial motor vehicles / Projet de loi 41, Loi modifiant le Code de la route relativement à l’utilisation de systèmes limiteurs de vitesse dans les véhicules utilitaires.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I’ll be sharing my time with the parliamentary assistant for transportation, Mr. Brown.

Our government has introduced legislation that, if enacted, will help protect our environment and improve road safety. This proposed legislation will cap the speed of large trucks at 105 kilometres per hour for all trucks built after 1995. This is an opportunity for us to bring about cleaner air and safer roads for our friends and family.

Our government is building on five years of action with an ambitious plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. If passed, this legislation would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by as much as 280,000 tonnes a year, the equivalent of taking 2,700 tractor-trailers off the road each and every year.

It would save the trucking industry an estimated 100 million litres of diesel fuel annually. With today’s high fuel prices, that could amount to a fuel savings worth approximately \$116 million each year for Ontario’s trucking industry, based on Transport Canada’s environmental benefits of speed limiters report. In addition, it has been estimated that speed limiters will also reduce the wear and tear on trucks, reducing maintenance costs.

Go Green, Ontario’s action plan on climate change, is Ontario’s greenprint for climate solutions. This plan includes ambitious but achievable short-, medium- and long-term emissions reduction targets.

Our government already has a number of important initiatives under way to help us reach our climate change goals. They include:

—the green commercial vehicle project, a four-year, \$15-million pilot project to help businesses switch to cleaner technologies such as hybrid power;

—high-occupancy vehicle lanes, our long-term plan to encourage more people to carpool and use public transit, and to reduce traffic congestion on our province’s highways;

—Move Ontario 2020, a \$17.5-billion plan to build more than 900 kilometres of rapid transit in the greater Toronto and Hamilton areas, the largest transit investment in all Canadian history; and

—more recently, the Next Generation of Jobs Fund, a \$1.15-billion fund to support companies whose products reduce pollution and energy use.

I'm sure most of us have experienced a speeding truck zooming by us on our highways, burning excessive amounts of fuel. We anticipate that speed limiters alone will help Ontario achieve approximately 2% of our 2014 greenhouse gas emissions reductions target.

Ontario is a perpetual leader in road safety and we're always looking for ways to make our roads even safer.

Excessive speed is a factor in nearly 23% of crashes involving large vehicles. We anticipate that speed limiters would improve this situation by capping the top speed of large trucks.

If passed, the legislation will make use of speed limiters on trucks mandatory. This built-in electronic device would cap the speeds of large trucks at 105 kilometres per hour. Most trucks built in this last decade already come equipped with this technology. This legislation would require that these devices be activated on Ontario roads.

1550

Our industry partners have shown strong support for speed limiters. The Ontario Trucking Association has stated that more than 50% of Ontario's trucks are already voluntarily using speed limiters. They realize that these devices help improve a truck's fuel economy, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and lower maintenance costs.

We are on the right track here. Not only would we enjoy cleaner air, but limiting truck speeds would also make our highways safer for everyone who shares the road with these vehicles—all of which contribute to a higher quality of life for all Ontarians.

I know all members of this House support measures that will protect the lives of Ontarians. This bill is exactly that kind of measure. Large trucks must operate at safe speeds and our friends and families need to get home safely. This legislation, if passed, would help save lives.

We are serious about improving our environment and we're committed to improving road safety, so I ask my colleagues to support this legislation and urge its passage. Let's work together to build a cleaner, greener and stronger Ontario.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I'm pleased today to be able to speak to Bill 41 and thank Minister Bradley for his leadership on this important bill.

As the minister said earlier, our proposed legislative measures will, if enacted, help protect the environment and improve road safety through the mandatory use of speed limiters on large trucks. This is an opportunity for us to bring about cleaner air and safer roads for our friends and family. The government has heard the public's concerns about speeding trucks on Ontario highways that pollute our environment and create unnecessary risk for others. As we've heard before, the reality we face today is that over one third of Ontario's greenhouse gas emissions come from the transportation sector. About 84% of these emissions come from road transportation, including large trucks.

Ontario has been studying a mandatory speed limiter program for commercial vehicles for the last 18 months. Our research shows a potential for significant environmental and safety benefits from speed limiters. The legislation we are proposing, if passed, would make speed limiters on large trucks mandatory on Ontario roads. This built-in electronic device would cap the speed of trucks at 105 kilometres per hour for all trucks built after 1995. The vast majority of large trucks built within the last decade are already equipped with this technology. The new rules would apply to all trucks travelling on our roads and would include trucks from both Ontario and out of province.

Our proposed legislation would help Ontario achieve the goals set out in our Go Green action plan on climate change by decreasing fossil fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions and improving the quality of the air we breathe. Under this plan, our government has set a series of ambitious but achievable targets to reduce Ontario's greenhouse gas emissions by 6% below 1990 levels by the year 2014, 15% by the year 2020 and 80% below 1990 levels by the year 2050. We expect that initiatives aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the trucking industry could help us achieve 5% of Ontario's 2014 Go Green emissions reduction targets. By 2020, we anticipate that the improvements in the trucking industry will account for fully 6% of our goal.

If approved, speed limiters alone could deliver nearly half of these reductions. Speed limiters would join a number of important green initiatives already under way to help us meet our climate change goals, including:

—the green commercial vehicle project, a four-year, \$15-million pilot project to help businesses make the switch to greener, cleaner technologies such as hybrid power;

—our plan to build a network of more than 450 kilometres of high-occupancy vehicle lanes across the greater Golden Horseshoe over the next 25 years; it's an ongoing project to encourage car pooling and reduce traffic congestion on our province's highways;

—Move Ontario 2020, a \$17.5-billion plan to build more than 900 kilometres of rapid transit in the greater Toronto area and Hamilton, the largest transit investment of its kind in Canadian history; and

—more recently, the Next Generation Jobs Fund, a \$1.15-billion fund to support companies whose products reduce pollution and energy use.

A recent Transport Canada study has found that capping the speed of large trucks operating in Ontario at a maximum of 105 kilometres per hour would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by as much as 280,000 tonnes. This is the equivalent of taking 2,700 tractor trailers off the road each year.

It has also been estimated that speed limiters would save truckers an estimated 100 million litres of diesel fuel every year. With today's high fuel prices, this works out to a savings of \$116 million each year for Ontario's trucking industry, based on Transport Canada's report on the environmental benefits of speed limiters. In addition,

it has been estimated that speed limiters would reduce maintenance costs by reducing wear and tear on trucks. Savings like these are very important to the trucking industry, which is experiencing increasing challenges as a result of the downturn in the US economy.

Ontario's roads are amongst the safest in North America, and our government is committed to improving upon that record by always looking for new ways to make our highways safer.

Ontario has some of the most stringent truck safety laws in North America, including some of the highest fines and sanctions for commercial vehicle-related offences.

One of the ways that our government is improving truck safety is through our work to enhance commercial driver education school standards and commercial driver instructor licensing.

We will continue to work closely with the trucking industry to improve both overall truck safety and commercial driver behaviour.

While driver education is an extremely important part of our plan to enhance truck safety, speed limiters are another way we can help to prevent unsafe driving behaviours before they happen.

It is a well-known fact that speed has a direct relationship with the severity of injuries in a vehicle crash. Research shows that excessive speed is a factor in nearly 23% of crashes involving large vehicles.

Research also shows that by reducing the top speed of large trucks, we can greatly reduce the risk of a crash involving a truck travelling more than 105 kilometres per hour. This would also decrease the severity of crashes, if they do occur. In fact, for every one-kilometre-per-hour reduction in the speed of a vehicle, the risk of casualties as a result of a collision is reduced by 7%. In this way, speed limiters can help our government combat excessive speeding on our highways and its often very tragic results.

Back in March when the government first introduced our proposed legislation, we were supported in the House by a great number of stakeholders who have helped us develop this legislation to improve the environment and help keep our roads safe. These organizations include the Ontario Trucking Association, Pollution Probe, the Canadian Automobile Association, the Ontario Safety League, the Transportation Injury Research Foundation, the Transportation Health and Safety Association of Ontario, the Insurance Bureau of Canada, the Lung Association, Smart Risk and the Ontario Provincial Police. Each of these organizations is to be commended for the valuable input they have provided in getting us to where we are today.

Over the next several months, Ontario will continue to work with our stakeholders and counterparts across Canada to implement this proposed legislation.

The Ontario Trucking Association states that more than 50% of all the trucks on Ontario roads are already using speed limiters.

The American Trucking Association has also expressed its support for the proposed legislation and

claims that more than 80% of US carriers already voluntarily use speed limiters. The majority of this industry realizes that the use of speed limiters would increase a truck's fuel economy, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and lower maintenance costs.

1600

Large trucks must operate at safe speeds so our friends and families may get home safely. This legislation, if passed, will help save lives. It will help us breathe cleaner air. We are serious about improving our environment and we're committed to improving road safety. Let us tackle these issues together. Let's curb pollution by burning less fuel and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Let's reduce collision rates. Let's promote safe driving. Let's keep our citizens safe on the roads.

So I ask my colleagues to support this legislation and I urge its passage. Let us work together to build a cleaner, greener and stronger Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to respond, but I am waiting for our member from Newmarket–Aurora, Frank Klees, who was at one time the Minister of Transportation and hopefully in the future will reassume that role.

My point is that there are so many inconsistencies in this particular bill that we're certainly going to have to have hearings on it. I just want to raise a couple of issues.

They're talking about the environmental implications. I'd like the reports on those implications tabled. I think that's important, because most of the Move Ontario 2020 plan—actually, it's Move Ontario 2020 because that's about when the money starts being spent, in 2020. There are a lot of unanswered questions there, certainly.

The fuel savings is another issue in terms of the new technology, certainly with the new types of engines and new types of fuel. There are a lot of changes going on there, and also, I suspect, the interjurisdictional issues and the enforcement areas around that. But even in Ontario, if you look at the posted speed on the King's or Queen's highway, basically it says 100 kilometres an hour, not 105, so you get into the enforcement issues on that.

I would just say that even if you look at some of the licensing and training issues—there was a program on television which was highly critical, the auditor's report on some of the licensing and training issues. So much of what the member from Algoma–Manitoulin said is something we need to have a little deeper and more thorough discussion on.

But at the end of the time, I certainly am waiting—in fact, I'm attending here today primarily to hear Mr. Klees, who was the minister and is now the critic, because everyone here wants the roads to be safer. It's not an issue.

I don't know whether the OTA have bought a table at Dalton McGuinty's fundraiser or what, but the Ontario Trucking Association have certainly got the ear of the minister, if not the Premier of the province, and there are a lot of unanswered questions.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I look forward, at about 5:30 this afternoon, to getting an opportunity to do the New Democratic Party leadoff on this particular bill, Bill 41.

I want to say, just quickly in passing, that I thought it was a little bit interesting—and this is meant in jocularly; please accept it for what it is—that my good friend from Algoma–Manitoulin was talking about speed limiters. I know, as a person who drives long distances in northern Ontario, that we've got to put them on our own vehicles. That would be a really good way of being able to reduce greenhouse gases and maybe make our highways a little bit safer. It's kind of funny listening to guys like us talking about speed limiters.

I would just say up front that we will support this legislation at second reading. We think it needs to get into committee. There are some problems. I think it was raised a little bit earlier in the sense that if we're talking about this as a green initiative, it seems to me that this is not in itself a green initiative. I think we need to bring together a more comprehensive plan. It certainly can be part of one. I wouldn't argue that it doesn't have any effect, but for the government to sell this as something that's going to green our environment amazingly—I don't think it's part of a bigger plan, and that's part of the problem.

The other thing is, I think we need to have a bit of discussion at the committee level of what this means to truckers. Yes, the trucking association has supported this, but I've gotten calls in my office from people in the trucking industry who have some legitimate concerns. For example, two trucks are driving down a twin highway with speed limiters of 105 kilometres and one is trying to overtake the other. Do you create a bottleneck on the highway? Does that create a safety impairment? Good question. There are other issues, such as: what happens if you're trying to speed up a truck and you put it out of gear? It will speed up going downhill, but you lose your Jake Brakes, which means to say you lose the ability to stop the truck safely coming down a hill.

So there are a number of issues that I think we need to talk about at the committee level to find out how we can strengthen this bill to make it do what needs to be done. As such, I think there are problems, and we need to fix them in committee.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to stand to lend my voice of support to Bill 41, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in relation to the use of speed-limiting systems in commercial motor vehicles. I am pleased to lend my support because this bill is good in terms of increased safety and it is good for the environment. As a result, Bill 41 has support from industry leaders, like the Ontario Trucking Association, and environmental groups, such as Pollution Probe, alike.

As we developed gogreenontario.ca, it was clear that the transportation sector played a significant role in the contributions to greenhouse gas emissions. As has been said, one third of Ontario's greenhouse gas emissions come from the transportation sector and 84% of those from road emissions. So there clearly was a lot of room

for improvement and, as a result, opportunities to bring all hands on deck, and that's what we did as we developed Go Green Ontario.

We indicated that we took climate change very seriously and that all of us would have to take steps to make sure that every group was engaged and every sector came forward, whether that was through the work with HOV lanes, Move Ontario 2020, where \$17.5 billion was put on the table, the commercial vehicle pilot project or the auto sector's Next Generation of Jobs. In each of those instances, we reached out to groups that contribute and ensured that everyone understood that we all have a role to play.

We also reached out across generations, because many generations younger than those of us who are privileged to serve in this Legislature will actually be the ones who will be able to make that significant change to the way we live, to the way we work, to where we drive and how we undertake our daily business. That's what this is part of, and I'm very proud to stand in support of it.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I appreciate the opportunity to add a few comments with respect to Bill 41 and the comments made by the Minister of Transportation as well as the member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

I would say, first of all, that it is an important bill. We do need to do something about speeding on our highways to end the carnage that we see, particularly as we enter the spring and summer holiday season. It is important that some action be taken. In fact, we thought it was so important that one of our members brought this forward last session as a private member's bill. The member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock brought this forward and was not successful, and now we see this repackaged as a government bill. But I suppose we shouldn't be surprised, because as the member from Newmarket–Aurora knows, the same thing happened with his private member's bill on street racing last session. That was not brought forward as a private member's bill but again was repackaged as a government bill, and it was only after the amendments that the member pushed for with respect to several important matters that weren't covered in the government legislation that it was finally passed.

So there we have it. We have another example of a bill that was originally the initiative of the Progressive Conservative Party that is now being claimed by the McGuinty Liberals.

I think it's important to hear the remarks that are going to be made by our critic the member from Newmarket–Aurora, because there are some significant issues with respect to this bill that I look forward to hearing his comments on. I think that will bring about, hopefully, a much more strengthened bill that is going to actually do what it was intended to do. So I look forward to his comments.

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

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I would like to thank the member for Durham, the member for Timmins–James Bay, my colleague from Etobicoke–Lakeshore and the

member for Whitby–Oshawa. I take your comments seriously.

This is an important bill. It does much for the environment. It will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 280,000 tonnes. It is the equivalent of taking 2,700 tractor-trailers off the road each year. It will increase road safety. Research shows that excessive speed is a factor in 23% of all crashes.

1610

It will reduce the amount of diesel fuel required by 100 million litres in the province of Ontario, used by the trucking industry.

It is clearly an important bill on a number of levels.

I ask all members if they would seriously consider supporting this as we go forward. This is a bill I think we can all work together to make better, but it strikes an important chord in the Ontario fabric. It means to many Ontarians that our roads will be safer, that our environment will be better and that the air we breathe will be cleaner.

I just want to point out to some members that we are working with other jurisdictions across the country. We have the support of Lawrence Cannon, the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities at the federal level. The province of Quebec has already moved with legislation. We are talking to them about harmonizing and working with them on regulations. And the province of Manitoba is also looking in the same direction.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: I look forward to the next hour of debate, when we'll have an opportunity to review various aspects of the legislation before us. I want at the very outset to thank my colleague Laurie Scott for her leadership on this issue. As has been said before by my colleague from Whitby–Ajax, I believe it was, Laurie Scott introduced a private member's bill that in large part addressed all of the issues that we have before us in the government Bill 41.

I would also say that no one on this side of the House will argue against the intent of making our roads safer. We do have an excellent track record, frankly, in the province of Ontario. On many fronts, we have led other jurisdictions in terms of bringing in safety legislation that has made our roads some of the safest roads in North America. As a former minister, I was pleased to be part of that. My colleague Norm Sterling, who's in the House, also a former Minister of Transportation, was also responsible for spearheading many road safety issues.

In fact, the former PC government brought in a considerable, very sizable legislation that dealt not only with issues of road safety but also with many of the underlying issues that lead to crashes, that lead to death on roads. One of those initiatives dealt with drinking and driving. The reason that we have the strongest drinking-and-driving legislation now in the province of Ontario is as a result of the initiative of the previous Progressive Conservative government, and I was pleased to be part of that.

With regard to this bill before us, essentially what it will do is require that commercial vehicles—I note with interest, though, that in the minister's opening remarks today, he did not use the term "commercial vehicles"; he specifically chose the words "large trucks." I will be speaking to that because I'm assuming that there is a reason that the minister chose to use that term, and I'm not certain that that is necessarily in our best interests. But we'll deal with that.

I was disappointed that neither the minister in his remarks nor the parliamentary assistant made any reference to the issue of road safety from the standpoint of enforcement or of the mechanical condition of commercial vehicles.

Before we get into dealing with the specifics of this legislation, I want to address something that, without question, many people who are observing and following this debate will probably be asking themselves. That is, we already have speed limiters in Ontario. They're called speed limits. The very fact that we have to entertain this legislation in this House is an indication that we have failed along the way in a very big way. We've failed to enforce our speed limits in the province. We're somehow saying that we cannot hold drivers of those commercial vehicles accountable; we can't count on them to drive responsibly; we can't count on the industry to ensure that the people who get behind the wheels of the truck, the commercial vehicle, will conduct themselves in a way that will ensure that the speed at which they're travelling is a safe speed. So I think we have to address that issue before we deal with the specifics of this legislation.

It's easy to put something into a truck that will keep it from going faster, but if you're irresponsible in your driving, there are also ways you can manipulate that equipment. If someone wants to do something, they'll do it. I'm told by technicians that if you want to, you can break that 105-kilometres-per-hour speed limit notwithstanding the technology, notwithstanding the limiters.

So it gets back once again to the issue of what our speed limits are for in this province. I was speaking earlier today to Chief Armand La Barge, chief of police of the region of York. I wanted to get his opinion on the legislation before us and his advice in terms of the technology: Is it, in his opinion, a right step, an appropriate step, for government? The bottom line: Chief La Barge indicated to me that, yes, in the absence of responsible driving, in the absence of enforcement, in the absence of providing sufficient resources to forces such as his—the York Regional Police are able to actually be on the front lines, they're able to do the inspections and the enforcements and, in the absence of the judicial system, when one is actually charged, that the system, the court system, is there to process those charges and ensure that people experience the consequences of their action.

But you see, unfortunately none of that exists in this province. So because we failed on the enforcement side, here we are in this Legislature not properly resourcing our front-line police, not properly resourcing our judicial system, our courts, and we now have to debate how we

can somehow force, outside of personal responsibility, a speed limit within this province. In discussions with Chief La Barge, he pointed me to a media release that was issued today by his office. The timing was coincidental, but it was very timely because the York Regional Police conducted a three-day training session to familiarize their front-line officers with commercial motor vehicle safety violations and enforcement options.

1620

I would like to read into the record a portion of this release, because it speaks to the issue of road safety. It speaks to the issue of the responsibilities that we have as a Legislature with regard to the underlying cause of speeding, the underlying cause of road safety issues in our province. The release reads as follows:

“The course, which was conducted between April 2 and 4, 2008, was delivered by York Regional Police certified motor vehicle inspectors. It consisted of a classroom segment and two days of road enforcement under the supervision of the inspectors. Topics included the weight requirements of commercial vehicles, paperwork required and identifying safety defects while checking these vehicles.

“A total of 26 York Regional Police officers and one Ontario Provincial Police officer received this training. During the two-day enforcement portion of the training, officers were strategically deployed in four groups across York region. A total of 517 trucks were inspected, 262 Provincial Offences Act notices were issued, including charges for insecure loads, mechanical defects, improper licences and document violations.

“One driver was arrested for being under suspension and obtaining a driver’s licence from another jurisdiction, while two other drivers were arrested for possession of a controlled substance. Six drivers were found to be operating commercial motor vehicles, while their drivers’ licences were suspended, and a total of 16 vehicles were removed from the road for mechanical defects.”

The reason I wanted to bring this release to the attention of the Legislature and specifically the minister is that I’m concerned that we’re focusing very narrowly through this legislation on an issue that, under the guise of dealing with road safety, will somehow be the silver bullet, and that somehow, by requiring the industry to install these speed limiters, we are getting to the heart of what the real problem is. This government has been very good at doing precisely that: to introduce legislation, make announcements, have a very flashy press conference and take the applause from the general public because they’re seen to be doing something. And yet, all too often the underlying issue is never addressed.

I would suggest, and would ask the minister, to give very serious consideration to seeing this as a beginning to deal in a very serious way with the issue of commercial motor vehicle safety in this province.

All we have to do is take a look at the York Regional Police experience over the course of a few days, and a very quick calculation tells us that one out of two commercial vehicles is unsafe. They are either unsafe when it

comes to mechanical issues or they’re being driven by someone who isn’t appropriately licensed. We can put a speed limit on a truck and limit that truck’s speed to 105 or to 80, but if the truck is not mechanically fit, it will do nothing for the safety of our roads. So while this is a step—and that’s all it is; it’s a first step—I believe that it’s incumbent upon this government to ensure that they don’t stop here.

In fact, I will be looking for confirmation from the minister that he will agree to public hearings before moving on with this legislation. The reason I think public hearings are very important is that it will, first of all, help us all to better understand the implications of what is being proposed. It will also give stakeholders an opportunity to come forward, because there are those who are opposing this legislation. There are those who feel that it will put them at a competitive disadvantage, particularly many of the independent truckers.

In fact, during debate, it was very interesting that the member from Davenport—I was looking at the records of debate from my colleague’s private member’s bill, and it was interesting that in the course of that debate, the very issues that I believe are going to be raised by many stakeholders were referenced by Mr. Tony Ruprecht from Davenport. I’d like to just quote him for the record, because this is a Liberal member of the Legislature who, no doubt, will be expected to support this legislation. He asks some very good questions that I believe we need public hearings on and the setting of a public hearing so that we can deal with those questions, answer them and ensure that if there are amendments that are required to improve this legislation, we take into consideration the wisdom of that advice.

Mr. Ruprecht made this comment: “I have a trucking company in my riding and I asked, ‘In what way would this specific private member’s bill affect you?’” He went on to relay how his constituent talked about the fact that they have shipments to make to parts of Georgia and that they are in competition with other trucking companies. He talked about the fact that this kind of technology—speed limiters—because they go into different jurisdictions where in fact the speed limits are different than speed limits here in Ontario, it may well put them at a disadvantage. These are questions that we have to discuss in the course of our deliberations.

I would also point to the fact that while the industry is supporting this in large part, we can’t in this province forget that there are independent business people who don’t have the ability to compete with some of the bigger players. We always have to be sensitive to ensuring that whether it’s the legislation we introduce or how it’s being introduced—and this is where we will want to hear from the government and have some discussion in terms of how this legislation will be phased in, over what period of time—that we have the appropriate sensitivities to the issues that various truckers face in this province.

1630

I also believe that we have to look very seriously at an issue that is raised many times by people who travel our

province, and that is the conduct of the drivers themselves. I think the issue of the discipline of lane changes—we've all experienced what it's like not only to have truckers who speed and intimidate those of us who are driving cars, but then how they conduct themselves on the road, like hugging the passing lane so that people are frustrated in terms of being able to pass, and then people take chances. These are all circumstances that I believe the industry has a responsibility to address.

With regard to the minister's remarks when he referred to large trucks as opposed to commercial vehicles, I would ask the minister whether it's his opinion that commercial buses should also be included in this category. I think that while we agree that the speed limits are there for all of us, when you have a large vehicle, a heavy vehicle, travelling at high speeds, the results of a crash are considerably more deadly than with smaller vehicles. If the government has the intention of excluding commercial bus vehicles, we will be very interested to know what the justification is for that. If it's good for large trucks, then perhaps it's also good for commercial buses. These are issues that we will again be asking representation to be made on at committee; it will give us an opportunity to discuss those issues.

The question that is raised is, if in fact the trucking industry is so much in support of this, then why do we need legislation? If it's a good thing, if, as the parliamentary assistant indicated earlier, all of the major stakeholders are there, then it should really be left to the industry, perhaps, to self-regulate—and it's happening now. The reality is that, I'm told, probably in excess of 60%, maybe even 70%, of trucks travelling our highways today already have activated speed limiters. If that's the case, perhaps rather than legislate, we should be looking at working with the industry to self-regulate on this issue. The answer, of course, is simple, and that is that while it's a good idea, very similar to helmets for bicycles or seat belts in cars, while you get perhaps a majority of people agreeing, complying and being responsible, there are always those who won't—and for that reason you need the hammer of the law to force them into compliance.

Having said that, we have speed limits, as I said earlier in the debate. Those are laws that are very clear, and we still have people who are ignoring those laws. I'm going to ask this question of the government: If you can't enforce speed limits, how will you enforce this legislation? What is it that you will do differently about enforcing this legislation as compared to enforcing the speed limits in our province? This government does not have a good record when it comes to providing resources. It has an excellent record of being able to introduce a lot of legislation, but the question that we ask is: What will you do to ensure that that legislation is meaningful, that it will actually make a difference in our day-to-day lives, that it will have the desired results of the objective?

I was speaking with my colleague Garfield Dunlop, someone who has a passion for community safety and for supporting our front-line police officers in this province,

someone who stands in this House often in debate and expresses his frustration at what seems to be empty rhetoric on the part of this government for supporting—whether it be the OPP or whether it be our community policing. He tells me that Ottawa has committed \$156 million to policing over five years for 1,000 new police officers in Ontario, and we welcome that commitment by Ottawa. Five hundred of these officers will be OPP, and they will be covering off highway patrol.

This is why we're so concerned: Up until very recently, this government did not sign on to the program, although the money was on the table. They did finally sign, but it's apparent that nothing will be done this year, and perhaps nothing will be done next year. Even though they have put their signature to the document and to the commitment, we have yet to see action. I know that my colleague will continue to put pressure on this government to work with Ottawa to ensure that community safety is in fact a priority. This province should be putting in the money especially for the 500 new OPP officers this year, and we'll be very careful to examine their actions in that regard.

I want to move on to another issue, and that deals with the issue of speeding trucks and just how important that is. Speaker, I can't tell you the number of times that I have heard from constituents who have shared with me close calls. They are wondering why they are being subjected to the kind of intimidation on the highways that they are. And yet we hear from the industry—and I have a great deal of respect for the trucking industry in this province. There are many, many responsible truckers, many responsible companies, many responsible individuals who are involved in this industry. But how do we deal with those who are not complying?

I revert again to the report from Chief Armand La Barge, the experience that they had in their safety blitz, when one out of two trucks in this province was found to either have a safety defect or have a driver who was not qualified or was improperly licensed. That is a condemnation, and it is a signal to the industry that we have to get serious about ensuring that, first of all, the drivers are qualified and the equipment is safe. And it's a signal to this government that we're not doing enough to enforce the standards that we already have in place. I recall from my time as minister, when reviewing the standards, that I was told—I have no reason to disbelieve this—that we have some of the highest safety standards for our roads anywhere in any jurisdiction. If that's the case, then again, how is it that we continue to have the incidents on our highways that we do, and how is it that we continue to have these reports such as I read into the record?

1640

Chief La Barge also shared with me the results of 2007. I point out that this is only within York region; this is not province-wide. In York region last year, out of 2,261 inspections of commercial vehicles, there were 997 charges; 602 vehicles were taken out of service. I say to the minister, when you look at those numbers and when

you listen to the industry tell you about the sense of responsibility they have towards public safety and towards safety within their industry, I would ask you to confront them with these numbers and ask the question: Where does this come from and what is it that we can do? According to these numbers, just within York region about 27% to 30% of all of the commercial vehicles we see shouldn't be on the road. That means that every day we travel those roads, every day that our families travel on those roads, 30% of the vehicles that pass them or are beside them are unsafe and are potential causes for a crash, an injury or a death.

Will this limiter solve that problem? The fact that a vehicle now has a mechanism that will ensure that that driver can't go more than 105 kilometres an hour—is that going to solve that problem? I suggest to you, Minister, no. It may solve the problem for the other 70%, but probably that's the 70% who are already complying. Those are probably those drivers and those companies and those members of the Ontario Trucking Association who have the standards, and all of those members have agreed that they would comply and support and conduct themselves responsibly. That's probably where they are. So now I would ask: What good will it do to put a limiter into a vehicle that is otherwise unsafe? Whether you're driving that vehicle at 80 kilometres an hour or 105 or 120, if it's unsafe, it's unsafe to drive. That's where we need to put our focus.

I would hope that in the course of our public hearings, we would hear from the industry on this very point: What is it we have to do to get buy-in? What is it we have to do to ensure there are consequences for those who don't? Because there will always be those who don't. And in the same way that we spoke earlier today about the blitz relating to school buses, where even though the ministry release—the ministry release stated “Ontario School Buses Get Top Grades” and then went on to tell us that in the course of a two-week blitz, 92 buses had minor repair orders issued, and 12—yes, 12—buses were pulled off the road. The plates were taken off; they weren't allowed to drive another inch. Why? Because when the inspection took place, it was determined that they were absolutely unsafe. Those were 12 buses where our young people, children in this province, were delivered to their door in the morning by their parents with the assumption, the presumption, that their children would be safe when they got into that bus.

I know it wasn't the minister's doing, the writing of this press release, and I have a sense that perhaps the minister didn't even look at the top line, because I can't imagine that he would have agreed. With a result like that, he would not have agreed to say, “Ontario School Buses Get Top Grades.” That's not a top grade. A top grade, after a two-week blitz, would have been that not one single bus would have been found to be unsafe, because in this province, under this government and under that minister, no child should ever step on to a bus that's found to be unsafe.

But what is the issue? The issue is that all too often we try to spin the news, and that's what happened here.

What happened here is, the government knew there was a problem. They conducted the blitz and they found the problem confirmed. But then what you don't want to do is put out a release and say, “Disaster Looms. Serious Problems in School Busing.” So you try to say, “Well, we're going to give them a top grade anyway, even though there are students at risk.”

I have a feeling that after today the minister will do whatever is necessary to ensure that proper steps and very clear steps are taken to address this issue of school buses, that very practical measures will be taken, that there will be consequences for those who are found not to be in compliance with those safety measures.

As I said to the minister during question period today, what I would like to see is the name of every operator who was found not to be in compliance with safety measures, that they be published. I think every parent deserves to know whether the bus that their child gets on is being operated by someone who is responsible, and I think every school district has the right to know that the people they are contracting with for school bus services are responsible.

Quite frankly, I think that people who don't have the sense of responsibility to ensure that our children are safe should be out of the business. There's no room for taking risks with our kids, and there are alternatives. The alternatives are the responsible players, and that's who should have the business, but those responsible players should also have sufficient funding to ensure that they can comply with the safety measures. This is an issue that the government has been weaving out and making excuses about for the last number of years.

Once again, even within the last budget, there is a huge gap between what is needed for transportation within our school system for those hundreds of thousands of kids and what the government is actually transferring in terms of funding for busing. Even then, school boards are forced to rob Peter to pay Paul. We hear the stories of school boards being forced to take money out of transportation to put it into some of the other categories.

In speaking with school bus operators, I have been told consistently for the last number of years that we are coming to a crisis, that we can't continue to shortchange transportation and expect the safety measures to be complied with, because compromises are going to be made somewhere and, unfortunately, that may well result in injury, if not death. It's a wake-up call to this government.

With regard to the environmental issues that the minister and the parliamentary assistant refer to, without question it's very clear that when you slow down the speed, whether it's a car or a truck, we're going to reduce greenhouse gases. We're all in support of that, and any measure that we can take with regard to that, we will, of course, support.

1650

I find it interesting. The former Minister of the Environment was speaking rather eloquently in support of this legislation for this very reason. The question I have is,

while you were environment minister, what is it that you did, if you feel so passionately about this issue? Here is an interesting piece of information that the environment minister would know and that I'm sure, Speaker, you know. That is that the amount of greenhouse gas emissions from one lawn mower is more than from idling 40 cars for the same period of time. Isn't that amazing? I found it amazing. So what are we doing about the lawn mowers? Forty cars; one lawn mower—more emissions. The Minister of the Environment gave us a Flick Off campaign as her contribution to the environmental legacy that she left us.

Does the general public think these limiters are a good idea? From what I understand, all of the research shows that 79% of the respondents believe that mandatory speed limiters would improve public safety. It makes sense, as I've said before, in terms of some of the logic behind this. Anything that can be done to reduce emissions, we will, of course, support.

The issue that I think we need to address as well is, what are the costs to the industry? Perhaps one of the strategies of the government is to ensure that greenhouse gases are reduced by the fact that we have fewer people driving to and from work. Some 190,000 jobs have been lost in the manufacturing sector, and there are manufacturing plants that have shut down, so I'm sure that at some point the government will probably lay claim to that as well.

I would ask the minister in his response to confirm for us today that we will have public hearings on this bill before he brings it forward for third reading. I would ask the minister to agree to being open to amendments relating to some of the issues that will be brought forward. I would ask that the minister be sensitive to that aspect of the industry that will require some time, some phasing in of these provisions. Finally, I would ask that the minister secure a commitment from his cabinet to ensure that the appropriate resources are available to enforce this legislation so that we don't once again go through a process of simply implementing legislation that has all of the trappings, but in the final analysis will not make any difference to road safety.

I would also look forward to the minister taking on the responsibility to address the issue of commercial vehicle safety in the broader sense, that we go beyond this legislation, that we look at the results, for example, of the safety blitz that Chief La Barge conducted in York region—I'll share that information with the minister—and understand that we have a serious problem in this province with road safety.

My final remark to the minister is that when all is said and done with regard to these various steps that we can take, one area that he's directly responsible for is the condition of our highways. If we're concerned about road safety, then I would ask him, when he gets back to his office later on today, to ask for an update on the condition of our 400-series highways and the potholes that I believe can cause, and are causing, serious problems. I say this to him from personal experience, having driven

from Toronto to London and back just a couple of weeks ago. I consider myself a careful driver. There were a number of occasions when I had to avoid a pothole, and in doing so, quite frankly, caused some angst in terms of what the potential was if someone hit that pothole at 100 kilometres per hour—not only the accident or the crash that can be caused as a result of that, but the resulting cost as well and damage to the vehicles. That's a simple directive on the part of the ministry to get on with prioritizing the post-winter results and the damage that was done to our highways.

I believe that we will be supporting this legislation for second reading. Second reading is always support in principle. We believe that anything we can do to enhance safety on our roads, we should take on that responsibility. It is something that has been done in many other jurisdictions.

I would have preferred to have this as a national initiative, so that we don't have the issue of different standards for different provinces. I know that there are ongoing discussions with the federal government and that a study is being conducted, but the timing concerns me in that we're moving ahead; I know that Quebec already has. But nevertheless, most of our Canadian traffic is cross-jurisdictional. I believe that it would have been in the interest of the industry to have this as national legislation as opposed to simply each province having to deal with it independently.

Having said that, we look forward to further debate. We look forward to further information coming forward. As I said previously, we look forward to the public hearings, which I hope either the minister or his parliamentary assistant can confirm in their response.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a real pleasure to add my comments on Bill 41 to those of the member from the opposition. Mr. Speaker, as you probably know, I live in eastern Ontario, or the eastern part of Ontario, just east of Durham, and I do a lot of Highway 401 east of here to get home. I think what we're doing here, putting those speed limiters on trucks, is a great, fantastic step to improve the safety on the 401.

On the day of the budget, I drove home from here. We had an enormous snowstorm. If anybody drives the 401, at least east of Toronto after 8 o'clock at night, they'll know the cars are outnumbered by probably 5 to 1 or 10 to 1, trucks to cars. Considering the condition of the weather that day, it wasn't very safe.

I know the drivers are professionals; I have a lot of respect for them. But I think when you're driving one of those big trucks, one of those big rigs—as we all know, speed kills. So anything that we could control to have safer highways is a step in the right direction.

1700

One of the comments from a speaker from the opposition was, "You know, if the industry supports this, why would we be introducing legislation?" Well, the industry does support it, but you know and I know that industry is

not always 100%. There is always that individual who tends not to abide by the rules; same as when the speed limit is set, not everybody abides by the speed limit. So this is really to reassure that those trucks are controlled all at the same limit. I look for this legislation to move forward.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to respond to the member for Newmarket–Aurora. As always, our Progressive Conservative transportation critic again has raised some excellent points that need to be considered when we debate Bill 41.

In my riding of Dufferin–Caledon, we've had a number of terrible tragedies on our roads. As with all tragedies, many rumours circulated after the road deaths about the training and experience of the drivers. Therefore, I would like to ensure that speed limiters are not the only aspect to ensure road safety in Ontario. Increased policing, monitoring, truck safety enforcement blitzes, regulation and monitoring of driving schools are also important points to consider.

I'd also like to remind members that the actual speed limit is not stated in the proposed legislation. We are being asked to trust the government that regulations will set the 105 kilometres per hour. I would be much more comfortable if this proposed legislation stated clearly which commercial vehicles would be affected and that the speed limit of 105 kilometres per hour was set in the legislation, as opposed to the regulations.

Based on these issues, I would hope that the government would allow public hearings to allow these important amendments that we have raised today to be discussed in committee.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to say that I listened to many of the points that were made by the honourable member. Some of them I could agree on, and I'm sure that people are going to be looking forward to my leadoff speech that will happen in 10 minutes.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I listened very carefully to my friend across the way—a very good intervention, I believe. He was the Minister of Transportation in a former government. I will say that he was of assistance to me on some of the projects that were going on in my particular constituency and I appreciate that.

I want to assure him, however, that the primary focus of this piece of legislation is an environmental one. What we are proposing to do is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Ontario by 280,000 tonnes per year. That is significant. That's the equivalent of taking 2,700 trucks off the road. We expect that just doing the speed limiters will help Ontario achieve 2% of our 2014 greenhouse gas emissions reduction, will reduce them by that much.

We know that this will also increase road safety. We know that excessive speed is a problem in 23% of all road crashes. We know that traffic surveys done here in the province, at three locations, showed that between 30% and 60% of large trucks today—on the 400 series, that is—are travelling at speeds in excess of 105 kilometres. We believe that it is now time to limit the speed that these vehicles are going for environmental reasons and for safety reasons.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: I appreciate my colleagues' comments. I just want to restate for the record that while I appreciate the objective, both from a road safety standpoint as well as the environmental objectives that the government has, there is a much bigger issue that we have to deal with. The parliamentary assistant refers to the excessive speeds that are being travelled and that's why we need the speed limiters. The reality is that there are excessive speeds that are being travelled by cars as well. Are we going to do that for cars? If it's good for trucks, why is it not good for cars? He knows the answer, I believe; we all know the answer. The issue here is not that the answer is speed limiters. The answer is to put an end to speeders, and the way you do that is to ensure that the speed limits that we have in this province are properly enforced and that there are consequences in place for people who break the law.

While it's difficult for me to stand here and say I will oppose this legislation, I will say that to put this legislation in place without also addressing the core issue, the fundamental issue, that we have in this province, and that is a lack of enforcement—and perhaps it's time for the minister, concurrently, to ask the question, "What are the right speed limits that we should have in place in this province for the road conditions that we have?" Then let's put in place a system of enforcing those limits and ensuring that the resources are there for our police services to do so.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Don't change your dial. Stay tuned. We're on the channel. Just keep watching. I'm here. As the guy used to say on Bugs Bunny, "Feast your eyes"—what was that again, the rooster? Anyway, nobody understands. I guess it's one of those metaphors I just kind of forgot.

I want to say, you don't know how much I was looking forward to speaking on this bill. I was sitting here with great anticipation. I was getting anxious inside because I thought to myself, "This is going to be an opportunity to speak about one of Mr. Bradley's bills. Mr. Bradley is the dean of the Legislature, along with, I believe, Mr. Sterling, and I'm always pleased to speak after Mr. Bradley. He's just a class guy. Even though he and I don't serve in the same party, we do serve in the same Legislature, and I'm always pleased to speak opposite to anything he may—we used to speak together at one time when he was in the opposition, but that's a whole other thing.

Bill 41: Here we are. We're going to be debating today, at second reading, a bill that puts in place speed limiters on trucks in the province of Ontario. The government is saying that this is part of a green plan, that this is one of the ways that we can lessen our footprint on the environment, by reducing the amount of diesel used in trucks by limiting the speed. Nobody's going to argue for one second that it doesn't have the effect of doing

that. But come on, give me a break, Mr. Bradley, Mr. Minister of Transportation. This is not a green plan. This is one stand-alone piece of legislation that, yes, will have a positive impact, but let's not put this out to be part of a green plan in the province of Ontario, because that's something we don't have.

That's something that I believe, and I think most New Democrats and most citizens who are interested in the environment would believe, we should have. The province should put together a plan that looks across all ministries, and which says that the Ministry of Transportation, the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food—all of them—through their ministers and through cabinet committee and others, should look at how the province can make itself greener by way of changing some of the ways that we do things within the province of Ontario, everything from the issue of how we can utilize technologies more effectively so that we're able to lessen our reliance on energy, looking at ways of being able to reduce greenhouse gases, and also how we can change consumers.

This is one of the points that I just want to say here very quickly, in passing. I believe that if you're going to have a huge impact on being able to green our planet, make us less reliant on energy etc., we need to find a way to engage consumers, because at the end of the day that's what's going to drive it. I believe, for example, with energy, if we're serious about saying we want to reduce the amount of electricity that is being used off the Ontario hydro grid so we don't have as much of a reliance on nuclear power and on coal and other gas-fired plants in the province, if the consumer had the choice of being able to buy appliances that were in some way offset by way of some sort of a tax credit or some sort of a scheme by Ontario Hydro itself, consumers would choose to do that.

But here's the problem. We all know, for example, the argument about the energy-efficient fridge. You can, if you want, buy an energy-efficient fridge, and we know they're about 40% to 50% more efficient than what is out there currently. This is going to relate to this point. But why is it that consumers are not buying to a larger degree? Because many people can't afford to; it's as simple as that. The amount of money they save in energy bills isn't going to offset fast enough the initial cost. Why don't we, as a province, say, "Let's engage consumers the same way we engage people who buy vehicles and people who drive on our highways. How do we engage consumers so that they can make the right choices, so that they themselves can become greener and effectively green our environment?"

1710

I think there are a number of ways of doing that. For example, what's wrong with going to a system that says, "If you buy an energy-efficient fridge, it's financed through your bill from Hydro One," or whoever you might be dealing with, and then you use the savings from the energy you're not paying for to pay off your fridge

over a period of time, and maybe a little bit more? Or maybe you can even kick in a bit of a tax credit from the province of Ontario. That would give consumers the ability to make that choice. It's the same thing with this. We talk about this as part of a green plan. We say in Bill 41 that putting speed limiters on our trucks is going to make our highways safer and our environment greener, but we're only putting it on trucks. What about cars? There's probably just as much, if not more, pollution emitted by vehicles driving down our freeways and our roads across this province than there is by the trucking industry. We're saying that we want to make ourselves greener. How do you allow the consumer to make that choice to become greener?

Some people will argue, "Heck, the price of gas today is going to help the consumer get greener. Who can afford to fill up their Ford F-150"—as I do at \$150 a pop—"or whatever other kind of vehicle you're driving?" The reality is that we're probably selling just as many SUVs today in our marketplace as we were two years ago, when the price of gas was a lot less. We need to find ways of engaging consumers so that there is some sort of financial payoff for them, and there's also an issue of getting them engaged in the process of how consumers themselves can make some choices around energy efficiency.

Even moi, little old me in northern Ontario, driving on Highway 11: How do you ensure that I'm not going faster than I should, in order to save the amount of fuel used, not only from the perspective of the dollars out of my pocket to buy gas but from that of the emissions into the atmosphere? The only way it could be done now is by the persons choosing to do it themselves. I'm just saying we need to have some mechanisms that would help us engage consumers in a practice that, at the end of the day, could make our environment greener.

I say to the government across the way, just on that point, that I'm all for making the atmosphere a better place for all of us to breathe in, as far as greenhouse gas emissions. But I'm also very conscious of the fact that this in itself is not a green plan; it's only one part of what could be a green plan if the government decided to put it forward.

Let's look at the legislation for what it is and what it's trying to do. I want to say up front, as the critic from the New Democratic caucus, that we will be supporting this legislation at second reading. We think it's a step in the right direction—

Applause.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —but—stop your applause.

Hon. James J. Bradley: However—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: However, there are some issues that need to be addressed. Some of the issues that were raised with us in calls, letters and e-mails that I got—I wouldn't say "letters", actually; I haven't got any letters on this. But I got e-mails and phone calls from people out there who have been sort of paying attention to this debate on Bill 41 with regard to speed limiters.

Here are a couple. One of the things that has been raised to me by others is that we as a country need to deal

with this more effectively. It can't just be Ontario and Quebec. If we're going to be competitive as a jurisdiction in North America and it's only Ontario and Quebec doing it—because we know that Quebec has already passed similar legislation. We know that Ontario's got legislation in the Legislature and, should we pass it, we would be two jurisdictions at about the same time with this type of legislation. One of the points raised is, what about the entire issue of inter-Canadian transport and transport from Canada into the United States and vice versa? If you have jurisdictions within Ontario and within Canada that have one set of rules, but everybody else operates differently, it's going to make an uneven playing field and it may in some cases affect trade. Some of the arguments put before me are that we should be doing this, but we should be doing all we can to encourage other jurisdictions in Canada to do the same so that at least, if you're in the Canadian trucking industry and you're driving from Vancouver all the way to Halifax, or from Pelee Island all the way to Cochrane—because you can't make it to Moosonee since you've got to get on a train; I was going to say “Moosonee”—you basically have the same rules. Your rules are somewhat similar, and there are the speed limiters across the country. It's not that you drive out of Manitoba and all of a sudden you don't need a speed limiter, but you drive into Ontario and you do.

Here are some of the problems. For example, the truck that's driving from Manitoba coming into Ontario will have to have a speed limiter by law. A truck leaving the United States and driving into Ontario will have to have a speed limiter by law. One of the issues that has been raised to me by e-mail is that a lot of trucks that are doing long-distance cartage, let's say from New York state to Alberta, may choose not to go through Ontario because they themselves from the point of origin don't have speed limiters, so they may very well decide to bypass Ontario altogether. That may or may not be a good thing, depending on your perspective. Some would say it's a good thing because it's less wear and tear on our highways. On the other hand, the people who sell fuel, operate restaurants etc., mechanical shops along the route, stand to lose. One of the arguments is that this is a bit difficult within the North American context, and I think they're making some legitimate arguments. I don't think we should make that an impediment and do nothing, but we need to think this through.

We're currently saying in this law that if you have a truck that originates outside of Ontario, you're going to have to have a speed limiter on your truck if you want to come into the province of Ontario. That might put some companies—and, I would probably argue, not so much companies—and individual truck owners at a disadvantage, and they may choose not to do business through Ontario because of this. The problem now becomes, “I live in Manitoba and want to transport goods into Ontario. I have to have a speed limiter that cannot be tampered with. So I now drive into Ontario at 105 kilometres on the speed limiter, no problem,” but they get on

the interstate driving into the States or the TransCanada going back west, and now they've got a speed limiter and they have to cruise at 105 while the speed limits in some of those places might actually be higher and they may be put at a disadvantage competitively with their neighbour.

The example that was given to me is that for the people who originate in Ontario, trucking firms in Ontario, who pick up loads in Ontario and bring them down to Tennessee, Texas or wherever it might be, those interstates in many cases have more than 105 kilometres posted as the speed limit, so they may be at a financial disadvantage competing with the American trucking company because you pick up the load in Ontario, get across the United States and you're having to drive a little bit slower.

Now, there are some holes in that argument, I understand. I've been around here long enough to know that you can argue a few other points on that argument, but I think it's one that's a legitimate concern, and we need to respond to those people who want answers to those types of questions. That's why I believe this bill has to go to committee for a bit to allow people in the industry to come and speak to us about the practicalities of having a provincial law apply to a truck that may only be transiting across Ontario.

How do you deal with the Ontario truck that picks up a load in Ontario and then goes out of Ontario into the United States or somewhere else where the speed limit will be more than 105 kilometres an hour and they're prevented by their own speed limiter from Ontario from driving at the speed limit in that other jurisdiction? I think it's an interesting point and one we'd have to think about at committee to see if there is a way of being able to deal with that.

One of the other things that was raised with me was the whole issue of what happens as far as passing. Many of the highways in our province are two-lane highways where you have either a passing lane on a single-lane highway or a dual-lane highway system. One of the things that people have raised in their e-mails to me is, what do you do when you've got one truck doing 100 kilometres an hour or 95 kilometres an hour and the other truck in behind decides that he or she wants to overtake that slower-moving truck that's doing somewhat less than 105? You're going to end up in a situation where you're going to box people in behind those two trucks.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: That's against the law.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Sure. The member says that boxing people in is against the law, but if you're legally overtaking another truck—you're in truck A and I'm in truck B. Let's say truck A is driving at 100 kilometres an hour, and truck B wants to run at 105 because of whatever load they're running—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: But the speed limit is 100.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh yeah, and everybody follows the speed limit. Come on; give me a break.

1720

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: But you're supposed to.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Hang on a second. Let me make the point, all right? The point I'm making is this: One

truck is driving 100 and the other is driving 105, and he decides that he wants to overtake. One of the problems you have is that the action of overtaking the other vehicle will take that much longer. One of the arguments raised is that you want that person to overtake the vehicle and get out of the way so that they're not boxing in traffic behind them and making people impatient, who may otherwise then take risky chances when it comes to themselves in their own cars to overtake the trucks. The point is, you may end up in a situation where people who are similar in speeds are going to try to overtake each other and are blocking our highways for a longer period of time.

It's the same thing if you get up on Highway 11 or Highway 17, where we only have passing lanes. See, the thing is, Ontarians—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You all drive at 90 kilometres an hour? I'm going to believe that? I want you guys to swear that on a stack of Bibles right now. Come on.

Now, you get up into Highway 11 and you've got the truck, and let's say we make the argument that my friend across the way makes, that nobody speeds. So you're on Highway 11 and the person is doing 90 kilometres an hour or 85 kilometres an hour, and you get the one truck in behind that says, "I don't want to do 85 anymore; I want to do 90 and overtake that truck in front of me." There's one passing lane for maybe two or three kilometres. How long is it going to take for that truck to pass the next truck? It's basically going to block people in behind. So what are the cars in the back going to do? The cars in the back are going to say, "Them trucks are nothing but a pain. I'm going to do everything humanly possible to get by this truck while I've got a chance." They will cut corners and take chances. That's the point people are making. I think it's a legitimate concern.

We need to think through the issue of overtaking, because every now and then, if you need to overtake somebody, you may need to have the speed to get out of the way to allow other traffic to go by you. It's already enough of an issue, especially on single-lane highways like Highway 11 or 17, where you've only got passing lanes every 15 or 20—I wouldn't even say that; passing lanes are probably more like 50 kilometres apart. It can become a very serious situation. So I'm just saying, from the perspective of safety, we might be biting off our nose to spite our face.

I'm not arguing for one second that we shouldn't do this. I'm just saying that it's a legitimate concern. It's something we need to think about. It might be a little bit less of an issue on a 400 highway. I would even argue that where the 401 is twin-laned, it may be a bit less of an issue, but on single-lane highways, this can become a problem, because it's already a problem.

I know myself, as all of you do, that as you drive on Highway 11 or 17 or any other roadway in the province of Ontario, passing lanes are sometimes few and far between, and you've been sitting behind four or five transport trucks for the last 50 kilometres and you want to get by them. All of a sudden, one of those five decides

that he or she is going to overtake the next truck, and you're stuck in behind. Knowing that, people are going to take chances. They'll pass improperly and we actually could put drivers at risk. So I think it's something that we need to look at.

One of the e-mails that I got was actually—I never thought of this. I thought, "It's amazing." We get all this information from people by way of e-mails, and I thought that it was quite an interesting one from a gentleman out of Sudbury, who said that in many cases, the way that you bypass the speed limiter—I don't know if this is true; this is what I'm being told—is that on a hill, you can put your truck into neutral and the weight of the truck and the momentum will allow you to go past 105. It might be one of the places where somebody decides to overtake somebody, right—this whole argument of the truck standing in behind. The problem is that if you take the truck out of gear and put it in neutral, you no longer have any Jake brakes. They use power to slow these trucks down. They don't use the actual "rubber hitting the road" kind of brake; they're power brakes, called Jake brakes. If you have it in neutral, your Jake brake doesn't work. So if the truck is using the hill as an advantage to pick up speed to pass somebody—because that's the only way you're going to be able to do it—taking it into neutral will knock out the Jake brake. And what happens? If you can't get it back into gear on time, you may actually have an unsafe situation.

I thought, "I'm not a trucker. I don't pretend to know if this is true or not." But this gentleman from Sudbury sent me this particular e-mail, and I know the hills that he talks about because I've driven those particular hills on some of those highways—on Highway 144 and others. If that's an issue, I think it's something we need to think about. It's something a committee will have to take a look at.

So those are a few of the concerns that I've gotten from the trucking industry. The issue of passing: You may need to have a bit of extra power in order to pass somebody properly, to get out of the way to allow other traffic to transit. There's the whole other issue of making sure that we look at other jurisdictions so we don't put ourselves into a position where we become uncompetitive as a result of our own legislation. Also, there's the whole issue of the Jake brakes that I raised just now.

Also, as I said at the very beginning, and I just want to repeat this, the government can't pretend that this is a green initiative in and of itself. It's only part of something. It's not part of a greater plan. One of the things that we call on the government to do is, we really do need to have a green plan that allows us to look across ministries at how we're able to pull together to develop good policies when it comes to greening the environment.

I'm sure there's much more here, but the wonderful luck you have is that I don't have my glasses and I can't read most of my notes. The great stuff I'm doing is all by memory. I'm looking at these little fuzzy things down on paper, trying to remember if I'm forgetting anything. There were a few things that I wanted to—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Give him your glasses.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Hang on a second. Before I say I'm done, there was one other thing.

Oh, thank you so much. My Liberal colleagues are helping me out. God, I'm looking like a Liberal now. I can't see; it's all blurry. Hold it a second. I see this side and I see that side. Holy jeez. God almighty, this might even be more fun.

Anyway, those are my comments. I look forward to the government referring this particular bill to committee. We need to make sure that at the end of the day those who may be concerned in regard to this particular issue come to committee and tell us what they think, how we can make this bill stronger and better. At the end of the day, that's probably the best way to do legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I was listening to the member from the opposite side speaking for 20 minutes.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You were heckling me.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: No, I was trying to support him and give him some ideas.

I think it's a very important bill. This bill is asking us to create some kind of safety on the road. Mr. Speaker, like yourself, myself and many others in this House, we drive a lot on Highway 401 or other highways in the province. Most of the time, we're competing with the trucks. The trucks speed a lot. It's like a giant driving in the street.

Not a long time ago, almost three years ago, I was driving from here back home to London. I was taking my time, putting my car onto cruise with 100 maximum, just driving and listening. It was beautiful weather. Then, all of a sudden, one of the big, giant trucks just hit my car. It was unbelievable. I felt like I was flying.

Those trucks—not all of them; some of them are very responsible, but a lot of trucks—work on miles. The more they drive, the more they charge the company. They want to make extra money. They want to go from A to Z fast and quick. That's why they don't care about the speed. They want to go fast and quick to make extra money.

That's why I think it's our responsibility as a government, as the Minister of Transportation, to put in some kind of safety mechanism to force those trucks to follow the law. Some of them, even though the law says the maximum speed on the highway is supposed to be 100 kilometres per hour—it depends on the highway; some of them are 80, some are 90, some are 100, but the maximum is 100 in Ontario, especially on the 401—don't stop. They speed fast and quick. It's amazing. Sometimes they put other people's lives in danger.

When you put an electronic guard on, an adjustable guard, they can adjust it to the maximum of 100 and pass out of the province of Ontario or go to the United States. If the jurisdictions allow them to speed more, they can adjust it again. I think we have that luxury, the ability to adjust the speed limit, with the technology which exists at the present time.

Our aim, our goal, is to protect the people who drive on the highway on a daily basis to go from their home to

work. We want them to go back safe to their families. It's not happening. If you drive on Highway 401, every day you see hundreds of accidents—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I appreciate being able to speak to this and make a few comments on it. First of all, I wanted to thank the member for Timmins–James Bay for his comments. I thought he brought in some great points.

I wanted to say to the government members that this could have been law by now. I'm hearing about all the wonderful things the bill does, but it could have been law because our member, Laurie Scott, brought it up as a private member's bill. Again, many private members' bills are brought up in this House and are ignored by this government. This was a typical example. You're talking about all the fuel you could have saved, you're talking about the emissions, you're talking about the people's lives you could have saved; you could have adopted Laurie Scott's bill two years ago now and you refused to do so for political partisan purposes. You can stand here today and brag all you want about the bill, but Laurie Scott had the bill on the floor, and I believe that the Deputy Premier at the time, George Smitherman, actually voted against the bill. It will be interesting to see how he will vote on this one.

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Second of all, I was disappointed in the member from London–Fanshawe's comments. He is treating all truckers as though they're almost cruel people and convicts. Read in your own Hansard the way you talked about them. A few bad apples may be a problem in the trucking industry but, by far and wide, the majority of truckers are very informed on public safety and on security. They look after their vehicles and they're safe vehicles. It's unfortunate that this government is attacking the trucking industry. That is what's happening this afternoon.

Clearly we will be supporting this, but we'll look forward to the regulations that come forward.

As I said earlier, this could have been law by now. Laurie Scott had the bill on the floor, and this party made sure they turned it down; they wouldn't bring it forward for debate. When this bill is finally passed, implemented, and hopefully good regulations put forward, it will be a Laurie Scott bill.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I rise to support Bill 41. I just want to set the record straight that, when this came forward, as the previous member spoke about, I did vote against it. But we have brought forward since then, as I did that day—I raised my concerns with regard to that private member's bill. I recognize the good work that has been done by the government to fix it so that it is acceptable.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Simcoe North, order.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: One of the things I wanted to talk about today was that I've received a number of calls

from the trucking industry. As many of you know, I have large trucking firms within my riding of Huron–Bruce. I have received a number of phone calls with regard specifically to this legislation and I can tell you that they are generally supportive of it. Why are they generally supportive of it? Specifically, here we see that at the OTA today 50% of the trucks already have the limiters in place. In the American Trucking Association, 80% state that they are already voluntarily using speed limiters.

I recognize that there has been a lot of work on this piece of legislation from the work that was done prior to this. I did want to inform the House that I will be supporting this legislation. I look to the opportunity to speak to this in greater length on another day.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you to the members who commented on my short dissertation on this particular subject.

Reading the legislation, much of what's going to happen will be left to regulation. That's why I think it's pretty important that we get off to committee to make sure we give proper instructions. First of all, let's get the legislation right if there are problems. Second, let's give some proper instructions when it comes to developing regulation.

The issue the member from London–Fanshawe talks about is how the person who drives a truck in Ontario and operates in Ontario, and goes into the southern United States, could basically turn off the speed limiter as he or she is driving into the United States, where they may allow faster speeds.

As I read the legislation, you can't tamper with the device. So what is considered a tampering device? An on-off switch? It's a question. You need to get this down. If a person is allowed to have an on-off switch in a truck leaving the Ontario jurisdiction, then it stands to reason that the person may turn the switch off while driving in Ontario, thus trying to get around the legislation.

We need to think this stuff through. Everybody agrees that, yes, it makes sense to limit the speeds of trucks for a whole bunch of reasons, such as greening our environment, making our highways safer—nobody argues that point—but sometimes we make legislation a little bit like the way they make sausage. The process ain't very pretty, and sometimes what comes out the other end may not be as good as what you want. All I'm saying is that we need to get this thing into committee in order to think it through, because I don't think it will be as simple as putting an on-off switch on the speed limiter. Leave it up to the regulatory people. I think they're going to box us in far more than that.

I appreciate the time we had, and I look forward to the comments of other members. I say again, I look forward to this bill going to committee and having the time it needs—not an inordinate amount of time, but enough time to do this right.

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak about Bill 41, the speed limiters legislation that we want to bring forward in the province of Ontario. I acknowledge that road safety is not a partisan issue and I do recognize the contributions already made in debate. The member from Newmarket–Aurora was a former Minister of Transportation in the government of Ontario. My friend and colleague the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock had a private member's bill, as did the member from Toronto Centre–Rosedale when he was in opposition. So road safety is something that I believe all three parties can come together on, because we're all interested in road safety.

It's of particular concern in my riding of Peterborough. I have two family-owned trucking businesses. I'd like to just get that on the record. First of all, there's Bryan Cathcart of Cathcart Trucking. I know Bryan extremely well. I believe Bryan is the third-generation Cathcart in the trucking business. His first cousin is the reeve of Cavan–Millbrook–North Monaghan, Neal Cathcart. So the Cathcart family has made an enormous contribution to businesses in the Peterborough area. I know Bryan Cathcart does extensive trucking for GE in Peterborough, for Siemens and for Quaker Oats, and has the opportunity to take those fine products and distribute them not only throughout Ontario and Canada but throughout North America. Then there's Evan Meyers, who owns Meyers Transport, another family-owned company in Peterborough, the third or fourth generation in the trucking business.

I know for a fact that those two individuals, Mr. Cathcart and Mr. Meyers, go to the nth degree to provide driver training for those individuals who are putting their rigs on the road, because they know that if they have drivers who are operating in a very responsible manner, staying within the speed limit, certainly that's a personal reflection on their businesses. They want to make sure that they have the very best people available driving their rigs.

A number of years ago, TPT Transport was headquartered in Peterborough, Toronto Peterborough Transport.

Mr. Mike Colle: That was the hockey team.

Mr. Jeff Leal: That was the hockey team. They sponsored the Peterborough Petes for many years. In those days, of course, they were owned by the Montreal Canadiens and a local guy, Bob Gainey, who's the current general manager of the Canadiens and doing very well, though they lost a close one last night in Boston. But we know that next Tuesday they will rectify that and take a 3-1 lead in that series. I don't mean to digress, Mr. Speaker. I will get back on the bill here, but I wanted to put in a plug for the hometown boy, Bob Gainey, and the great job he's doing with the Montreal Canadiens.

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Oh, yeah. My wife went to school with his younger sister. When I was a summer student at Quaker Oats in Peterborough, I worked for his dad.

Mr. Mike Colle: Okay, get back on the subject, will you?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I don't mean to digress, Mr. Speaker.

I want to pay tribute to our colleague the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Dwight Duncan. I know we certainly offer condolences to Minister Duncan and his family on the recent death of his mother in Windsor, Ontario. I know every member in this Legislature's thoughts are with Minister Duncan during this very difficult personal family time.

The Minister of Transportation is in the House today. I know he was certainly instrumental in convincing our colleague the Minister of Finance to include \$448 million over the next five years to accelerate projects to rehabilitate bridges that are part of the provincial highway work. We know there is a correlation between safe roads, safe bridges and safe operations in terms of tractor-trailers. This investment is expected to result in improvements to over 100 bridges in addition to those as part of ReNew Ontario. Through this five-year ReNew Ontario infrastructure plan, the government is investing some \$3.4 billion to improve the provincial highway network in southern Ontario and \$1.8 billion in northern Ontario.

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I know that's of grave concern to my good friend the member from Timmins–James Bay, who's always very concerned about the bridges and highways in northern Ontario. Mr. Speaker, you know that in your part of Ontario—and I know you were a strong advocate for getting improvements to your section of the 401 through Essex and into Windsor, along with our colleague the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex, because over the last number of years, there have been some really serious accidents in that area. There have been a number of fatalities, and part of it had to do with road conditions. I know that you and the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex were certainly instrumental in making sure that that funding got in place to rehabilitate those roads in your area.

We'll provide another \$927 million for other projects in southern Ontario. Just to mention the new roads that we're building in the north, these are key corridor projects, including: Highway 17 east and west of Thunder Bay; the Thunder Bay Expressway; Highway 17 around North Bay; and Highway 11 around North Bay. This work will result—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member from Peterborough, I know that you're going to relate this somehow to Bill 41. I can just hear it coming.

Mr. Jeff Leal: In a roundabout way—

Mr. Peter Kormos: Bill 41, Jeff.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Bill 41, of course, is a great bill. But in order for Bill 41 to succeed—I will make the direct link right now—in order to have safe driving in tractor-trailers, we've got to make sure that we have safe roads and bridges. Often what happens—I will make the link again—is, if you don't have safe roads and safe bridges, then there is this real urge, perhaps, to increase one's speed to make up for lost time when you don't have good highways and good bridges on which to travel.

Mr. Mike Colle: Potholes are very dangerous.

Mr. Jeff Leal: We know there are a lot of potholes. We heard from the Minister of Finance, our good friend the Honourable Jim Flaherty; he said not too long ago that the federal government is not in the pothole business. But we really need to explain to him that trucking and the trucking industry are the backbone of Ontario's economy.

You know, that GDP we have here in Ontario is so dependent on getting our products to markets throughout the rest of Ontario, Canada and into the United States. We know that our auto companies, Ford, Chrysler, General Motors—I see the member from Durham here; he has a large General Motors assembly plant in his riding. We know that there are a number of parts suppliers in my area of Peterborough and the GTA area that are dependent on just-in-time inventories and just-in-time assembly and production. They're very dependent on getting tractor-trailers into those facilities to make sure that the Ontario economy continues to hop.

We're very optimistic, even though I look opposite, and some days I see Herbert Hoover on one seat over there and I see R.B. Bennett in the other seat, the doom-and-gloom prophets. We all remember the great words of Franklin Delano Roosevelt in his inaugural address in 1933 when he became President: "We have nothing to fear but fear itself."

I want to get back to the bill here—

Mr. Bill Murdoch: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: As you mentioned, we're supposed to be talking about limiters on trucks. I fail to see how, by talking about Hoover and—I understand that Bob Gainey is the best manager in the NHL, so I agree with him there, but for the rest of it he seems to be wandering off, talking about the—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): That part of it is not a point of order, but we will keep in mind that we want to keep to the subject.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Yes, that's right. We all know that every road in Ontario has shoulders, and we want to make sure that they're safe, so I'll get back to the bill.

This is a very important piece of legislation, when you think that this is going to be part of our key climate change initiative. A mandatory speed limit will certainly improve the quality of the air that we breathe. In fact, there will be a 280,000-metric-tonne reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, which is the equivalent of 2,700 tractor-trailers off the road each year. I know that's so important because we all know the former Vice-President of the United States, Al Gore, who is very involved—he had his film, *An Inconvenient Truth*. He has been going around North America. He was in Montreal recently talking about the positive things that provincial governments can do to address greenhouse gases. This is part of our plan, to bring in these speed limiters to 105 kilometres an hour, to reduce the amount of greenhouse gas that's spewed by tractor-trailers along our roads.

The road issue is important in my part of Ontario. When the previous government downloaded roads, 47% of that happened in eastern Ontario. We're still trying to

recover from that. This government is helping us out with great investments for safe roads for our tractor-trailer operators, who do a great job. This will increase road safety. Research shows that excessive speed is a factor in 23% of crashes in the province of Ontario. In my earlier remarks, Mr. Speaker, I alluded to that section of the 401 that you're very familiar with.

Also, this bill will save 100 million litres of diesel fuel being used in the trucking industry.

Ontario traffic survey data, collected at three highway locations, show that between 30% and 60% of large trucks travelling on the 400 series of highways are speeding in excess of 105 kilometres an hour. I know that my friend from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound is a guy who has been a strong advocate since he arrived in this House in 1990 for road safety—

Mr. Mike Colle: He's a motorcyclist.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Well, he's a great guy and great hockey fan.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: What have you got against Laurie Scott?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I know he is convinced that we need more legislative initiatives to improve road safety here in Ontario. We'll be counting on him to indeed support it. I had a nice trip to Thunder Bay with the member. We chatted a lot about hockey on our way up, a very pleasant trip indeed.

Studies further show that casualties would be reduced by 7% for every one-kilometre reduction in average vehicle speed if we implement this. I said to my friend from Simcoe, when I opened my remarks, that credit is due to the member from Kawartha Lakes-Haliburton; I mentioned that. I also mentioned the former transportation minister from Newmarket-Aurora, who was a real advocate for road safety. And certainly the comments by the member from Timmins-James Bay—road safety is not a partisan issue. This is one of the rare opportunities where people can come together in unison to make sure that we make road safety our number one issue here in Ontario.

We have been in consultation with the Ontario trucking industry. We've also looked at comments from the American trucking industry. A lot of their members already volunteer to use speed limiters. That's a good start. There will be an extensive education initiative here in Ontario to work with not only the larger companies who are involved in trucking—I think of the trucking firm from Algoma-Manitowlin—in the OTA to make sure that the education component of this bill is put out for discussion, to make sure that drivers comply with the 105-kilometre-per-hour speed limit and that the appropriate technology is put in place, and to really work with those independent truck operators that broker themselves out to deliver freight for a wide variety of companies, to make sure that they become part of this important equation, to work with them to make sure that they will be able to comply with this legislation.

I suspect there will be the opportunity, when it's discussed between the various House leaders, to perhaps

take this bill on the road in committee and hear deputations from individuals who are involved in the industry, individuals who are independent truck operators, who are a significant group in the Ontario economy, and those larger trucking organizations that do the bulk of the trucking here in Ontario, to get them involved in this.

We've seen the great proliferation of the use of tractor-trailers in Ontario in the last 20 years to ship goods with the introduction of just-in-time production. At one time, of course, in the not-too-distant past we shipped by rail. There were rail lines all over Ontario that were moving our products. Then governments of the day of various political stripes decided that rail links were no longer being used. Some of them got sold off. Some of it was given to municipalities and developed into walking and cycling trails and put to good use. But you can see in retrospect, as climate change as an issue came to the forefront—we look back, and hindsight is always 20-20; perhaps we would not have got rid of some of those rail lines that no doubt could be put to use today to ship products and goods and services to our various people who need them.

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I understand that the province of Quebec has speed limiter legislation in place, and we'll have the opportunity to find out what the experience in Quebec has been with the use of speed limiters. Also, I believe that Transport Canada, which has the responsibility of covering groups that do pan-Canadian activities, has been looking at this issue of speed limiters as an initiative. Our former colleague the Honourable John Baird, who is the Minister of the Environment—the government of Canada is looking, of course, as we all are, in positive ways to address the issue of climate change. I know that Transport Canada is also looking at this particular issue.

I really commend all those involved: the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock; the former Minister of Transportation, from Newmarket-Aurora; and the new transportation minister of this Parliament, the Honourable Jim Bradley. Mr. Bradley certainly appreciates the role the trucking industry plays in his part of Ontario, St. Catharines being the home of General Motors and some other large organizations that are dependent on trucking products out of that area. I know that Mr. Bradley, over his long and very distinguished career since 1977, has always been a huge advocate of initiatives that will improve road safety. He certainly is a man who uses the Queen Elizabeth Way on a very frequent basis, going through the Hamilton area, which is still a great hub of manufacturing in a variety of areas.

Mr. Mike Colle: He knows first-hand the importance—

Mr. Jeff Leal: He knows first-hand, seeing the dramatic increase in the number of trucks that are used on our 400-series highways. I wasn't surprised when he stood in the House the other day to initiate this legislation because he is a guy with first-hand experience in this particular area.

I'm told that speed limiters have been used extensively in the European Union, in the United Kingdom and

Australia, three other jurisdictions that have had positive results from using speed limiters. In the European Union, I think of Germany and the autobahn, a very high rate of speed in that area—bringing in speed limiters in a very positive way, as a central part of our green program to fight climate change.

We're looking forward to hearing members from the other side of the House. We heard some very positive leadoff speeches today from the member from Newmarket–Aurora and the member from Timmins–James Bay. I want to listen—the member from Durham's community is very dependent on having a vibrant trucking community, and he's a guy who I know has always been a strong advocate of road safety.

Mr. Mike Colle: He cares.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I know he cares, because he was born in Peterborough, and anybody who was born in Peterborough cares for road safety. I know the member from Durham is there. He has had a couple of private member's bills, one of them dealing with cellphone use. This is all part and parcel of our work, collectively, that we do here to improve road safety in Ontario.

I know I only have less than a minute to go. Again, we see this as a very proactive piece of legislation, an opportunity for all of us to come together, an opportunity, depending on discussion that happens with the House leaders, to take this bill out to hear what the grassroots people—

Mr. Mike Colle: We should have a public hearing in Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I think we could have a public hearing in Peterborough. I know just the other week I dropped by the Tim Hortons there on George Street. For those of you who know Peterborough well, it's right across from the Holiday Inn. People are very concerned about road safety. They say to me, "Jeff, we want to make sure when you're down there in Toronto representing us that you support the kind of initiatives that will improve road safety and try to reduce the amount of carnage that we see on our roads."

I think of Sergeant Cam Woolley, who's often the public relations voice of the OPP. He comes on and he talks about road safety. He talks about things the Ontario government can do to bring about improved road safety.

Mr. Mike Colle: Buckling up. People have got to buckle up.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Buckle up; and appropriate child care seats.

I know the Minister of Transportation, a very thoughtful individual. When he wanted to bring this legislation forward, he wanted to make sure it's part and parcel of our thrust, along with the official opposition and the third party, to bring about road safety here in Ontario.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): As I refer to this fine pocket watch given to me by my wife on one of our 46 wedding anniversaries, I declare this House adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1756.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Balkissoon, Bas (L)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
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Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (L)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / procureur general
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (L)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / ministre de la Promotion de la santé
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Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Brotten, Laurel C. (L)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Brown, Michael A. (L)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (L)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)	St. Paul's	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, government House leader / ministre des Affaires autochtones, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (L)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique
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Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
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Craitor, Kim (L)	Niagara Falls	
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Dhillon, Vic (L)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (L)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (ND)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (L)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
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Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	

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Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (ND)	Kenora–Rainy River	Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Hardeman, Ernie (PC) Hillier, Randy (PC) Horwath, Andrea (ND)	Oxford Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Third Deputy Chair of the committee of the whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Jaczek, Helena (L) Jeffrey, Linda (L) Jones, Sylvia (PC) Klees, Frank (PC) Kormos, Peter (ND)	Oak Ridges–Markham Brampton–Springdale Dufferin–Caledon Newmarket–Aurora Welland	New Democratic Party House leader / leader parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Kular, Kuldip (L) Kwinter, Monte (L) Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L) Leal, Jeff (L) Levac, Dave (L) MacLeod, Lisa (PC) Mangat, Amrit (L)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton York Centre / York-Centre Glengarry–Prescott–Russell Peterborough Brant Nepean–Carleton Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
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