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Tuesday 6 May 2008

Mardi 6 mai 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 6 May 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

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*The House met at 0900.
Prayers.*

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES AND
INTERIM APPROPRIATION ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008
SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES
ET L'AFFECTATION ANTICIPÉE
DE CRÉDITS

Mr. Bryant, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 44, An Act respecting Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters / Projet de loi 44, Loi concernant les mesures budgétaires, l'affectation anticipée de crédits et d'autres questions.

Hon. Michael Bryant: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to be sharing my time with the member from Pickering–Scarborough East.

It's a pleasure to be here to speak to this bill, obviously part of our supply process, part of our appropriations process. It allows, among other things, for this House to scrutinize the financials of the government of the day. It's the means by which our government in fact is held to account, not only in the Legislature but through committee processes and otherwise. It's the means by which, among other things, the public has an opportunity, through the media and otherwise, to assess and probe and test how the taxpayers' money is spent.

I do want to share my time with the great member from Pickering, and I'm going to do that right now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: It's Pickering–Scarborough East now. With all of the boundary changes that occur, the ridings keep shifting, and I now have the pleasure of representing both areas in Durham and areas within the city of Toronto.

It's a pleasure to be able to rise today on third reading of the Ontario budget bill to speak about the initiatives that will make Ontario yet a better place to live, to work and to do business. Let me say it's so nice to be here bright and early on this Tuesday morning, starting the debate at a time that reflects on the business hours that most people are familiar with—although, as has been

said here, we're all often busy at this time of the morning regardless of when debate begins.

Ontario's economy has continued to grow even in the face of rather significant challenges, despite an external environment that includes weakened US growth in their economy, higher oil prices and a much stronger Canadian dollar. The government, though, has been prudent with the province's finances and will continue to exercise caution while remaining optimistic and positive about the economy of this province. We're on track to produce six balanced budgets, while investing in this province to build a better future for all Ontarians.

We have said before that our government has the right plan to lead this province both in good times and times that are more challenging. Our plan balances prudent financial management with vital investments that build on the strengths of this province. We're investing in health care in a very substantive way, in public education and the environment, because these foundations make Ontario a better place to live. The government is investing in people and in our communities to improve the quality of life for all Ontarians, including families and our most vulnerable citizens. There isn't one simple answer to attract growth and investment to this province. We recognize that the people of Ontario, though, are our greatest strength in the long term. Giving people the tools and opportunities to succeed will help with our future prosperity.

The McGuinty government is making major investments in Ontario's infrastructure that will build stronger communities, improve the quality of life and attract new business investment to Ontario. Our infrastructure initiatives will create jobs and a more productive, competitive and green economy. This budget includes \$1 billion in new funding for municipal infrastructure in this budget year. Municipal roads and bridges are the backbone of Ontario's transportation networks. They connect communities and provide access to economic opportunities. This year, the McGuinty government is investing some \$400 million for municipal roads and bridges to help communities outside of the city of Toronto. They're investing \$150 million in the municipal infrastructure investment initiative, the MIII, building on the \$300 million already committed in 2007 for municipality priority infrastructure projects, including those very same roads and bridges. Some \$16 million is being invested for 35 different projects to help municipalities invest in local roadways designated as connecting links.

Our government recognizes that, just as investing in our roads and bridges is important, investing in public

transportation is equally important. A fast, effective public transportation system is vital to the future prosperity of this great province. Expanded public transit will reduce traffic congestion and improve the quality of the air that we all breathe. So we have expanded our investment and targeted priority projects, which include some \$497 million for public transit in the greater Toronto area and Hamilton, and \$314 million this year to municipalities in gas tax revenues for public transit. Speaker, you and others will recall our commitment in 2003 to invest two cents per litre of the gas tax in municipal transit. That initiative was delivered early on and is paying dividends throughout Ontario. We're investing \$382 million in 2008-09 to improve GO Transit, including investments in Union Station, really a symbol, a hub of activity for public transit in this province. We're replacing and renewing GO Transit's equipment. We're investing some \$166 million over the next five years to expand GO Transit's bus rapid transit system to augment the existing rail and bus transit systems.

Just as it is important to move people easily around the province, we have to move goods swiftly and efficiently. International trade is an integral part of Ontario's and Canada's economic prosperity. The McGuinty government is committed to ensuring efficient and uninterrupted trade with the United States, our greatest trading partner, through Ontario's borders, its gateways and its trade corridors. That's why the Windsor gateway and border crossing will be a pre-eminent example of these levels of co-operation. To further improve the flow of goods around Ontario, we're improving our highways throughout the province. The budget has earmarked some \$448 million in new funding over the next five years to accelerate projects to rehabilitate bridges that are part of the provincial highway network. One only needs to take a look at the 401 east from Oshawa through to Cobourg to see the type of work that's going on in many areas of this great province.

0910

The government is also making progress on commitments including the ReNew Ontario plan, with overall investments of \$927 million in this budget year in the southern Ontario highways program and \$557 million in the northern Ontario highways program. So investments are being made, not only in the south part of the province where the population is more dense, but in the northern part of the province where the demands are just as great, if not greater, for improved highway access.

As you know, our three-year, \$1.5-billion skills-to-jobs action plan was a major component of this particular budget. Ontario's skilled and highly educated workforce is a key economic advantage of Ontario and will continue to be so, when the economy is at its most robust, or when it faces challenging times. Our investments will position Ontario as a destination of choice for global investment.

Many high-growth industries, such as information technology, construction, energy or health care, face a shortage of people with the right skills in place. The challenge is to ensure that workers with the right skills are

available when growing industries actually need them, while also giving unemployed workers the retraining opportunities they need to get good jobs in expanding areas of the economy. The government's new skills training program will give Ontario's workforce the knowledge, the skills, the innovation and flexibility to compete with the world's best. Our new second-career strategy will help some 20,000 unemployed workers who have to commit to a long-term training plan to make the transition to new careers in growing areas of the economy.

We'll further expand the number of apprentices. The goal is to reach some 32,500 apprentices annually, an increase of another 25% by the 2011-12 budget year. The apprenticeship enhancement fund will help buy state-of-the-art equipment essential for technical training.

Our strategy involves investing in our students and post-secondary institutions so they can remain competitive well into the future. I've estimated that 70% of new jobs in the next decade will require post-secondary education. That's up a further 10% from just 10 years ago. It's indicative of why we need to have a strong post-secondary education system available to young people and those who are retraining or continue training in the workforce.

We also understand the importance of attracting students from around the world. We want to build upon the cultural and intellectual mosaic that is Ontario, that's reflected right here in this assembly. So the government is investing more than \$7 million over three years for an international Ontario strategy to attract talented post-secondary students from around the world, raising the level of research excellence in Ontario's universities and contributing to our economic prosperity. We're also creating what's being called Global Edge, a program that facilitates international work and learning opportunities for enterprising post-secondary students, so that Ontario students have the chance to study abroad, to share the Ontario experience with the world.

Ontario's competitive strengths attract business investment and create jobs. So we're recognizing those areas that strengthen our economy and give our province an edge in that global marketplace. The McGuinty government is also investing in key sectors and making the tax system more competitive to promote investment and encourage economic growth.

Ontario's entertainment and creative cluster is a cornerstone of the province's new innovative economy. So we're providing \$4 million over the next four years to support international marketing initiatives and increase the profile of Ontario's artists and cultural industries.

The government is also supporting tourism in Ontario with new investments. We're investing some \$8 million over the next two years to conduct research on new tourism markets and determine the steps necessary to increase visits to Ontario and visits within Ontario.

The McGuinty government is continuing its support for the successful festival and events attraction and support program. We've heard about those in members' statements and in communities throughout Ontario,

where we're providing support. I've had the pleasure over the last few years to attend the Durham highland games, which has been the beneficiary of those types of funding programs.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Did you wear a kilt?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I didn't wear a kilt on that particular occasion, but the organizers certainly did.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Excellent.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Just as we're helping other industries to modernize, the government must do its part to modernize itself. Ontario's goal would be to lead all Canadian jurisdictions in efforts to measure and reduce the regulatory burden that business faces. The government's regulatory modernization will start with an aggressive cap-and-trade initiative for government regulation so that when new regulations are enacted, others must be eliminated.

We'll also create a new independent agency, Investment Ontario Inc., to respond to intensifying global competition for new business investments and jobs. This will help the government become more strategic in targeting markets and sectors on which to focus investment and trade activities, and improving Ontario's international recognition.

We're on track to produce six consecutive balanced budgets, and our accumulated deficit-to-GDP ratio is forecast to improve to 16.2% by 2010-11 from over 25% in 2003-04. The McGuinty government is paying down debt, we're balancing budgets and we're investing in Ontario to build a better future for all Ontarians. That really does need to be repeated: We're investing in Ontario, we're balancing the budget and we're paying down the debt to build a better future in Ontario.

We have the right plan to lead this province in good times and in times that are more challenging. Our plan balances prudent financial management with vital investments that build on the strengths of this great province, because we know that there isn't one simple answer to attract growth and investment in Ontario. It takes a comprehensive approach. Our quality of life is affected by a great variety of things and the people of this province agree with the approach that we're taking.

The government has invested and continues to invest in tax cuts for businesses. However, simply lowering taxes is not enough to ensure that an economy can compete in global markets. According to a recent 2006 competitiveness study by KPMG, the combined total of all taxes imposed by all levels of government represents only 3% to 13% of location-sensitive costs. As KPMG notes, selecting the best site for a business operation requires balanced consideration of many factors, including business costs, business environment, personnel costs and quality-of-life issues.

That's why our government has created a five-point plan that factors in all of these considerations, a plan that will attract investment and help grow the Ontario economy. The plan includes investments in skills and knowledge and speaks to our \$1.5-billion investment in the skills-to-jobs action plan in this budget. It accelerates

investments in infrastructure, and that speaks to the hundreds of millions of dollars being invested in our road and bridge systems. It supports innovation. It lowers business costs. Those in northern Ontario this year will be a benefactor as we accelerate the reduction of the business education tax for northern Ontario. It strengthens key partnerships to maximize our future potential.

Attracting business investment now and into the future requires an environment that supports business and people in all areas of their lives. We must continue to build on our strengths, because businesses are run by people and the citizens of this province want to live in a modern, well-run, competitive province. They want solid infrastructure, they want good public health care and they certainly want excellent education. Ontarians want a government that supports business and supports people.

We believe the key to success is in building on the strengths of this province and supporting an environment where new expertise can grow. In fact, just a few short months ago, we proposed a package of business tax relief worth \$1.1 billion over three years and, in this budget, a further \$750 million in business tax relief starting in 2007-08. We're proposing to eliminate the capital tax retroactive to January 1, 2007, for manufacturers and the resource industries. It's a clear reflection on the challenges that these sectors are facing. This would entitle those sectors to an additional \$190 million in tax rebates for the period from January 2007 forward.

0920

The government proposes to extend the acceleration of the capital cost allowance rate for manufacturing and process manufacturing and equipment investments made before 2012. This will save businesses some \$433 million over three years and encourage Ontario manufacturers and forestry companies to invest in new equipment.

To help modernize northern businesses, as I mentioned, the business education tax cuts will be accelerated and this will create a savings of some \$70 million over the next three years for small business in northern Ontario.

The McGuinty government recognizes that supporting key sectors in the economy will encourage growth and innovation. To encourage innovation, we're proposing a 10-year Ontario income tax exemption for new corporations that commercialize intellectual property developed by qualifying universities, colleges or research institutes. This is a unique tax measure. Our income tax exemption would help educational and research institutes to create meaningful public-private partnerships. Small and medium-sized firms in Ontario employ over 60% of private sector employees. We want to continue to support an environment where they can flourish and grow Ontario's economy.

With only a couple of minutes left, I have much more that I would like to be able to say this morning, but in the interests of ensuring that all parties have an opportunity for the full debate that they would like: With this budget the government is reaffirming its support for all of Ontario. We're moving forward with the strategy that builds

on Ontario's strengths. The government is investing in those sectors, communities and families not currently sharing in Ontario's prosperity.

This budget package moves forward on the government's five-point plan for economic competitiveness. It's a plan for now that will build a better Ontario for the future. It's about investing in today to strengthen our position in the global marketplace tomorrow, a long-term strategy for Ontario's success. Our government takes immediate action when it's needed and builds on our skills. We are leading this province through some difficult times. The budget will further enhance the province's tax competitiveness and build on the areas that make Ontario a success. The McGuinty government is providing immediate strategic investments and tax measures to stimulate economic growth. We're investing in the building blocks of tomorrow. We're investing in innovation, in infrastructure, and we're investing in skills development. In the foundations of our economy today, we're investing in manufacturing, in the forestry sector, in agriculture and in tourism.

Our budget provides a solid economic package that starts right now, when it's most needed. I would encourage all of those in this House, when the time comes, to stand and show their support for Ontarians, the people, the communities and the businesses that make this a great province, and to support the budget of 2008-09.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to respond to the member from Pickering-Scarborough East, who is the parliamentary assistant to the minister. He had no content, technically. With about 40 minutes left to speak, he said he had no time to speak. In fact, he really should have said he had nothing to say.

I'm very surprised, quite honestly, when I look at this. This government has been here since 2003. They've increased spending by some 44%. I ask my constituency regularly, is it any better? With the largest tax increase in history as part of their record, the health tax, is it any better? Do we have problems in the emergency room? Do we have problems in long-term care for our seniors, our frail elderly? Do we find communities that still can't find doctors? With the increased spending, you would think you would find better outcomes, but in fact it's not the case.

The treachery of this discussion is really more profound when you look at the issues that they put in the budget which we would support. I call them poison-pill mechanisms. They're token amounts of recognition for relief for hard-working Ontarians. In the form of tax cuts for seniors, that's a worthy thing. It's certainly not enough relief for seniors. What it is, is giving them back their health tax money.

When you look at the implications of the 10 years tax-free for new, innovative companies in R&D, commercialization—most companies fail in the first three years, the majority of them. We will not see any of that money, that commitment, spent. I put on the record—the next election is 2011—none of those companies will be commercialized and have income that will taxable in any

case. Even the tax relief for the business education tax is only for northern Ontario. So these are half measures. There's no strategic plan here. When you have 200,000-plus people out of jobs in the forestry sector, the manufacturing sector and even the IT sector and the agricultural sector, I'm concerned about the lack of vision, the lack of commitment for the longer term for the people of Ontario.

I can't support this budget, and I know our party is concerned that there are no decisions that affect the ordinary working people in this province, except more spending and more taxes.

Mr. Paul Miller: Obviously, I concur with the former speaker. This budget doesn't meet our needs in this province. It just touches on some of the more important things. You're talking \$1 billion for infrastructure when we're about \$60 billion short. I'm not sure if that would even take care of Hamilton's needs, one city in this great province.

Where is this 2008 budget? What's amazing about the Liberals' 2008 budget is that most of the spending announced has already been done. Budgets are supposed to be forward-looking documents to give citizens a sense of direction the government is taking. Budget 2008 made countless re-announcements of decisions presented in December's fall economic statement. Bill 44, the omnibus budget bill, contains, word for word, the proposal presented in Bill 24, the fall economic statement legislation. For example, the government announces over and over its decision to accelerate the capital tax reduction and tax changes for small businesses. What is clear from these re-announcements is a lack of a plan, no plan for a troubled economy, and disappearing manufacturing jobs—no plan to bring people out of poverty and no plan for an ever-worsening environment.

Speaking from the perspective in Hamilton, there are no new companies opening in Hamilton; there are no jobs coming to Hamilton. In the last 15 years, we've lost almost 20,000 manufacturing jobs, and as of just yesterday, National Steel Car is now having more layoffs—100—and they're talking about moving to Alabama. So I'm not quite sure where this government is headed with these so-called jobs, and I'm not sure where the jobs are happening, because it sure isn't happening in my part of the province.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to offer a couple of minutes of comment on budget Bill 44. I listened intently to the comments of the member from Durham, who talks often in his comments about the largest tax increase. I always feel the need to remind him about the incredible tax shift that occurred under the eight years or so of the reign of the Mike Harris-Ernie Eves governments in the province of Ontario. Like many other members who sit in this Legislature, I was a municipal councillor—in Thunder Bay—at the time that that exercise was unfolding, and am fully and acutely aware of the impact that had on our municipal budgets, as it did on the municipal budgets of many members around this Legislature. Not only was it downloading of social services, but they like to not

remind people about the downloading of infrastructure costs. I have a wonderful little example from Timmins, where I once took a ride from the airport all the way into the community of Timmins, a small community of about 50,000 people. A highway about 30 kilometres long was downloaded onto the backs of those municipal property taxpayers. They like to talk about tax increases, but they don't like to talk about the tax shift.

In this bill, there are a lot of really good pieces, especially for me as a member from northern Ontario. We remember the three-legged stool that we inherited from the previous government: a services deficit, a fiscal deficit and an infrastructure deficit. Everybody is very clear on those, and they don't want to talk about it. On infrastructure, I can tell you, we have great news in this budget, great news for northern Ontario and specifically northwestern Ontario communities. Small communities in my riding, like Oliver Paipoonge, 3,000 or 4,000 people with huge geographic areas to support, end up with about \$2 million in infrastructure money.

These are communities that oftentimes even have a hard enough time finding the fiscal capacity in their municipal budgets to make the applications and spend the engineering costs necessary to apply to these programs in the first place. These infrastructure dollars in our budget, through the MIII program and through the formula-based program in the budget, are wonderful things, especially so for small rural northwestern Ontario communities.

0930

Mr. Jim Wilson: I listened carefully to what the government members had to say about this bill. I think they don't really tell the public the whole story when they use things like debt-to-GDP ratios rather than actually talking about the real debt. Since 2003-04, your first year, we had a public debt of—it has gone up about \$47 billion dollars in the time you've been in office. You forget to tell the public that.

The honourable member from northern Ontario just spoke about infrastructure deficits. You're not even paying for your infrastructure. You're borrowing pretty well all of it from third parties. If I look at the Ontario Infrastructure Projects Corp., it had a debt of \$323 million when you came in and set it up; it now has a debt of \$1.95 billion. Sorry, \$1,950,000,000. That would make more sense. So it has gone up several hundred per cent.

The seniors' tax credit: My colleague for Durham points out constantly that you're just giving back the health tax to seniors. You're not even doing that. My mother, as a retired schoolteacher, paid \$600 this year in health tax. The maximum she'll get back in three years' time is \$300. So that's a bit of an insult.

There's really no plan here, either, to look after the 200,000 people who are unemployed. You're spending a record amount of money on skills training, but skills training for what? For jobs out west. That's a shame.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concluded the time for questions and comments. The member for Pickering-Scarborough East has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I appreciate the comments coming from the members for Durham, Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, Thunder Bay-Atikokan and Simcoe-Grey. I'm always surprised, and maybe I shouldn't be, when members from the Tory caucus and some members from the NDP caucus are actually in agreement on things. I'm not quite sure what they're in agreement on.

I heard a lot about spending on health care from the member from Durham. Then I heard about tax cuts. I'm not sure what it is he wants to speak of, if he wants to speak to spending or speak to tax cuts. You really can't be doing both in an effective way.

With the 90 seconds or so that might be available, I do want to comment just briefly on the proposal we have in respect to poverty reduction in Ontario, dealing with those who are the most vulnerable as part of this budget process. We're making investments in this budget on our proposals for dental services for low-income Ontarians, which is a very important part of our campaign platform and an important part of what Ontarians of low income need. We've committed to raising the minimum wage. That, effective just last month, was raised to \$8.75. We're on our way, on a structured plan, to get to \$10.25 by March of 2010.

We're investing in a variety of other initiatives, including tax relief for moderate and low-income seniors on the property tax bill, to help offset things like general property tax or their school taxes as part of that. We are enhancing the Ontario property and sales tax credit program for seniors as part of that overall strategy as well.

So we're doing a great variety of things in the budget. We're dealing with infrastructure, we're dealing with innovation, and we're dealing with the economy. And we haven't forgotten those in our communities who are vulnerable, whether those be children; whether they be lower-income adults who may need dental services; whether it's seniors who need some degree of tax relief, but at the same time maintaining a property tax system that's fair to all. Thank you so much for your time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm pleased to rise on the third reading of Bill 44 this morning. I want to offer a few comments on the state of the economy as we contemplate the final reading of Bill 44. I want to address some of the amendments that we brought forward in committee as well, which we think would have substantially improved the bill. But surprise, surprise: One by one, the Liberal members of the committee—almost like they were whipped—voted them down, even though they were generous amendments to help seniors with their costs of living, for example, to encourage exercise, which you would think would be something that the Ministry of Health Promotion would have supported. But again, they all got voted down, I suspect because they came from individual MPPs as opposed to coming from the minister's office. So I'll talk about that a little bit, and talk about the difference in economic approaches that we're seeing in

Dalton McGuinty's old-fashioned tax-and-spend Ontario versus what other provinces have pursued successfully.

I do want to note as well at the beginning of my comments that today marks the second day of the new Liberal-friendly rules changes. There was a very good article today in *The Toronto Star* by Mr. Benzie, a very talented, insightful journalist whom members know in the Queen's Park press gallery, talking about the rules changes and how it's impacted on debate. I think it's important as we consider Bill 44 today. It didn't seem, as Dalton McGuinty promised, that we've seen the Churchillian rhetoric in these morning debates. In fact, this is about as exciting as the 9:20 p.m.—

Interjection.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thank you; that's nice of you to say, Mr. Milloy. It was so exciting this morning in debate that John Milloy actually cracked a smile and giggled over there. It was the first time to see such a sight.

So it's not exactly much different from what you see at 9:20 p.m.; maybe we'll see some improvements here. What I found interesting about Mr. Benzie's article, I say to my colleagues, is that Liberal members have been saying off the record that they're concerned that this will impact their ability—because usually at this time of day, members would be addressing constituency issues and doing their roles as parliamentary assistants or critics; committees would be meeting; you'd be on the phone a good part of the morning trying to solve issues on behalf of your constituents and interacting with the ministers, their staff and ministries to get that job done.

Liberal members have been saying—rightly so—that that makes it much more difficult for them to do, and they seem to have pinned the tail on the proverbial donkey. I give credit to the Liberal members who had spoken with Mr. Benzie as part of the article.

The real goal of moving question period to 10:45 was to do two things. The goal was to limit the ability of the opposition to hold the Premier and his cabinet accountable, because it limits the time to prepare for question period. Granted, sometimes you have days ahead of time to prepare questions, and we'll still do that. But the other side of the coin, I would say, is that sometimes there's a story that's moving and you need to do the research. It does take time, whether you're contacting a source, through a library, a municipal partner or a hospital, to get an answer in time to propose your question for question period, and then get it on the list for 10:45.

I agree with the Liberal members mentioned in the article that the goal was to allow the government to kill issues early in the morning and to control the spin coming out of Queen's Park, so those stories don't get on the 6 p.m. news.

It also limits the availability—

Mr. Bruce Crozier: The article doesn't say that.

Mr. Tim Hudak: My colleague says the article doesn't say that. He can stand up in his time of the debate and quote Mr. Benzie's article. That's my recollection when I woke up this morning after Miller had been up and got to my *Toronto Star* and my *National Post*.

At any rate, the other point, obviously, is to limit the access that the press has to the Premier and to various ministers. So they've made that change, and I guess we'll see how this works out. I figure the deal has been cooked to move the question period to that particular time for those two purposes.

In reality, my colleagues know that all you really need to do is move the night debates into the morning. We'd have orders of the day, continue that debate in the morning and then hit question period at a fixed, predictable time. We've suggested 1 p.m. That gives the opposition the opportunity to get good questions, do the research and bring them forward. It's a fixed time, to allow individuals and those with young children to adapt their schedules to a fixed time. I think it also would assist the press because they'd know exactly what time question period would be, the post-question-period scrums, and it would allow them to file their stories both for the noon news—the morning news of the day—and then following question period if there's a follow-up to those stories.

0940

I want to read back some Hansard, because I think it's important that we talk about Bill 44 and we have a substantive debate about the merits of the bill and the proposals therein. But I don't think I can pass without comment, noting that Bill 44 is being debated in a morning session. I want to reach back to Hansard from April 16, 2008. Premier McGuinty said, "I had the opportunity earlier today to speak with a group of representatives of various farm organizations. I'm not sure I could ever muster up the courage to tell them that we are, as a sacrifice now, about to begin work in this place at 9 o'clock in the morning. In our original proposal, we talked about working on Fridays. They said no to that," and the Premier goes on.

So the Premier is basically saying that now, all of a sudden, we're going to start work at 9 a.m., and I know my colleagues opposite start their days far earlier.

Mr. John O'Toole: Where is he? He's not here.

Mr. Tim Hudak: My colleague notes that the Premier is not even in the Legislature at 9 a.m. We're not sure what he's doing. He's certainly not in the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask you not to make reference to the absence of any other member in the House.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the point.

There's a good interjection here, by the way, from the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook to the Premier's comments, saying, "That's an embarrassment. How can you demean your members like this? You should turn around and apologize for that"—

I was called to order by the Speaker, rightly so. But I think it was a good point, because the Premier is basically standing here, saying to his members, like the member for Peterborough, that he doesn't start his workday at 9 a.m.; presumably he started his workday at 1:45 or 2 o'clock, when question period would often occur. I find it very unfortunate that the Premier has that kind of attitude

toward members of the assembly and his own members, basically insinuating that his members are not working at 9 a.m. when I know very well they are and have been, trying to solve issues for their constituents, doing their business as parliamentary assistants, committee work or in their role as critics, if they are in the opposition.

Again, the Premier said during that response in Hansard, April 16, "I just don't see how starting work here at 9 o'clock in the morning is such a tremendous sacrifice." Again, it's unfortunate—I bet some of you had the guts to stand up in caucus and call the Premier on this—that he would insult you in such a way as to suggest that you weren't working in the mornings merely because orders of the day weren't happening. We know full well, as you would, Mr. Speaker, that members of all parties would be working hard on behalf of their constituents much earlier than 9 in the morning. I wanted to note that as we began debate on Bill 44 and to remark on the unfortunate, demeaning attitude the Premier has exhibited even toward his own MPPs in the debate on the sitting times in the Legislature.

We address Bill 44 today, about a week after the Toronto Dominion research dropped a bomb on the province of Ontario. You'll remember that report. The report basically said that Ontario was heading toward have-not status. I was back in my riding this past weekend and I spoke to the Rotary Club in Grimsby, actually on Thursday evening, and this was the number one issue. Rotary, a very active group as a whole in the province and especially active in Grimsby, brought up this issue of Ontario having have-not status, which was shocking to them. Some members of Rotary are younger, some members of Rotary could probably be described as senior citizens, and they had never contemplated in their lives the notion of Ontario being a have-not province, begging thy neighbour for funds to come into our province.

We have always known an Ontario that was a leader in Canada—actually, under the previous PC government, a leader in North America—in job creation and in growth, the kind of province where people came from St. John's in Newfoundland, Victoria, BC, Yellowknife. They came to Ontario to make their way, to find a good job, provide for their families, buy a nice home, climb their way up the ladder. That was the Ontario we've always known: an Ontario that, because of its wealth and potential, would share with other provinces.

Now, after just four short years—well, in some senses, long years—of the Dalton McGuinty government, we find Ontario contemplating have-not status, meaning we're at the bottom rung of the ladder. This great province, with vast potential and incredible entrepreneurs, a hard-working, well-trained workforce that is accustomed to leading the country, is now laid low by Dalton McGuinty's tax-and-spend policies, at the back of the pack. We've gone from the powerhouse of Confederation to a poor cousin in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

So those watching at home now, who have moved off from—who would be on at 9 a.m.? They've moved away from Regis and—is it Kathie Lee still?

Interjection.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Kelly. My apologies. The Regis and Kelly show—

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'm at work.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Members are at work, as my colleague from Simcoe says, so he wouldn't know, but I guess the Regis and Kelly show. They've changed their channel now to the Legislative channel.

I want to refer to the TD Economics special report released April 29, 2008, the highlights of the report on the first page: "Ontario set to receive payments under the federal equalization program."

"Based on TD Economics' economic and revenue projections, Ontario is projected to qualify for equalization payments of \$400 million in fiscal year 2010-11 and \$1.3 billion in fiscal year 2011-12."

They go on to talk about how the other provinces are doing and that "Ontario's advantage has been slipping." They show the growth of Ontario's economy relative to the rest of Canada.

As I mentioned several times in debate before, and I want to stress this: For the first time ever, as far as I know, Ontario's per capita GDP, a measure of our wealth, has fallen below the national average, I believe, in 2006. When Dalton McGuinty came into office we were about \$2,000 above the national per capita GDP, and now we have slipped below the national average for the first time. I think that gives reason to think, why is Ontario in the situation it is in, contemplating have-not status? That's because our wealth relative to the rest of the provinces on average has declined, fallen behind the pack; our job creation, as TD has pointed out, among other institutions, is now last in Canada when it comes to private sector job creation.

All of these measures have shown that Ontario's economy is facing significant challenges. I'll argue that it has been hobbled by Dalton McGuinty's policy of having business taxes that are the highest in North America, by having government spending increase, program spending, by some 42% under his mandate, without any real results that I believe taxpayers would say they have seen. Red tape has increased, throttling innovation and job creation in the province. That's underlying why TD Economics has noted that we have slipped in our GDP per capita relative to the national average and relative to the provinces that are doing much better than Ontario.

I do want to note as well that the Premier's reaction to this news was disheartening, to say the least.

Mr. Jim Wilson: "Don't worry; be happy."

Mr. Tim Hudak: My colleague from Simcoe—Grey says, "Don't worry; be happy." There's no doubt: One of Dalton McGuinty's typical responses to bad economic news is to replay the old Bobby McFerrin hit from the 1990s, "Don't Worry, Be Happy." He tries to change the channel by talking about other things like banning pesticides or allowing clotheslines—

Mr. John O'Toole: Sushi.

Mr. Tim Hudak: —or banning sushi, as my colleague from Durham notes. The reality is that Dalton McGuinty

ty's response is either "Don't worry, be happy," or, "We need more money from Ottawa."

You would think that a Premier worth his salt in the province of Ontario would say, "There's no way that I would let Ontario slip into have-not status, come hell or high water." A Premier worth his or her salt would call in the top ministers on the economic files: finance, economic development and trade, and energy, to name a few. He or she would call them in immediately and say, "How are we going to reverse this decline? There is no way, under my mandate, that I would allow Ontario to become a have-not province." That's what I expected Dalton McGuinty to say, to show some bit of leadership and say—this is a loud warning cry by TD Economics; this is an alarm bell that they hear from Ottawa to Niagara to Kenora—"There is no way, come hell or high water, that Ontario will be a have-not province." That's what a Premier showing some modicum of leadership would say.

What did we see from Dalton McGuinty? Instead of saying, "We'll try to combat this. We'll turn the economy around. I'm calling in my top ministers. We're going to have a plan. We'll get out of this rut. We'll move back to Ontario's proper place as a leader in Confederation," Dalton McGuinty was just so anxious to get his hands on more money.

Dalton McGuinty loves to spend taxpayers' money. Let's not forget that one of his first moves while in office was to break his famous promise where he said he wouldn't increase taxes on working families and seniors, yet one of his first bills did just that: up to \$900 per individual and up to \$1,800 per family, depending on income—a substantial increase on the backs of middle-class families and seniors in Ontario, one of the first things Dalton McGuinty did in office.

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Combined with that, he increased taxes, despite warnings from economists, despite warnings from business groups, despite warnings from Roger Martin, his own economic policy adviser at the Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity. He increased taxes on business investments to now the highest in all of North America, chasing jobs out of our province. Some 200,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs, by way of example, have left in the last two years alone.

For every dollar Dalton McGuinty can squeeze from taxpayers, he's got three or four ways to spend it. Instead of talking about attacking the underlying problems, turning the economy around, making Ontario open for investment and private-sector job creation, reducing the red-tape burden and trying to give consumers a break so that they can spend in the local economy, Dalton McGuinty is more concerned about spending as much money as he can.

In a way, that's a bit duplicitous. He talks about the \$20 billion that the province sends to Ottawa, and he makes it sound like if that money came back, it would all be in provincial coffers for the next Dalton McGuinty spending program. The reality is, unless it was trans-

ferred back and Dalton McGuinty increased taxes by that much—he may very well do so—it's a fallacious argument that those funds would go to the provincial treasury and then be parceled out in new spending programs.

Let me talk a bit about what consumers are facing in the province of Ontario under Dalton McGuinty. We did a bit of a research project, the PC research services. These numbers are relatively current; they're a little bit outdated. The values that I'll talk about have become slightly worse, but we found that a typical family of four earning \$75,000 per year has seen their out-of-pocket expenses rise by \$2,045 under the McGuinty government. A typical individual, sole-income earner, not a family, earning \$35,000 per year in case 2 has seen her expenses increase by \$1,110 under Dalton McGuinty.

When you work through the numbers on these examples, the health tax on the family of four would be about \$750. Energy prices have gone up because Dalton McGuinty has increased them, I think despite campaign promises to the contrary. Yes, he did; he promised that hydro rates would be frozen at a certain level for a number—was it three years or so, Mr. Speaker? He broke that promise upon coming to office.

Mr. John O'Toole: Doubled.

Mr. Tim Hudak: My friend from Durham says that the cost of energy has increased significantly.

Mr. John O'Toole: Doubled.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The member from Durham says "doubled."

He's also planning on shutting down about 20% of our power by closing down the coal plants without any real plan to replace that power. That puts upward pressure on energy prices as well, and Dalton McGuinty has locked himself in as well to some long-term, expensive contracts to try to make up for that closure of 20% of our power supply through closing down the coal plants. The bottom line when we did this research was, the cost of electricity for that typical family was up about \$140.

If this family used natural gas in its household, which a lot of families do—we're on propane in my home in Wellandport and natural gas when we're here in Toronto. The typical family of four in our example would have seen, in this time period, their natural gas costs go up \$250 annually.

Gasoline has gone through the roof. Whether you're here, by Queen's Park, if you're back in Wellington county or if you're in Mount Hope, you're seeing prices at the pump of \$1.20 and upwards. In fact, CIBC is predicting they'll go as high as \$1.40, \$1.50 this summer and even higher in 2009. At any rate, the calculation is that the typical family of four now is paying \$490 more in gasoline costs than they had paid previous to Dalton McGuinty, so approximately \$500.

New driver's licence renewal charges were brought in, which is a cost of \$25 for an annual exam. I remember famously when Dalton McGuinty brought in the infamous health tax, which we know doesn't go to health care; it just goes to general revenue. He delisted, at the same time, health services from the OHIP stable, in-

cluding annual eye exams for adults, which now would cost \$150, to this typical family of four. The foregone tax cut was \$240.

Again, this was work we had done a couple of years ago, so I suspect the numbers are even higher now, because gas prices are higher than they were two years ago, as are energy prices, and there have been additional fees imposed on Ontario families. At any rate, when you add all those numbers up, I say to my friend from Peterborough, you get \$2,045 in more expenses for this family of four. Now, does Dalton McGuinty tell Esso where to put their gas prices? No, we're not saying that. We are simply pointing out—you know what? My friend brings up an important point. Dalton McGuinty did say, when he was in opposition, running to become Premier, that he had three great ideas to hold the line on gas prices. Remember that?

Mr. John O'Toole: Name one.

Mr. Tim Hudak: He said he had three great ideas to hold the line on gas prices, and this was at a time when I think gas prices were about 70 cents a litre. Dalton McGuinty said that was outrageous and he had three great ideas to hold the line on gas prices. But again, once elected Premier, these promises and these ideas had been forgotten.

So we have seen the cost of living increase by over \$2,000 for the typical family. Some things were in provincial control, like the health tax, like the delisting; they passed on some through the OEB, like energy costs, and they are about \$2,000 behind where they were in 2003. So you would think that there would be pressure from the Liberal caucus. I know there's pressure from small business groups, the taxpayers' federation etc., to lower the tax burden, to give middle-class families and seniors a break, because it's awfully difficult to make ends meet in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, particularly when you look at those numbers.

For the sole-income earner—I gave that example as well—she would face a health tax, in our example, of \$300 per year if she's earning \$35,000. Energy costs, natural gas, gasoline—we allocated \$245 in increased gas taxes. The delisted health programs, driver's licence renewal etc. works out to an impact of over \$1,000 on the bottom line of a single-income earner in the province of Ontario.

Back to the issue of transfers, by the way. I do want to point out for the record the increase in federal transfers that has taken place. In 2005-06, maybe in the last year of the Martin government, annual federal transfers to the province of Ontario were \$11.28 billion. There was \$7.7 billion in the Canada health transfer, \$3.1 billion in the Canada social transfer, \$379 million for infrastructure, to \$11.28 billion. In 2006-07 that was up about \$600 million, to \$11.8 billion. And then a substantial increase in 2007-08, the Harper government in Ottawa making good on its commitment to increase transfers to the provinces. It was \$12.5 billion in 2007-08, and for 2008-09, \$13.9 billion. That's with a \$2.6-billion increase from transfers in 2005-06. I think anybody on the federal side,

members of the opposition, I'm sure, and members of the Liberal caucus are wondering, with the \$2.6 billion in increased transfers from the federal government to the province of Ontario, where did the McGuinty government invest this money? Are taxpayers getting their money's worth? I don't think we have seen a \$2.6-billion increase in the quality of services. When we hear about wait times to offload ambulances in emergency rooms, when we hear about the backups in emergency rooms, about patients in beds in the hallways because they can't get a bed, when we see the lack of investment in the long-term-care sector, by way of example, when we see more students in portables than ever before—Blessed Trinity in Grimsby, by the way, has the sad distinction of having the most portables of any school in the Niagara Peninsula—you wonder where the \$2.6 billion in federal transfers has gone.

I think one of our major challenges is that Dalton McGuinty goes to Ottawa cap in hand, as opposed to reacting to the have-not status by saying he's going to do everything he can to rejuvenate our economy and get people working again, and attract more jobs to our province. When he goes to Ottawa cap in hand, I think the challenge we face is that our chief salesperson for the province of Ontario has a briefcase full of broken promises. He will say one thing, and has a reputation of doing the opposite. When we've seen the transfers increase by over \$2.5 billion, I think we in the assembly need to hear from the Premier exactly where those funds have flowed so we know we are getting an impact from that. I think if you ask my constituents in Niagara West-Glanbrook, they would say they have not seen that.

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Instead, what do we see? Well, the sunshine list of 2008 came out. If you look closely, the number of individuals on the sunshine list—these are government employees who earn more than \$100,000 per year—has increased by over 42,000 since Dalton McGuinty came to office. I think a lot of the growth—well, we haven't seen much growth in job creation, as TD points out and I'll point out a bit later. Dalton McGuinty has increased the size of government by some 42,000 workers making \$100,000 or more. That is about the size of Welland in the Niagara Peninsula, to put it all into perspective.

Let me give you some examples here. I mentioned that 42,000 Ontario government employees and workers in crown corporations, municipalities, hospitals, and colleges and universities are on that list. Ministry staff, by the way—these are political staffers who are on the sunshine list—have increased by 84% since 2003, ministry staffers who are making \$100,000 or more per year. The chief of staff in Dalton McGuinty's office, for example, now hauls down \$203,000, I guess heading up the 72 political staff who work in Premier McGuinty's office. One of the rare growth sectors in the province of Ontario is Dalton McGuinty's office, by the way: 72 employees, with the top dog making \$203,000; I'd point that out. There are seven individuals who either work in the Premier's office or work for various ministers who make

substantially more than your average MPP makes. I thought I would point that out for the Liberal members. I think they do know this, but I thought it was an important thing to raise as part of the debate, when we're wondering where additional spending has gone.

The local health integration networks, the LHINs, are the middle managers that the McGuinty government created as opposed to investing in front-line health care workers—more doctors and more nurses. It created these bureaucracies throughout the province of Ontario to administer funds. A new level of middle management was created at substantial cost to the health budget and to the taxpayer. I don't think they could show in this Legislature that as a result, health care has improved. I think there have been a lot of meetings held, there has been new investment in furniture and new offices, and a lot more staff hired. But I don't see how these funds are translating to reducing wait times at West Lincoln Memorial Hospital or getting more doctors into the Mount Hope area. The local health integration networks, the LHINs, have seen the people making \$100,000 a year increase from 13 to 53 from the time they got set up in 2006-07; 13 to 53 is a substantial increase. These salaries are typically in the \$200,000 range. I think most taxpayers would see these salaries and wonder why they couldn't be going into front-line health care as opposed to this level of middle management.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation makes an important point on this—I think the central difference between the approach the McGuinty government would take and the approach that Progressive Conservatives would take—that Dalton McGuinty's job creation has been primarily, over half of it, in government jobs. We've seen a very anaemic growth in the private sector, one of the reasons why we are on the verge of becoming a have-not province. Kevin Gaudet from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation in the National Post on April 7, 2008, had a very insightful column. This is a release I'm quoting from, actually; similar thoughts were in his column in the National Post recently: "McGuinty Grows Public Service by 16%: Private Sector Grows by 2%." Quite a disparity.

To read from Mr. Gaudet's release: "Jobs, jobs, jobs" was a catchy refrain during the federal election of 1984. Nearly 25 years later, the slogan may be making a comeback in Ontario. Yet this time, thanks to Premier McGuinty, it is the public sector rather than the private sector leading job growth. This approach cannot succeed because it does not add up."

Mr. Gaudet's central argument is that if public sector growth outpaces private sector growth, that is not sustainable. He backs it up with some interesting statistics: "During Premier McGuinty's tenure, Statistics Canada reports that private sector job creation has grown by 2.1%," which again, I remind you, is, if not last, close to last in all of Canada, "whereas the public sector has grown by 15.5%. There are now 101,882 more people employed by the provincial government than when Mr. McGuinty took power. That is triple the provincial

population growth rate, which only grew by 5.3%. Over a similar time frame, the private sector only generated 108,000 net new jobs."

So the government jobs are approximately at the same level, for the provincial government, as private sector jobs, according to Mr. Gaudet. As I raised with the sunshine list, as I raised with the political staffers and such, I don't think taxpayers would be convinced that those jobs are being created in front-line services. Instead, we're seeing more folks in middle management—more spin doctors, so to speak—than those who are delivering services.

Another important comparison Mr. Gaudet brings up: "Notwithstanding the different economic challenges each faced"—here he compares Premier Bob Rae, Premier Mike Harris and Premier McGuinty—"it is interesting to compare Mr. McGuinty's performance on the job front to some of his predecessors." This needs to be underlined. "Mr. McGuinty has grown the public sector more than Bob Rae, Mike Harris and Ernie Eves—combined." I don't know if you knew that. It bears repeating. "Mr. McGuinty has grown the public sector more than Bob Rae, Mike Harris and Ernie Eves—combined. Over five years, Bob Rae shrank the public sector by 21,673 jobs and his high taxing and high spending policies drove net private sector job growth of a meagre 12,500."

It's an interesting point, when you see over the course of the Bob Rae mandate what happened with public sector jobs. They actually shrank by 21,000. Private-sector job growth over approximately five years was a very "meagre 12,500."

"...Mike Harris (and Ernie Eves), grew the public sector by 47,235." You always hear the Liberals say, "You cut this; you cut that." The reality, from Stats Canada data, is that Mike Harris and Ernie Eves "grew the public sector by 47,235 jobs."

"Of note is that the Harris growth came outside the main departmental bureaucracy, which declined by almost 10,000 during his tenure." When Mr. Gaudet talks about "departmental," he's talking about ministry staff, what we see as the layer of bureaucracy, the middle management. He says that Mike Harris reduced that by 10,000, but overall public sector job growth was 47,000, indicating the trend there was towards front-line delivery services as opposed to those working around Queen's Park—StatsCan data.

"Premier McGuinty may defend his record of public sector job growth saying he promised more nurses, more teachers and more doctors. While this is true," Mr. Gaudet says, "the data reveals that departmental staff has also ballooned—up by 8.8% to 102,180." So while McGuinty talks a good game, the reality is that the departmental staff—the term he uses for middle management—not front-line services, have increased by 8.8%, to 102,180.

Mr. Gaudet's concluding points are that it's important to note that "this increased burden on taxpayers comes at a time when the economy is facing trouble." He makes the correct point that, "A healthy private sector that

creates wealth and a tax base is what provides for jobs in the public sector, not the other way around.”

So there is this fundamental difference in philosophy. Dalton McGuinty's tax-and-spend approach would be to grow as quickly as possible—since he's already left previous Premiers in the dust, so to speak—the public sector; therefore, buoy or juice a little bit the job creation statistics, and then hope that the private sector will follow.

The best approach that we've seen here in the province of Ontario and other jurisdictions is that you need a strong private sector creating new jobs, new companies, creating wealth. Then, when more people are working, more businesses are hiring and businesses are expanding, tax revenue increases and the province can invest in health care, education, police and other important services.

If you throttle the private sector economy, as we've seen Dalton McGuinty's tax-and-spend approach do, you have much slower growth—again, now at the back of Canada—which makes it unsustainable to continue to invest in needed public sector services. In a sense, it's a bit like David Peterson, *déjà vu* all over again, where spending got out of control, and then, when the economy slowed down, they had no room to adjust to stimulate the economy. As a result, he handed off to the NDP a significant deficit.

I do hope, and I could have expected in Bill 44, to see some approach by the government to reverse that trend, to say, as I mentioned before, “No way, come hell or high water, will Ontario ever be a have-not province; we're going to turn this ship around, help create jobs in the province of Ontario by creating a positive environment for business investment and expansion, so when 2010-11 comes around, the TD economics would be very wrong, they would be way off the mark, and their prediction would not come true.” You would think that would be the approach of the Premier and the approach in Bill 44, but sadly, it's almost like he is looking forward to collecting equalization payments to fuel this runaway spending that I mentioned earlier on, rather than pulling out all the stops to halt Ontario's slide and put us back to the top of the pack in Confederation once again.

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We brought forward a number of amendments to this bill. Hard-working members of the finance committee—my colleague from Wellington-Halton Hills, my colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk—brought forward amendments suggested by the PC caucus and suggested by me, as the finance critic. They were very reasonable, thoughtful amendments, but, as I mentioned, all of them were shot down.

Not everybody sees what happens in committee, so I thought I'd bring to the floor of the Legislature what some of those amendments were to make the case for them, and perhaps my colleague the parliamentary assistant—because I know he cares about working families and seniors in the province of Ontario—will help improve this bill. And if it's not going to be in Bill 44,

maybe a subsequent bill will amend Bill 44 and bring in some of these good ideas.

Schedule A was part of the bill that we felt really missed the boat, so to speak, when it comes to assisting families and seniors in the province of Ontario. Schedule A of Bill 44 dealt with the Assessment Act and consequential amendments. Members of the assembly, like my colleague from London-Fanshawe—because I know he follows this issue very closely—will tell you that one of the results of Dalton McGuinty's freezing assessment increases is that Ontario homeowners are going to face a triple whammy of property assessment increases for the 2009 tax year. Those assessments will be coming out this fall.

Just by way of background, you will remember that the debate of skyrocketing assessments consumed this Legislature for some time back in 2005-06. All of us were getting tons of calls and e-mails from our constituents who saw double or triple per cent increases in their assessments and said, “How can I afford to stay in my home?” It was a real burden on young families with children to see their assessments going through the roof and the resultant tax increases they were paying; or seniors, particularly seniors whose spouse has passed away and who had lived for a long period of time in the family home which happened to be in a neighbourhood that was improving, and she or he had seen the house value improve to the point where they couldn't afford the property taxes because of the assessment increases. Their income was fixed, but their assessments and taxes were going up simply because of the neighbourhood they lived in.

The Ombudsman, André Marin, did a scathing report on the Municipal Property Assessment Corp., MPAC. Before Mr. Marin's report, the McGuinty government was not going to make any substantive changes to the way assessments worked, in the face of tripling assessments in the province of Ontario, until pressure here in the assembly and, I suspect, pressure in the caucus room from the Liberal members—I would certainly hope—and Mr. Marin's report moved the government to action.

The problem was, instead of addressing the underlying problems in the system, the Liberal government decided to, in what I would call a cynical move, postpone the pain until after the election. So, conveniently, assessments were frozen until after the 2007 election; new assessments would come out in September 2008. Because assessments were basically frozen for three years, that means that homeowners, in the fall, will open up their mailboxes, take out the envelope from MPAC and see three years of assessments hitting them all at once. As CAPTR and WRAFT, two groups for homeowners, have pointed out, substantial increases of double or triple percentage values are coming forward.

When the business sector faced similar increases in assessments, as we adjusted to the new system, the then PC government did bring in a capping system to help address and transition to the new system. At that time, in

the late 1990s, we didn't see the spiking assessments that we do today, and I think that a sensible response would be to bring in assessment caps.

I've brought forward a bill called the Homestead Act that would put a cap of a maximum 5% on annual assessment increases. It would also provide a modest but helpful property tax break to seniors and those who are disabled. It would also allow a deductible on home repairs, because there's a bit of a disincentive when you improve your home; you see an increase in value and therefore an increase in taxes as a result. So there would be a deductible to support home repairs.

That bill actually did receive support from many members of all parties. Here at the PC caucus we supported it, the NDP caucus supported it, and I think I had about 11 or 12 Liberal members who defied the Premier and the finance minister to support the bill. Unfortunately, it never proceeded to third reading. As a result, that is not the regime that we have in the province, even though I believe we should.

I think you'll know that populations representing probably half or more of North America do have some kind of capping regime. They have it in the province of Nova Scotia. We proposed it for Ontario. New York state, California, Florida, Michigan, Iowa and Texas, to name but some, have a form of capping regime—some lower than 5%, some higher than 5%, but they have a capping regime.

States that have faced similar pressure on property assessments have tended to react and bring in these caps, some through voter initiatives, some through legislative initiatives and referenda, but nevertheless, they do exist. I do hope that the government will consider that again when the triple-figure increases come out this fall.

We brought forward a motion to schedule A of the act to bring in that cap of 5%. It seemed very reasonable. I know that my colleagues presented it well and explained what the motion would do, but unfortunately, the members of the Liberal caucus did vote that down.

We brought forward a subsequent motion that said, "Okay, if you don't agree with 5%, if you think it should be higher or you think it should be lower," we were ready to give cabinet the regulatory authority to determine what that cap level should be, to give flexibility. If I'm wrong and if CAPTR is wrong and if WRAFT is wrong and assessments aren't going through the roof this fall as three years of assessment increases hit all at once, then cabinet would have no need to bring in caps. However, if we are proven to be right—and CAPTR has done a lot of research on this with a known real estate firm—then cabinet would have the ability to act to bring in caps of whatever percentage they deemed to be appropriate for the circumstances. But unfortunately, that amendment was defeated as well.

Basically, we brought forward a series of amendments to schedule A, the Assessment Act, to try to anticipate the skyrocketing assessments that homeowners will see this fall, but unfortunately, each of those was defeated, as was the proposal to allow a deductible for home repairs and home improvements.

We made some suggestions, as well, to the timing. We want to make sure that if homeowners disagree with their assessment notices, if they think the number is way off and they want to make an appeal—you certainly do need time to consider this. You need to look at like-valued homes. You may want to consult somebody who has some degree of expertise to give you advice whether it's worth pursuing or not. So we had made some suggestions for improvements to schedule A to extend the time period for appeals for various homeowners, but unfortunately, they were defeated as well.

I'll move on from schedule A for the time being and look at schedule B. Schedule B would give the Minister of Finance a new ability to make grants to various groups. It would be a new function for the ministry. It wouldn't have legislative debate; the minister would just be able to make these grants. We certainly have seen what happened with that abuse of power in the run-up to the last election, with the infamous slush funds scandal that saw a cricket club, to use the most famous example, that asked for \$100,000 receive over \$1 million in funding.

We had a simple suggestion that we certainly thought was of merit, that these proposals for the grants in the Ministry of Finance would first go to the assembly for the assembly to approve on motion. They have the votes; we recognize that. They have a majority government. They could vote these things through. But at the very least, why not bring some scrutiny by the Legislature of these new grants, so that they would receive approval by motion in the assembly, as opposed to simply being signed off by the minister in a backroom?

We also expressed concerns about schedule C of the act. Schedule C, of course, amends the City of Toronto Act, 2006, for reasons that aren't entirely clear. Andrew from the finance minister's office and representatives from the civil service came in and took the time to brief the PC caucus on this and respond to our questions; I do appreciate that. I want to thank them for that courtesy. It helps us to ensure that the amendments we bring forward are sensible and are addressing the purpose of the legislation.

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But schedule C, if passed as is in Bill 44, would basically allow the ministry to put a wide range of information into city of Toronto tax bills. These are municipal tax bills that are going out which indicate the level of tax, the value of the property. The city of Toronto may put some things in there about what they're spending money on, for example, but this would give the province of Ontario the ability to add things to the envelope. If there are specific purposes that the government had in mind and it was made clear they were doing this for purpose A—to inform the residents of the city of Toronto of plans to expand the subway north toward York University—I don't think members of the caucus would object to that. It's an important service for those in the city of Toronto and the GTA, and those visiting the city. I don't think we would object to something like that.

The problem is that they're asking us to buy a pig in a poke and give them blank authority to slip anything whatsoever into the tax bills under schedule C. We brought forward an amendment to make sure this new power would not be abused by this government or any future government. Clause 309(3)(a) of the City of Toronto Act would be amended under our motion to say that the minister would have to sit down with the city of Toronto and consult with them before they would insert whatever piece of propaganda into a city of Toronto mail-out on the taxes.

I don't know if time will allow me to get to subsequent amendments of this kind, but there are also amendments under this bill for municipalities outside of the city of Toronto. If you're worried about Elmira, by way of example, this bill would allow the minister to slip whatever he or she sees fit into a tax bill in Elmira. The amendments the PC caucus brought forward were that they should consult with the local municipality to make sure it's a shared purpose before inserting something willy-nilly into a tax bill. So we do worry about what the government's plans are because it was never made quite clear what the true intent of schedule C was and why they needed this new power. They didn't give us any particular examples of what they intended pursuing in the time ahead.

There was some debate here in the assembly and in committee over our amendment to schedule E. Schedule E, of course, amends the Corporations Tax Act. We moved that the tax rate for 2008 and later years would be at a rate of 12%. As I've said many times in the assembly, as my colleagues have said and as Roger Martin, the Premier's economic adviser, has noted, we have the highest rate of taxation on business investment in all of Canada. In fact, we have the highest rate of taxation on business investment in all of North America. Saskatchewan used to be ahead of us. Saskatchewan used to have the highest rate, and we were number two after Dalton McGuinty raised taxes on businesses. And then believe it or not, a New Democrat government in Saskatchewan lowered their corporate tax rate, leaving Ontario with the rather ignoble distinction of having the highest taxes on business investment in all of Canada.

I mentioned at the opening of my remarks the TD report warning that Ontario was on the downward spiral to have-not status. If you book-ended five days on either side of that announcement, you saw a worrisome trend. In Listowel, Ontario, a town of just a few thousand people, Campbell Soup, which employed 500 people, announced it was closing its doors. A major employer, a good corporate citizen in the Listowel community, affecting Lord knows how many homes, announced 500 layoffs. Can you contemplate the economic impact on a town of Listowel's size?

My colleague from Wellington-Halton Hills, by the way, asked a very good question to the Minister of Research and Innovation, who happens to be the MPP for that area, asking what he was prepared to do in his capacity as minister to save those jobs. Interestingly, that

very day, the minister dodged the question and referred it to a colleague, which I thought was unfortunately instructive.

In the same week that we saw the Campbell's layoffs, some 500, we saw 900 announced layoffs at GM in Oshawa. Within a week, we saw Dell in the city of Ottawa announce about 1,100 layoffs. Very sadly, in Niagara we saw the announced closure of CanGro, which is a fruit cannery in St. David's. It employed, at one point in time, 150 people. I think 120 were told, around the time of the have-not report, that their jobs would be lost. It's not only devastating for those families, it has spin-off impacts on about 150 growers of peaches and pears in the area who will now be hard pressed to find a market for their product. People watching CHTV would have been greeted by the very sad image of tender fruit trees being uprooted, creating a brownfield in Dalton McGuinty's much-vaunted greenbelt. It takes six, seven years or more once you invest in a new tree before it starts producing fruit for market. It's particularly challenging for peach growers, because the clingstone peaches are meant for canneries, not for the fresh market. I do hope that the province, which failed to save that plant, will at least help the tender fruit growers transition and help them to find markets.

We brought in an amendment to schedule E which would at least have lowered the corporate tax rate to 12% from where it is today as part of the highest level of business taxation on business investment in all of North America, but unfortunately this is a government not interested in reducing the burden of taxes on businesses or working families and they, of course, voted down the amendment to the corporations tax rate.

We also proposed an amendment under schedule E to eliminate the capital tax altogether. It would have seen the capital tax, no matter what the business, eliminated by January 1, 2007, retroactively, to help stimulate job creation in the province. We're one of the last provinces, I believe, to have a capital tax. It's a tax on jobs; it's a tax on investment. It was originally scheduled to be eliminated at the same time as the federal capital tax, which would have been, if I remember, back in 2006. Of course, as part of Dalton McGuinty's bill that increased taxes to the highest level in all of North America, and part of his famous broken promise not to increase taxes on working families and seniors, we thought at the very least we could accelerate—

Interjection.

Mr. Tim Hudak: My colleague has an opportunity to correct the record, I guess, but I've seen time and time again that Ontario has the highest rate of taxes on business investment in all of North America. In fact, Roger Martin, the Premier's own economic advisor, has talked many times about the high rate of business taxation in the province of Ontario.

At any rate, we had proposed that the capital tax be wiped out in its entirety as of January 1, 2007. There's certainly the capacity in the budget to do so, but again Liberal members, I think taking their cue from the

Premier and the finance minister, were not interested in reducing the tax burden in the province and they voted that one down as well.

We had some other amendments to schedule E. In the interests of time I think I'll move on, but basically they are a compendium of amendments in schedule E to help reduce the burden of taxation on businesses, to help stimulate job creation.

Schedule L is quite interesting, and I believe it's schedule Q that went along with it. We brought forward amendments in both respects. Schedule L would call upon the LCBO to borrow for major capital projects. I think it uses the word "shall" as opposed to "may," so it's forcing the LCBO. If I recall, schedule Q would impose the same thing on the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. We have concerns that this is an attempt from the government to hide its borrowing in its agencies and to inflate the revenues that are coming into the province for additional spending. Again, we didn't suggest that this schedule be eliminated altogether. We thought we'd be reasonable about it, so we said in our amendment that the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs would review these major capital projects, or even minor capital projects. The bill leaves it in the minister's hands to define, rather than forcing them to go into debt to finance them if they could finance it through cash flow.

My colleague from Simcoe North noted earlier on why we have this concern. If you look at page 156 of the government's recent budget, the net debt and accumulated deficit tables as of interim 2008, you'll see that the publicly held debt by the province in 2003-04, the first year that the McGuinty government came into office—that was split a bit between the Eves government and the McGuinty government, the McGuinty government, of course, being elected in October 2003.

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The level was \$121.992 billion. I'll saw it off at \$122 billion in publicly held debt. The plan for 2008-09, so within five years, is that publicly held debt will increase to \$149 billion. As my colleague from Simcoe North pointed out rightly, we're seeing a \$28-billion increase in publicly held debt under the Dalton McGuinty government. And we know what that means. That means a greater burden being placed on children and grandchildren in the province of Ontario. At a time that revenues are at record levels, largely due to Dalton McGuinty's tax increases and increased federal transfers, despite the fact that we have record revenues, the province of Ontario continues to borrow, which is actually amazing.

A \$28-billion increase in debt, a new burden on future generations—interest payments will go up as a result—taking money that could be used in the budget for health care or education, now towards debt repayment: So how they score that circle, how they can say, at a time that their revenues increased by \$25 billion or more, that they see fit to borrow an additional \$28 billion beyond that, is simply breathtaking. My colleague from Simcoe North was absolutely right in calling attention to that. That's

why we brought forward these amendments to schedule L of the act, and schedule Q when it came to the OLG, the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., now known as Ontario Lottery and Gaming, OLG.

Schedule O: As I mentioned, we brought forward an amendment not to eliminate but to restrict the ability of the minister to put whatever he or she chose into a municipal tax bill, whatever piece of propaganda the government wanted to put out there. We asked the minister simply to consult with the affected municipalities. It seemed very reasonable. I know reasonable members of the committee would probably, deep down, agree with this proposal, especially former mayors and municipal councillors, but unfortunately, this very reasonable amendment to schedule O of the act was shot down.

Schedule P: We also brought forward amendments basically saying that no order in council authorizing borrowing under this act shall be made after March 31, 2009. The reason we brought forward that amendment was that we were concerned with the level of borrowing that the McGuinty government is doing to fuel the runaway spending. As I mentioned, public debt has gone up by some \$28 billion under the McGuinty government, so we weren't willing to give them a blank cheque when it comes to future borrowing that the McGuinty government might contemplate, and we made some companion amendments to that.

I mentioned as well schedule Q, dealing with the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., and our concerns that the government will try to put more debt on the backs of its public agencies. We certainly have seen some accounting trickery by the McGuinty government. We'll have a chance, I think, in the next few days to debate Bill 35. The time allocation motion was struck on 35. We went to committee and, as you may recall, the Auditor General had offered pretty strong criticism. It is not every day, in fact it's a relatively rare occurrence, that the Auditor General writes to a committee to the Legislature raising concerns about the accounting principles in a government bill.

We thought it very reasonable to suggest, and my colleague from Beaches—East York, Mr. Prue, had brought the motion forward—and we supported it—that we simply hear from the Auditor General. That would give members of the committee from all three parties a chance to ask the Auditor General and decide for ourselves if his critique of the bill—that, in his view, certain sections should be deleted—was meritorious or not. But, unfortunately, Mr. Prue's motion, that we supported, was voted down by the Liberal members, and the Auditor General was not able to come before the committee to raise his concerns in person.

We've raised our strong reservations about the accounting voodoo in that legislation. We feel strengthened in that because of the Auditor General's concerns in his letter, that this basically legalizes a slush fund that allows the cabinet, in the summertime, to allocate funding from a previous fiscal year to whatever group it deems appropriate—particularly when you think the

government may be politically motivated. It's hard for me to say such a thing, but that would be potentially in the run-up to the 2011 election when they could disburse these slush funds, and that's why we raise our objections to Bill 35, as well as Bill 44, before the assembly today.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm just going to read a few facts here. This sort of sums up how we feel about this budget.

Since Dalton McGuinty came to power, Ontario has lost 18% of its high-paying manufacturing jobs. That's \$6.6 billion in wages out of the Ontario economy. That very scary number of 18% sounds good compared to the absolute devastation of the manufacturing sector that communities such as Hamilton have endured, where 30% of the manufacturing jobs have been lost. Outrageous.

But all this pales in comparison to the hit that Windsor has taken, where close to 40% of the manufacturing jobs have disappeared. Windsor now has the second-highest unemployment rate in Canada.

Here are some other numbers that demonstrate the depth of the job crisis in Ontario manufacturing and resource sectors. Under Dalton McGuinty's watch, 10,000 forest sector jobs, worth \$869 million to the Ontario economy, have been lost. Northerners have lost seven out of 10 jobs. Ontario manufacturing employment stood at 913,000 in February 2008. That's a loss of almost 200,000 manufacturing jobs since 2004, or about 18% of the total manufacturing jobs in our province. Auto—parts and assembly—steel and forest products have been particularly hard-hit.

Stats Canada has found that the average worker who lost a job in the manufacturing sector suffers a 25% drop in wages in his or her new job. That's a loss of \$10,000 in wages per worker. I guess those are some of the 147,000 jobs that this government likes to announce, while these people lost 25% of their income—not exactly something to be proud about.

I guess I'm finished with the time. Thank you.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I listened with interest to the speech from my colleague from Niagara West—Glanbrook. It was an interesting view of history, so I would just like to get the correct history on record.

Ontario, technically, was in a position to be a have-not province from 1977 to 1982, when William Davis was the Premier of Ontario. Why that happened at that time was because that was the first oil shock in the world. Oil prices have moved up rather dramatically, and because of the technical definition of the way equalization was formulated back then, Ontario was technically a have-not province and would have qualified, between 1977 and 1982, for \$100 million under the equalization program. The government of the day, of course, changed the formula so Ontario would not get that \$100 million.

What's interesting is that Mr. Davis was a huge supporter. As we can remember, Mr. Trudeau came back in 1980, won the federal election and brought in the national energy program. The premise of the national energy program was to have a two-tier price of oil—one domestic and one foreign. That would give the national

economy a break by having a domestic price for oil, benefiting the economy of Canada.

It's interesting. I'd like to hear today—perhaps the official opposition would like to go back to that position. Perhaps they want to go to Ottawa and chat with Mr. Harper, the Prime Minister, and say: "Perhaps we need a two-tier price of oil, something that's half the price of the world price, so that the Ontario economy would get a benefit." I would like to see that happen. They should go to Ottawa today and demand from the Prime Minister that we really need a domestic price for oil, to give the central provinces of Canada a break, to cope economically with the high price of the dollar. "Give us a break on the price of oil," and then we would have those additional revenues to try to fund other things.

Every day, when they come in the House, the first question says, "You should cut back this and that and every other thing," and the second question is, "Spend more."

Mr. John O'Toole: I would like to respond positively to the member from Niagara West—Glanbrook, our critic for the Ministry of Finance, as he watches this diligently. If you're looking at it as you would a report card, you would really come to one line that would summarize the outcomes after five years of Liberal reign. You would have to say taxes are up, jobs are down. Let's recall that: Taxes are up, jobs are down. Spending is up, jobs are down. Those are the numbers.

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Actually, if you look at the experts—and much has been mentioned about this important report, called Path to the 2020 Prosperity Agenda. This report is non-partisan. Just a few of the members that I have to celebrate here: Roger Martin, who I believe is the dean of the Rotman School of Business; Jim Balsillie, who's from the Research In Motion group; as well as David Johnston, who's president of the University of Waterloo. These are leaders giving advice in Ontario to Dalton McGuinty.

What are they actually saying? Roger Martin and the other experts on the panel are saying—and this is on page 45 of the report. It says: "Motivations: Pursue smarter taxation." One of the recommendations they give here is, "The incoming government"—meaning the McGuinty government—"needs to pursue tax reform as high priority to raise Ontario's competitiveness and prosperity." It's an important report.

In fact, what are they doing? They're doing just the opposite. If you look on page 47—here's the chart for all of the viewers—it says, "Taxation of new business investment is higher in Ontario than nearly all OECD countries." So the evidence is there: Taxes are up; jobs are down. Almost every sector is affected by this.

I'm very disappointed that there doesn't seem to be a plan here to address the young people here today and their future.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's certainly a pleasure to speak about the do-nothing, accomplish-nothing budget of the McGuinty Liberals. This is a budget that has no new

dollars for housing, in a province that has 170,000 households waiting for affordable housing. It has no dollars for a so-called anti-poverty program, despite the rhetoric to the contrary. It has no dollars for child care, despite being bordered by a province that has \$7-a-day, quality child care and which brought in 20,000 more spaces for child care. That's the Quebec example, but that's Quebec; that's not Ontario. We don't care about children here, we don't care about the poor here and we don't care about housing here. The McGuinty Liberals have made it very clear in this budget.

Instead, of course, what we do get in Ontario is 200,000 lost good-paying manufacturing jobs and a government that has made it even more difficult to unionize by voting down our bill for card-check certification. What we do get in Ontario is handouts to corporate friends of the government, like GM, with no strings attached, so that we see jobs lost as a result of the corporate handouts. What we do get from this government is handouts to the wealthy at the expense of benefits for those who are middle-class or poor.

So again, what I would say about this budget, what we in the New Democratic Party would say about this budget, is that this is an accomplish-nothing, do-nothing budget, a budget I've characterized as the *Oliver Twist* budget, where those in need go cap in hand to the master's table and say, "Please, sir. Please, sir. Just a little bit more, sir." In fact, with this budget, they don't get anything.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

The member from Niagara West–Glanbrook, final comments?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I appreciate my colleagues' comments in response to mine on Bill 44. I never thought I'd see the day, though, that the member from Peterborough is calling for a national energy program, part two. I've been criticized for resurrecting the spectre of Bob Rae. Holy cats, Trudeau has made a comeback here in the Legislature today, calling for the NEP, which was disastrous for Canada.

My recollection—it was a while ago, back in the day. He references 1977 to 1982, when he said that Ontario qualified for equalization—which they never took, by the way. In fact, one of the reasons why Ontario did not receive money is because our income per capita was above the national average. That ain't true in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, my friend from Peterborough; that is not true anymore. Our income per capita now is below the national average for the first time in memory, and perhaps ever. We've always known that Ontario was a wealth creator, a province of prosperity, not below the average when it came to income levels for families in our province.

The other important distinction, by the way, to my friend from Peterborough, is that, if memory serves, Bill Davis said no; he did not want to take the equalization payments. He wanted to fight.

I would have expected that Premier McGuinty, when he got the word that Ontario was heading to have-not

status, would have stood in his place and said, "No way will I let Ontario slip to have-not status. No way, come hell or high water, will I accept Ontario as a have-not province." I would have called in my finance minister, my economic development and trade minister, my energy minister, and I would have said, "By God, we're going to turn this province around and make it strong again, create jobs, and take us to the top of Canada." Instead, Dalton McGuinty says, "Don't worry; be happy." It's almost like he wants to bring in more tax dollars to spend rather than to turn our province around and make us friendly for job creation. That would be real leadership from the Premier, not this "Don't worry; be happy" attitude we see from these guys.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate on Bill 44 stands adjourned.

Third reading debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from Oak Ridges–Markham, in the east public gallery, I'd like to welcome the students from Pierre Elliott Trudeau High School in Markham.

In the Speaker's gallery, we'd like to welcome Ms. Debra Broderick, senior Hansard editor with the Cayman Islands Legislative Assembly. Welcome today.

On behalf of page Hannah Jansen, in the west public gallery, we'd like to welcome her grandmother, Nancy Millson.

On behalf of page Cali van Bommel, in the Speaker's gallery, we'd like to welcome her mother, Suzanne, and her sister, Petra.

ORAL QUESTIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: To the Premier: Premier, this weekend we learned about the tragic death of 87-year-old Florence Coxon, a resident of a nursing home. She is an example of the fact that today our long-term-care residents are older and they require more complex care than a decade ago. Today, 68% of long-term-care residents suffer from dementia or some other form of cognitive impairment. Considering these changes, why have you not implemented all of the recommendations of the Casa Verde inquest, which you know was called following the death of two residents in a Toronto long-term-care home?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman: Let me repeat, as I had a chance to say yesterday in response to questions from the third party, that any loss of life is of course a very challenging and tragic circumstance, particularly for family members, and we are awaiting some of the results of the

investigation into the particular matter that you referenced at the top of your question.

With respect to long-term-care overall, our priority in the long-term-care-home environment is clear: It's to continue to add more staff. We have staffing levels at all long-term-care homes in the province that are much higher than those which we inherited in 2003-04.

With respect to the Casa Verde inquest, on matters like enhanced training for individuals working with a client load that has dementia, we've invested millions of dollars in enhancing their capacity to care for that part of the population.

I look forward to providing more information in the supplementary.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: What the minister didn't understand is that over the past 10 years, we have older residents and we have residents today who require a more complex level of care. There needs to be more staffing. There need to be more human resources.

He has not implemented the recommendations of the Casa Verde inquest. In fact, one of the recommendations in 2006 was to increase the level of personal care to an average 3.06 hours per day. Minister, why did you not respond to this recommendation for more hours of care for our frail and vulnerable residents?

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Hon. George Smitherman: The honourable member references the higher levels of care required for patients over a 10-year period, which reaches back to cover her term in office as Minister of Health; it covers three of those years. But when her party was the government in Ontario, they eliminated all of the standards with respect to provision of care in our long-term-care homes. The standard they inherited from the prior government was 2.25 hours, and they eliminated that standard.

Through the investment of hundreds of millions of dollars and 6,000 additional people on the front line, the standard of purchased hours of care on a daily basis for our residents is nearly three hours—very close to the recommendations that the honourable member mentioned. We intend, through the budget that's been debated today, to continue to add resources, 2,000 additional nurses and 2,500 additional personal support workers, building to a standard of 3.25 hours—

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: This minister ignored the pleas of the residents, families and staff for 24 more minutes of care, and you only gave them 4.42 in your recent budget. Furthermore, it was you, in 2003, who cried crocodile tears and who promised a revolution in long-term care.

You received a letter from the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors. They told you in December that they were finding it increasingly difficult to cope with the volatile and aggressive behaviour for which they're not trained or resourced.

Minister, not only have you not implemented the recommendations of the Casa Verde inquest, we have

now learned that you have been sitting on an internal report from 2006 outlining the models of care needed for patients exhibiting aggressive behaviour. Why have you sat on this report since 2006 and not helped our residents?

Hon. George Smitherman: I'm not aware of any report that the honourable member is mentioning, but I do know that within a few short weeks Shirlee Sharkey will author a report that we've asked her to do.

The honourable member uses expressions to question my sincerity, but it was on her government's watch that standards in long-term care were eliminated. But there's a bigger question that I think must be asked in the circumstances. On this side, we agree we must have more care in long-term care. That's why our budget contributes nearly \$300 million this year in new funding for long-term care while her party continues to propose a \$3-billion cut to health care. They eliminated the standards. They eliminated the number of baths per week. There were no standards in long-term care when we came to office, and through hard work we brought 6,000 additional people to the front line. We continue to add to those in a budget that they will inevitably vote against, it would seem—

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

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is for the Premier. Agencies and professionals are telling us that children's mental health in Ontario is in crisis, and this government is refusing to take action. In York region alone, 39,000 are on waiting lists and only 5,000 children are being treated. They face wait times for child psychiatric services of more than a year—devastating to children and their families.

Children with mild to moderate problems linger on these lists until they are in crisis. They have to get worse before they can get help. Why does your government refuse to provide enough money for children to get the services they need?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'll allow the minister to deal with some of the specifics, but let me just say that this is another "spend" question, and it is difficult from one question and one debate intervention to the next to figure out where the Conservatives are coming from.

I don't doubt the member's sincerity when it comes to her concern for children's mental health issues and our shared responsibility to do more together, but how can she say that on the one hand, while her party holds the position that we should be taking \$3 billion out of health care in the province of Ontario? It just doesn't make any sense. Either you're committed to this issue or you are not.

I'm proud to say that we are providing kids with the support they need to achieve their full potential. We have ended the 12-year freeze under both the NDP and Con-

servative governments. We've invested another \$106 million in new funding since taking office, and 10,000 more children are being served.

The member is right: There is more to be done. But she can't say that we need to do more and take \$3 billion out of health care at the same time.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Premier, early intervention is crucial, because a child's brain is still developing. Dr. Fraser Mustard has pointed out how we spend too little in the early years of life, when we could make the most difference. Dr. Rod Evans of the McMaster Children's Hospital says that children's mental health must be dealt with promptly to prevent greater suffering in the long term, yet in his city of Hamilton, the public school board has lost four support programs over the last three years, all under your watch. Reach Out Centre for Kids in Halton estimates the needs in the millions to provide proper services. Minister, why are children with mental health problems such a low priority for your government?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, to the Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman: I'm in a privileged role of working alongside the Minister of Children and Youth Services in enhancing capacity for access in the province of Ontario. But I do think it's interesting that the honourable member who asked the question didn't have any vociferous voice on behalf of these same children when she was in government. For eight years under that party, mental health at the community level didn't receive a penny.

We're expanding the number of doctors who can work with this client population. In York region, where the honourable member hails from, there's been a 36% increase since 2003 in the resources that flow to those agencies that work at the community level.

With respect to the early intervention and forming the child's brain, that's why we're making a substantial investment in expanding full-day kindergarten for four- and five-year-olds.

Again I say to the honourable member: In one voice they call for reductions in health care spending; in the next voice they call for increases. That seems rather incoherent.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I just want to clarify that health care spending always increased under our government.

In Halton region, children are waiting, on average, 250 days for a preschool psychological assessment—250 days—and nearly a year for family counselling. In the minister's own town of London, parents had to fight to save the early intervention program at Vanier. Children across Ontario sitting on waiting lists are becoming worse and worse. When will you take action and spend the money these services need?

Hon. George Smitherman: We anticipate that with a question like that the honourable member will be supporting our government's budget, because it continues to make investments in health care, and she's abandoning

the policy of her party, which is to call for a \$3-billion cut to health care.

She says that in every year that they were in office they increased funding for health care. Ask the people at Southlake hospital whether they received more money every year. They'll tell you about 1995 and 1996 and about direct cuts. Ask anyone in the community mental health sector, bring them to the gallery, introduce them to the House, show us anyone who received a penny of increase for community-based mental health services for the eight long years that they were in office. You can't find one.

We've made substantive increases in this area. We agree that there's more to do. That's why we stand, as a party, prepared to make a commitment in expanding health services, rather than advance a \$3-billion cut to health care, which is their plan.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Howard Hampton: To the Premier: The recent census data shows that the McGuinty government's failure to take the loss of manufacturing jobs seriously has resulted in far more damage than the loss of 200,000 manufacturing jobs. In the greater Toronto area, where about four million people live, median family income has dropped an astounding 5.8% in just five years. In Windsor, median family income has dropped an even more astounding 9.8% in the last five years.

The Premier tells us that things are getting better. If that's the case, why are so many Ontarians experiencing a decline in median family income under the McGuinty government?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think it's important to understand what's happening to the economy. The price of oil is up; that's great if you're an oil-producing province, but in Ontario it's driving up our business costs. The dollar is up; that makes our products less attractive to buyers from outside the country. The US economy is down; that means there is less demand for our products. That makes a real challenge, particularly for the manufacturing sector and people working in that sector.

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That's why we've been very aggressive in terms of the kinds of support that we're making available. For manufacturers themselves, we have eliminated the capital tax retroactive to January of last year. That means \$190 million immediately in their pockets at a time when they need it. When it comes to workers who have lost their jobs, we have placed, through our recent budget, \$1.5 billion by way of an extraordinary measure into long-term training opportunities. We understand and we recognize that it's a challenging time. That's why we have risen to the occasion as a province and placed our investments where they need to be.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The Premier talks about rising to the occasion. What ordinary people experience is an increase in the hydro bill, an increase in the heating bill, an increase in food costs, an increase in the cost of

gasoline, an increase generally in the cost of living, yet a decline in the paycheque. The Premier says that cutting the capital tax is going to make a difference. Banks and insurance companies love a reduction in the capital tax, but banks and insurance companies aren't suffering, not the way working people are suffering.

Premier, we've put forward a number of suggested proposals, proposals that have been adopted by other provincial governments; Manitoba and Quebec, for example. Why does your government continue to fail to take the loss of manufacturing jobs seriously? Why do you seem to be even unconcerned about the decline in median family income for so many Ontarians?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Facts are not unimportant in this place. We have the second-highest median income in Canada, behind only Alberta. So I would ask the leader of the NDP to recognize that and to admit to that.

Again, with respect to helping manufacturers, we have done a number of things that are lending real support to them. I mentioned eliminating the capital tax retroactive to January 2007. That provides them with \$190 million in immediate rebates. We're also cutting their business education taxes. We're extending the capital cost allowance to 2012. We've extended digital media tax credits to 2012 as well.

Again, one of the things of which we are most proud is the continuing level of high investment we make in our workers. We have the highest rate of post-secondary education in the western world. But, clearly, that's not enough when it comes to the challenges faced by our manufacturers. That's why we put in place extraordinary long-term training opportunities.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I think the Premier struggles to miss the point. The point is that, since you've been the government, declines have happened for the majority of Ontarians in terms of their median family income. Almost everything that you've offered here as a solution—the situation has gotten worse since you've made those announcements or put those proposals on the table.

We put forward some very practical things: Reduce industrial hydro rates so manufacturers can continue to operate is one. Introduce a refundable manufacturing investment tax credit, so that manufacturers will continue to invest in their operations in Ontario. You refused that. Last week, we pointed out that allowing workers to join a union merely by signing a union card would help them to fight to protect their own wages. But you've rejected all of those suggestions.

Premier, why does the McGuinty government continue to take the loss of manufacturing jobs—

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I just don't see it that way, and I know it's not a surprise for you to hear me say that. We've got a different perspective in terms of the best way to help.

The leader of the NDP believes in manufacturing tax credits. We believe in retroactive tax cuts. That puts \$190 million into the hands of manufacturers immediately.

Now is when they need it. The leader of the NDP is fond of attacking financial services in Ontario, but that's our fastest growing employment sector. I'd ask him to keep that in mind as he levels his continuing barrage at the financial services sector.

We have done much to help families. Whether you're looking at seniors and the enhancement of property tax credits, helping families with the cost of new vaccinations—saving them \$600 per child—or the new investments we're making in nutrition programs in all of our schools, all those things are designed to provide some support to our families, who in many cases, I agree, are experiencing some challenging times.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Howard Hampton: To the Premier. We see a barrage against working families in this province. That's who we're concerned with, more than we're concerned with banks and insurance companies.

What I also want to raise here is, in 2005, with much fanfare, the McGuinty government signed an agreement with the federal government that committed \$678 million for affordable housing. The federal government would provide some money; the McGuinty government had to match. Shockingly, the McGuinty government used only \$285 million of the federal funds, which meant \$300 million of available federal money for affordable housing has not been used.

Premier, with thousands of families in Ontario looking for affordable housing, how could you leave \$300 million of federal money on the table and not use it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Jim Watson: Once again, the NDP is completely wrong, and I would suggest that they get their facts straight. We have, as a government, allocated our \$301 million, which is the matching money from the federal government—the previous federal government, I might add—and the response we have received from stakeholders and service managers throughout the province of Ontario has been very positive. To date, 4,774 units have been built, 2,537 are under construction, 3,800 are awaiting planning approval and 8,149 are with local service managers making sure they get those projects right. It takes time to plan, to get the zoning, to build these houses. Every single cent of the federal money will be spent in the province of Ontario, providing affordable housing for those people in need. We're proud of the program and we hope the federal government comes to the table and renews the agreement, as it expires on March 31—

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: Here is the reality: The agreement has expired and \$300 million of federal affordable housing money has been left on the table by the McGuinty government. What this means is that the McGuinty government promised over 20,000 units of

affordable housing but, as the minister himself admitted, you've barely got 4,000 units of affordable housing. Meanwhile, we have 170,000 people in the province of Ontario looking for affordable housing.

I ask again: With so many people looking for affordable housing, in desperate need of affordable housing, how could you leave \$300 million of federal affordable housing money on the table and not use it?

Hon. Jim Watson: I would suggest that the honourable member put a little bit more money and effort into hiring better researchers, because he's got it completely wrong once again. We have taken a holistic approach to housing in the province of Ontario. Not only are we building new affordable housing—and I just gave the honourable member some of those numbers—we're also putting a substantial amount of money into rent supplements. In fact, over 14,000 individuals have already applied and received \$100-a-month ROOF cheques from the province of Ontario. We also have the DOOR program, that has gone to providing rehabilitation and repair on some of the units. We put in \$100 million that the NDP—only the NDP, only socialists would call \$100 million meagre, but we consider that \$100 million significant in repairing some of the stock that, quite frankly, is not in very good shape.

We still have \$80 million that we are working with the aboriginal community with to ensure that they—

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: It is interesting that the McGuinty government would mention the rental subsidy program, because that also expired on March 31, 2008. It was an \$80-million program from the federal government, of which the McGuinty government used only \$25 million. That means that there are low-income people out there who should have been able to access rent subsidy and they've had to do without. Fifty-five million dollars has been taken out of their pockets by the McGuinty government because you didn't take up the federal rental subsidy money. Now, on March 31, 2009, the other \$300 million that is sitting on the table for affordable housing will expire as well.

I just say again: With people facing reduced wages and higher costs of living, how could you leave hundreds of millions of dollars of federal affordable—

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

1110

Hon. Jim Watson: For the third time, the honourable member, the leader of the third party, has it completely wrong. The March 31 expiry date is for federal programs such as the RAP program. The affordable housing program does not end on March 31. It means that there's no new money coming forward. That's why I, along with other provincial and territorial housing ministers, have taken the lead to pressure the federal government to come to the table. The money he speaks of with respect to ROOF does not expire on March 31. In fact, it's a five-year program. It goes for another four years.

I encourage the honourable member (a) to get his facts right, and (b) to encourage his federal cousins in the NDP to start putting some pressure on the Harper government. Stop being an apologist for the Harper government and get them to come to the table and support affordable housing in the province of Ontario.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: To the Minister of Health: As you know, on the weekend, Dr. Ken Arnold, the new president of the OMA, called on your government—and by the way, Minister, he didn't go back five years to ours; he called on your government—to tackle the critical doctor shortage, which is estimated to be 2,000 physicians. He also stated that there are about one million Ontarians without a family doctor. As you know, that's the same number as in 2003. Minister, how are you going to respond to this cry for help from the doctors and from residents without a family doctor?

Hon. George Smitherman: We want to congratulate Dr. Arnold. He's come into life as the one-year president of the Ontario Medical Association, following on the heels of Dr. Willett of Sault Ste. Marie. I've enjoyed a privileged relationship with—I think he's my sixth president of the OMA.

Since our government came to life, we've dramatically renewed efforts in Ontario to train doctors, something the previous government wasn't particularly committed to. We've introduced new models of care—the family health units—and we've done a substantially improved job of taking advantage of the skill set of foreign-trained doctors in Ontario. That means that 550,000 additional Ontarians gained access to care. But the number of unattached patients is decidedly below one million, and of those, many are not even looking for a physician today in the province.

We've made tremendous progress, in partnership with Ontario's doctors, and we have every intention of continuing to move forward and provide care to a higher number of Ontarians, something the honourable member's party wasn't capable of.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I think the minister has a selective memory. He doesn't remember the two medical schools we announced or the expansion of the program for foreign-trained doctors and many other initiatives, but that's not new. This person has been here for almost five years and, I'll tell you, we also know that under his watch—again, he can't go back and blame anybody else—the number of underserved communities has jumped to 142, from 122 in 2003.

In fact, here's an example of what's happening because we don't have the doctors. The Richmond Lodge, a 42-bed retirement home in eastern Ontario, has been looking for a doctor for over a year. Lots of long-term-care homes are, by the way. They mailed over 100 letters to local doctors, without success. They brought the situation to the minister's attention. Do you know what he said? "Here's the address and phone number for the

College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario. Go look after it yourself.” Minister, how are you going to deal with the needs of these—

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

Hon. George Smitherman: I do want to say to the honourable member that previous presidents of the OMA have made the point well that if we had continued with the status quo, that is, the policies that we inherited from the honourable member’s government, there would be 1.6 million people in Ontario without a family physician. As a result of the efforts that we’ve made, through the surveying that we’ve had, the number of people is substantially below one million.

The honourable member talks about announcements that she’d made, but we’re the government that spent the money to enhance the size of Ontario’s medical schools by nearly 30%. They want to cut \$3 billion from health care. We’ve introduced the model of family health teams, as well as nurse-practitioner-led clinics, the first of which is now functioning in Sudbury and which will be expanded across Ontario. In the next four years, we have every expectation of enhancing by at least one-half million the number of additional Ontarians who gain access to the kind of care that the previous government was uncommitted to and incapable of providing. We’ve made tremendous—

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Three times now—at least three times—the minister has made an error. I won’t say that he lied. We’re not going to cut \$3 billion from health care.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment that you just made, please.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I will withdraw if he’ll not make further statements—

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

POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday in Peterborough and again this morning in Cobourg, I and dozens of other local community members were barred from attending the government’s so-called poverty consultations. In a shameful and appalling display, yesterday security guards and today police were present to keep the poor out of the consultations. Obviously this government is running scared. Why doesn’t the Premier tell his poverty minister to open the doors to the government’s consultation? Of what are you afraid?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I welcome the question. I disagree with the perspective of my friend. We’re running towards poverty. We’re trying to get our arms around it, trying to better understand it. I’ve asked Minister Matthews to head up a cabinet committee. I’ve asked her to provide us with some reliable indicators that we can use to measure poverty. I’ve asked her to put in place some targets that we can work towards and to develop a strategy to help us achieve those targets.

Let’s understand whom Minister Matthews met with yesterday. She met with representatives of community housing, income advocates, the mayor’s task force on poverty reduction, the United Way of Peterborough, the Canadian Mental Health Association, the county health unit and the dental coalition, and then she had dinner at the youth shelter. She’s out there working hard, collecting ideas. The member knows that we have a website; he can access that any time. He has the opportunity to question the minister when she’s present here.

Mr. Michael Prue: I think what the Premier forgot to say is that MPPs who are not Liberals have been barred so far and the poor have been barred so far.

I know what this government is afraid of. This government is afraid to hear from low-income families who are facing cuts of up to 39% on their Ontario Works basic needs. This government is afraid to hear from low-income families who are having their back-to-school and winter clothing allowance terminated.

Why won’t the Premier stop classifying poor children as deserving if their families work and undeserving if they’re on Ontario Works, provide the full Ontario child benefit to all children without new cuts and without new clawbacks, and listen to the poor?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We accept our responsibility to do more to help the poor, and poor children in particular. If it’s not simply a moral imperative, it’s a matter of enlightened self-interest. If our children do well, then we all stand to do well, both as a society and as an economy. That’s why we’ve put in place our Ontario child benefit, to benefit 1.3 million children.

Today in Cobourg, the minister is meeting with the district health unit, the youth advisory council, the children’s aid society, the United Way and the county of Northumberland social services. Minister Matthews is working hard to help us better understand the nature of poverty and what specifically we can do to help address some real and pressing issues for Ontario families.

BROWNFIELD SITES

Mr. Jim Brownell: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, brownfield properties are lands that are contaminated due to historical, industrial or commercial land use practices. These properties are often former gas stations or industrial facilities. The city of Cornwall and the townships in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry have their share of brownfield sites. Cornwall is doing a commendable job of cleaning up these properties and ensuring that they see new life. Lots, like the former Domtar site, having been bought by Paris Holdings, will soon be repurposed, allowing for exciting new opportunities for the city. We should all be proud of the work Cornwall and the communities are doing, in essence, to turn lemon properties into lemonade.

Minister, what is this government doing to support such endeavours?

1120

Hon. Jim Watson: I'm very proud of the McGuinty government's commitment to the revitalization of brownfield properties throughout the province of Ontario. In fact, in last year's budget, a total of \$11 million was assigned to various projects throughout the province of Ontario. We've also instituted the brownfields financial tax incentive program to make it a little easier for those responsible landowners who want to revitalize those brownfield sites for commercial development or, in fact, housing. We've also made it easier to ensure that crown liens are taken off the properties in question, introduced greater flexibility into the tax sale process, and generally recognized that brownfield redevelopment is not only good for the environment, it's also good for the economy.

We're very proud of what's happening in Cornwall, and I thank the honourable member for his leadership in encouraging brownfield developments in his beautiful city.

Mr. Jim Brownell: I am proud that our government believes in working with communities in transition, like Cornwall and area, to bring new life to old properties. In fact, more than one minister, during visits to Cornwall, has expressed interest in the exciting waterfront loft condos being planned for the city's Cotton Mill district. No mention could be made of the city's brownfield development without due recognition going to local groups, such as Heart of the City and Groupe Renaissance, and individuals like Chuck Charlebois and Denis Carr.

Speaker, you have had the privilege of speaking to these men when you visited my riding and seeing the great work they do in assisting developers in redesigning older buildings in brownfield sites. Projects like these are helping breathe new life into communities like Cornwall and others in my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry.

To the minister, what programs are available to assist community development groups such as Heart of the City and Groupe Renaissance in drawing and supporting development in Ontario's communities?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Just stop the clock for a second. I'd just like to remind members, particularly on the government side, that yes, at one point I had a very partisan role that I did play, but I'm conscious of having backed away from that. I'd just ask that in your questions or answers you not refer to me in that former role that I once played. I'd appreciate that. Thank you very much.

Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Jim Watson: I thank the member for the question. We're proud of what we've done in Cornwall. In fact, in the 2007 budget, Cornwall received a \$1-million unconditional grant for brownfield redevelopment. Also, something that we're promoting in the province of Ontario through our ministry is brownfield redevelopment for affordable housing. We provided \$2.1 million under the affordable housing program brownfield initiative that was set aside for affordable housing in Corn-

wall. An RFP was issued in the spring of 2008, and the ministry is waiting to hear the results of that proposal call. Municipalities can add to the value of municipal tax relief through the brownfields financial tax incentive program.

I just wanted to highlight the other programs above and beyond the good work being done in Cornwall: \$5 million for Brantford, \$3 million to Hamilton, \$1 million to St. Catharines and \$1 million to a very exciting project in my hometown at the University of Ottawa.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, as you know, the Central East LHIN has recently approved a plan to move 20 in-patient mental health beds from the Rouge Valley Ajax hospital to the Scarborough Centenary site. This decision, as you know, has been extremely unpopular in the community and was made without any consultation with them. There have been numerous large protests, most recently the one with 700 people over the weekend.

The decision has also been frowned upon by psychiatrists, and I quote from a letter written by Ajax psychiatrists to members of the Rouge Valley board: "It is our strong opinion that the elimination of acute care beds will compromise the quality and safety of care for those seriously ill patients." The letter goes on to state, "The lack of speedy access to service for these patients could place them at great risk."

Ajax has only four psychiatrists. In the peer review initiated by the Rouge Valley board, it states that "equal attention must be given to those who cannot or do not advocate for themselves."

Minister, why won't you listen to the—

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

Hon. George Smitherman: I want to thank the honourable member for the question, of course. I've been dealing with this matter with many members of the Legislature, most notably my colleague from Ajax-Pickering, who has expressed strenuously some of the same sentiments.

I would correct one small piece of the honourable member's question, where she seems to suggest that these beds are closing. In point of fact, of course, the local health integration network area and, indeed, the hospital organization of the Rouge Valley Health System will have exactly the same number of beds. The proposal is that they be co-located for the purposes of being able to save about \$600,000 in resource and enhance the critical mass of supports that can be offered to this population group, which is very, very worthy of a high degree of support.

Alongside these continuing investments in mental health services is a substantial additional investment in community-based mental health capacity.

Overall, I'm very confident that the Central East Local Health Integration Network has more resources for

mental health, but I'm very, very mindful of the concerns in the local—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: If I may say to the minister, the problem is that when you locate those services in a different community altogether, you remove those supports from the people who need them within the community. So it weakens the community health services as well.

The expressed reason for making this move was to save \$600,000 over three years, yet I understand that there are deplorable physical conditions at Scarborough Centenary, with mould spores and so on. Also, there have been some safety-related issues. Witness the injury at Scarborough Centenary on April 16, when a patient injured himself so extensively that the ER was shut down for half a day and a special investigations unit had to probe it. Given the extensive physical work that needs to be done at the Scarborough site, which will far outweigh the \$600,000, why are you making this move in the first place?

Hon. George Smitherman: First off, I appreciate the backhanded compliment that was there, acknowledging the nearly \$100-million capital program that's currently underway at the very Ajax site that the honourable member also speaks about.

The benefits associated with co-location are not limited to some capacity on the financial side. It is also that having a critical mass of mental health services on one site should enhance the capacity of that program to support people.

While I do acknowledge that those in Durham might see crossing the Rouge River as another jurisdiction altogether, the people who are coming from other parts of Ontario to receive care at Sick Children's hospital or Princess Margaret Hospital are mostly focused on the quality of the care that is provided.

I understand that the community is unsettled, and changes can do that. The member knows well about some of the impacts in Whitby from the changes that the previous government brought forward. But I'm very confident that, overall, the range of health care services related to mental health in this area of Ontario is increasing, not decreasing.

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is for the Minister of Education. You promised full-day kindergarten classes in your election campaign, including at Toronto Catholic schools. St. Thomas More was supposedly one of your inspirations for that campaign promise. Now we learn that the Toronto Catholic District School Board will be forced to cut proven, effective full-day kindergarten programs to cover budget shortfalls. St. Thomas More school now stands to lose the very program that inspired your government's campaign promise. Will the minister visit St. Thomas More and explain to those parents why, despite her earlier promise, their children may be losing their full-day, full-time kindergarten classes?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I thank the member for the question because it does give me an opportunity to talk about a great initiative, which is that we have asked Dr. Charles Pascal to give us some advice on how best to expand full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds. We know that that kind of programming will help our kids in the long run.

The fact is that there are boards around the province that have made decisions, historically, to put programs in place that, albeit beneficial to kids and a good idea, are not things that traditionally have been funded.

The board, right now, is making decisions about its budget. The fact is that this board, the TCDSB, has had a \$132-million increase since we came into office. That's an 18.6% increase, when they've had a 7% enrolment decline. So there actually is some flexibility in their funding.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's their funding formula and it's their rules that result in the budget deficit to the Toronto Catholic board.

Here are the facts. The full-day kindergarten program implemented by the Toronto Catholic District School Board is so successful in boosting skills in younger students and allowing teachers to connect with students that your government, the McGuinty government, used its success to boost its election campaign. That's a fact. Now the Toronto Catholic board is forced by your funding formula and your rules to cut \$14 million to balance their books, putting that successful program in danger. That is a fact.

So I ask again: Will the minister commit to the children of the Toronto Catholic board that she will not cut their full-day kindergarten classes to pay for a budget shortfall?

1130

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: If the member opposite is looking to me to make an argument against full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds, she's not going to have that satisfaction. What we have done is we have made a commitment to put \$200 million in the third year of our mandate, \$300 million in the fourth year of our mandate, but we're going to take the advice of Dr. Charles Pascal.

In the interim, boards like the Toronto Catholic school board, that have seen declining enrolment and yet have got increased funding, are making their budget decisions. They are setting their priorities, and they have control over the way that funding is allocated. It is up to them to set their priorities within the budget that we have given them—reminding the member opposite that there has been a 6,585-student reduction in that board, yet they have \$132 million more to work with.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the Minister of Research and Innovation. It's spring, and it's time to get out the lawn mower. Many small-engine products, such as lawn mowers, are powered by high-polluting, two-

stroke engines, emitting as much as 25% raw, unburned gasoline in their exhaust. Litre for litre, lawn mower engines contribute 93 times more smog-forming emissions than cars.

According to Statistics Canada, gas-powered lawn equipment releases about 80,000 tonnes of emissions in Canada every year, using 151 million litres of gas.

Minister, in my riding of Guelph, Linamar consumer products is developing the Terra Phase Power system, which is the first lawn mower of its kind to offer the performance of a gas engine with a cordless rechargeable engine.

Mr. Speaker, through you, what is the Ministry—

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

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my friend for the question. I had the opportunity, actually, to visit the company in question.

Through my ministry, we have the innovation demonstration fund, and it is focused on trying to help innovative companies that have new technology to meet a market demand. I think we'd all agree that consumers want to be able to go green.

As the member said, when you use a gas lawn mower, it pollutes 93 times more powerfully than a car. So a new technology called the brushless motor has been adopted by the good people at Sterling, which is a subsidiary of Linamar, and they have created a brand new product that has the power of a gas lawn mower—which people want—and it's cordless. As a matter of fact, it can actually be charged by solar power. So you'd be able to cut your lawn and have absolutely zero emissions.

So I was proud to announce a \$1.8-million loan from the innovation demonstration fund to Sterling. I want to thank the member for having me there for a visit.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: This project shows how innovation can lead to a greener Ontario. I am proud that this innovative lawn mower is being produced in Guelph, and was pleased to join Linamar for the announcement of our \$1.8 million in funding last week.

Linda Hansenfratz, CEO of Linamar, stated: "We're thrilled with the support we have received from the Ontario government as well as the enthusiasm we're seeing in the market for our 'green' lawn mowers."

In fact, Annette Verschuren, CEO of Home Depot Canada, says the Linamar mower is the third most frequent hit on the Home Depot website.

So, while the opposition may not think this is good news, Ontario consumers do think it's a great, environmentally friendly product.

Can the minister outline the positive impact that the Linamar project in Guelph and other innovation demonstration fund projects are having on our Ontario economy and on our environment?

Hon. John Wilkinson: It just proves that our government understands that our industries in this province want to go green and they want to meet that consumer demand. As the member said, you can actually buy one of these lawn mowers at Home Depot.

We believe that there is a large market for this. It allows us to do a number of things. One, it is generating jobs and demand right here in our province, and that's good for the economy. Secondly, it's very, very good for the environment. To think that everyone who owns a piece of property that has a lawn needs to cut it; it's something that we do, so our ability to do that in an environmentally sustainable way and create jobs in Ontario—I can't think of a better win-win. That's why our government has invested in this and so many other projects.

I can think of the project, for example, at Plasco, one of our other innovation demonstration funds, where we're using new technology, plasma arc technology developed here in Canada, to turn waste into energy; again, an environmentally friendly, sustainable way—

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

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the Minister of Health. In my riding of Thornhill and in neighbouring ridings throughout southern York region, people are anxiously awaiting an announcement pertaining to the next steps in moving ahead with a Vaughan hospital, to which the minister has made reference publicly and in this House. The minister is aware that care access is in crisis, notably in the 905. Even if approval were granted today, we'd be five years away from cutting any ribbons.

Is the minister prepared to confirm that a Vaughan hospital is in our future, with an announcement to that effect coming imminently?

Hon. George Smitherman: I did have a chance by private conversation to let the honourable member know that he'd be amongst the first 10,000 people to know when the announcement was coming forward. I've been discussing this matter very forthrightly with my colleague, the member who represents Vaughan, recognizing, of course, that many constituents in Thornhill are also in need of these expanded services.

We're working very closely—the local health integration network has been in the lead in developing a proposal for the delivery of health services in the Vaughan community. While there are many hospital projects in the province that are very noteworthy and important, this is amongst them. Although I don't have a date for an announcement today, I can confirm for the people of Vaughan—reconfirm for them—that it is our government's anticipation to make the investments that will see health care services enhanced in the Vaughan community.

Mr. Peter Shurman: That's good news, but it's only half news. No body of people more than those in southern York region were more acutely aware of the much-heralded revolution in health care for Ontario. The Vaughan hospital would begin to address a glaring disparity and needless difficult travel.

The minister has the positive recommendation, as he stated, of the local health integration network on his desk.

Can we begin to see some redress in favour of the underfunded 905 today by way of an announcement, at least for the master planning stage of the Vaughan hospital, so that York region constituents can look forward to this dream becoming a reality?

Hon. George Smitherman: Firstly, I have to remind the honourable member that he did run with a party that proposes cuts to health care, which would make the advancement on this project difficult.

He looks for an announcement about Vaughan as a sign of our government's commitment to addressing funding inequities in the 905, but he merely needs to go over to Richmond Hill and look at the hospital development that's underway. He could look just slightly to the west and see the more than \$800 million we've invested in a new hospital in Brampton. He could go to Southlake hospital in Newmarket and see the expansion underway of a regional cancer centre. Very, very soon, he'll be able to go to Markham and visit the expansion—much-needed expansion, I might say—of the Markham hospital.

In that context, in York region there's plenty of evidence that abounds about our commitment. I acknowledge the need to make more progress in Vaughan. I look forward to seeing the honourable member in the audience when we make that announcement.

ABORIGINAL RIGHTS

Mr. Howard Hampton: To the Premier: Last week, in a letter to prominent Ontarians regarding the jailing of First Nation leaders, you indicated your government was pursuing, "strong and positive relationships with First Nations." Yet I want to quote your government's lawyer. When the Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug leadership were sentenced, he said, "I'm suggesting a financial penalty that hurts ... the very fact that it will hurt means that it's the appropriate penalty."

Premier, are crushing financial penalties to impoverished First Nations like Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug the basis of your new "positive relationship" with First Nations?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Michael Bryant: As the member is aware, the government has made, and continues to make, a number of efforts to avoid the incarceration of Chief Morris and council. As the member knows from reading the transcript, the Attorney General's agent opposed incarceration. In fact, it was the Attorney General who brought a motion to expedite the appeal which is before the courts.

But in any event, I'm happy to recognize that significant efforts have been made to try and resolve this. We will continue to try and resolve this, as we are seeking solutions to try and come to an agreement to find a solution, not only in KI but across the province.

1140

Mr. Howard Hampton: You haven't answered the question, but I do have the transcript from the sentencing

hearing. What's interesting is the McGuinty government's lawyer doesn't argue that jail is wrong. He says, "Jail is not the appropriate remedy" because it allows them to portray themselves as martyrs. "Your Honour, it allows them to portray themselves as martyrs."

My question again: Is this the reality of the McGuinty government's positive relationship with First Nations? You wanted a sentence that would "hurt" the First Nation, but you didn't want a sentence that would allow them to portray themselves as martyrs. Is that the reality? Because that's what the court record shows.

Hon. Michael Bryant: First, the member stood in the House and suggested that it was the government of Ontario that had jailed First Nations, and he was wrong. Then he suggested that, in fact, the government somehow was advocating for incarceration, and he was wrong. Now the tactic is, "Let's attack the crown. Let's go through the transcript and attack the crown." The bottom line is, the Attorney General opposed incarceration, period. The Attorney General is, in fact, supporting the appeal, period. If you want to look at the transcript, we have the unusual situation where defence counsel—counsel to chief and council—says, "I'm in the odd position whereby the crown says, 'no incarceration,' and I find myself supporting incarceration." In fact, defence and crown attorney opposed incarceration. That was the position, that is the position and that will be the position. We will continue to pursue a resolution outside of these courts in order to achieve justice in KI.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Labour. High school and college students across the province are looking forward to starting their summer jobs again this year. In some cases, this will be their first job experience. Minister, the parents of these young workers want to know that when their children go to work they will be safe.

Will the minister tell the parents and young workers what our government is doing to ensure that work environments are safe and healthy?

Hon. Brad Duguid: As a father myself, I can't imagine the pain and suffering that families must go through when a young worker goes off to the workplace in the morning and doesn't return in the evening. Workplace safety, in particular young worker safety, is a priority for this government. I'm sure that all members in this House remember the excitement of their first job, but what should be a productive and rewarding experience for young workers can often go very wrong, whether that be a workplace injury or, even worse, a fatality.

I have said several times that young workers are the most vulnerable workers in Ontario. It's worth repeating that they're at the highest risk in their first four weeks on the job. They're four times more likely to be injured in that first month on the job than they are at any time after that in their working careers. The WSIB is working very hard on an advertising campaign specifically geared toward young workers in this province, but we need—

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

Mr. David Zimmer: I commend the ministry and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board for the work they are doing to ensure Ontario's young workers have safe working environments.

Minister, it is heartbreaking to hear about tragic circumstances in the workplace, in particular when it comes to our young people, the very future of Ontario.

What is our government doing to ensure that young workers across Ontario return home safely every day after work?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The Ministry of Labour has implemented several initiatives over the years to improve the health and safety of young workers. Ministry inspectors pay special attention to the orientation, training and supervision given to young workers in the workplace. We've also created an innovative and youth-friendly website, WorkSmartOntario, to provide Ontario young workers with the information they need to be safe. Young worker health and safety information kits have been distributed to all members of this Legislature, so we have an opportunity as well to help out through our constituency offices to ensure that families across Ontario get the information they need.

We're also working in partnership with the Ministry of Education, where we've provided Live Safe! Work Smart! resources to classrooms across the province. I've spoken to teachers about this program. They're very enthusiastic about what it has to offer.

We're trying to build a culture of safety across this province. The best place to start is with our young workers. Through working with our young workers, in partnership with workplace safety associations across—

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

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: This is for the Minister of Health. In my riding, there is a family who has been trying to get treatment for their 17-year-old son. Daniel has a mental health illness. Daniel's parents have been told that Daniel will not be accepted into any program across Ontario because the wait lists are so long. Daniel will be turning 18 before an opening even becomes available. This family has nowhere to go. They're looking for treatment for their son when none is available. What will you do to ensure that Daniel and other adolescents like him receive the treatment they deserve?

Hon. George Smitherman: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I'm pretty sure, based on the information she's offered in the question, that this would normally be a question to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Of course, she's not here. I'd like to take the question under advisement.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind the member about absences.

Hon. George Smitherman: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker.

I think the honourable member has a piece of case-work that I would be very happy to undertake with her and see what benefit we might be able to offer to a family in trouble.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: You've been the minister for five years. Daniel's parents are looking for compassion. They're looking for a solution for their son, not this endless bouncing back and forth between ministries. Will the minister agree to review this situation and report back to me on what can be done to assist Daniel and his family now?

Hon. George Smitherman: It's a little bit disappointing that the honourable member asked the question and didn't listen to the answer, because in the answer I offered exactly what the honourable member asked for by way of supplementary: To work on this as a matter of casework, to see it as one individual circumstance, to offer whatever support we can to a family in need. That's the commitment that we've made.

Our government has been committed to the expansion of mental health services, and the evidence abounds all through the budgets of my ministry and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. I daresay, to remind the honourable member, that for 12 years in this province, eight of them under her party while in government, there was not one penny of increase for community-based mental health services. We've reversed that trend. That's why I have confidence that, working with the honourable member, we'll be able to find some relief for this family, who undoubtedly is experiencing very challenging circumstances.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm doing this because it's for a page's family. We'd like to welcome Dr. MacPherson and his wife, Nancy Steele, from Orillia. They're here for the third time. This is their third grandchild who's here as a page, and they're welcome, on behalf of page Evelyn, in the west members' gallery.

PETITIONS

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: "Whereas sections 48.9 and 48.10 of the Vital Statistics Act currently protect the privacy of adopted survivors of child abuse who are put up for adoption after being taken from severely abusive birth parents; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government's Bill 12 will take away this protection and mandate the Registrar General to hand over the adoptive identity of these victims to their abusive parents once the child turns 19; and

"Whereas the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies has said, 'The provincial government should

not legally mandate the release of identifying information of victims of violence to the perpetrators of those violent acts'; and

"Whereas the Ontario Victims' Bill of Rights declares that the victim should be treated with respect for their personal dignity and privacy; and

"Whereas these victims are often adopted in family groups, so that when one sibling reaches 19, there may be younger siblings who could also be affected by contact with the abusive birth parents; and

"Whereas no-contact notices have not been in existence in other provinces for long enough to be truly tested;

"We, the undersigned, demand that the McGuinty government and the Minister of Community and Social Services stand up for the safety and well-being of these severely abused individuals and reinstate a one-way disclosure veto to be filed by the children's aid society so that their abusive birth parents cannot find out the victim's adopted name without their permission."

I've signed that petition.

1150

COLORECTAL CANCER

Mr. Peter Kormos: I've got a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care doesn't fund the drug Avastin despite Health Canada's 2005 approval of Avastin for the treatment of colorectal cancer;

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

"Immediately fund the drug Avastin."

Signed by hundreds of parties, with my signature as well.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: This petition is in co-operation with the member from Eglinton–Lawrence when he introduced Bill 56. So this is in conjunction. The petition reads as follows:

"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;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 56, entitled the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act, 2008, into law,

so that we can reduce the number of crimes involving firearms in our communities."

I agree with this petition 100%.

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition 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 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 present this to Bilaal from Richmond Hill.

HOME CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: This is from the SEIU and the people of Rockland, Prescott–Russell, Ottawa and Cornwall.

"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;..."

They ask the Ontario government:

"(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, will affix my name to it and will send it with page Cali.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas part-time college workers in Ontario have been waiting for 30 years for bargaining rights; and

“Whereas thousands of part-time college workers have signed OPSEU cards, and the Ontario Labour Relations Board failed to order a timely representation vote; and

“Whereas the Ontario government must immediately make good on its promise to extend bargaining rights to college part-timers;

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

“The McGuinty government must immediately pass legislation legalizing the rights of college part-timers to organize, and direct the colleges to immediately recognize OPSEU as the bargaining agent for part-time college workers.”

I affix my signature and give it to page Matthew.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition sent to me by Donna Hutton of Markdale, Chapman’s Ice Cream in Markdale, the Bank of Montreal in Markdale, Dundalk Daisy Mart, and also Peek Thru My Window, a store in Markdale.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

I’ve also signed this.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas crack houses, brothels and other persistent problem properties undermine a neighbourhood by generating public disorder, fear and insecurity; and

“Whereas current solutions—enforcement measures based on current criminal, civil and bylaws are slow, expensive, cumbersome and not always successful; and

“Whereas safer communities and neighbourhoods (SCAN) legislation is provincial, civil law which counters the negative impact on neighbourhoods of entrenched drug, prostitution or illegal liquor sales based out of homes and businesses and is being successfully

utilized in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and the Yukon; and

“Whereas the following have endorsed SCAN legislation: city of Ottawa, city of Kingston, city of Hamilton, federation of Ontario municipalities, Ottawa Police Service, Ottawa Police Services Board, Ottawa Centre MPP Yasir Naqvi, Ottawa Neighbourhood Watch executive committee, Concerned Citizens for Safer Neighbourhoods, Eastern Ontario Landlord Organization, Friends and Tenants of Ottawa Community Housing, Hintonburg Community Association, Somerset Street Chinatown BIA, Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa and the Dalhousie Community Association;

“Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, urge the province of Ontario to enact safer communities and neighbourhood (SCAN) legislation in Ontario for the benefit of our neighbourhoods and communities.”

I agree with this petition and affix my signature. I send it to you by way of page Evelyn.

LORD’S PRAYER

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to thank members of Knox Presbyterian Church in Alliston for sending this petition to me.

“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 agree with this petition and I’ve signed it.

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, the 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 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 on the quality 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 affix my signature to that and pass it to Sheilagh.

HIGHWAY 35

Ms. Laurie Scott: “Highway 35 Four-Laning

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has been planning the expansion of Highway 35; and

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

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

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

I agree with this and sign my signature to it.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have another petition today from the good citizens of the riding of Eglinton–Lawrence.

“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 agree with this petition and will give it to page Peter.

ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLES

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition from the ATV drivers in Wiarton.

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

“Whereas the Highway Traffic Act, Ontario regulation 316/03, operation of off-road vehicles on highways, reads under part I, ‘Definitions,’

“(d) is designed to carry a driver only and no passengers;”

“We request the change of (d) to read as follows:

“is designed to carry a driver and passenger if the all-terrain vehicle has been a manufactured design to carry a passenger.”

I’ve also signed this.

HIGHWAY 138

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas provincial Highway 138 is one of the province’s only two-lane roadways within the region and provides the main connection from the international bridge at Cornwall through Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry to Highway 401 and Highway 417. Speed and traffic volumes are of particular concern and may have been contributing factors in numerous collisions and fatalities;

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

“To urgently consider measures that will address the serious public safety and traffic hazard concerns on provincial Highway 138.”

I shall send this to the clerks’ table.

LORD’S PRAYER

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have another petition that’s sent to me by the Burns Presbyterian Church in Feversham, Ontario.

“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

“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 this and given it to Evelyn.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Joe Dickson: “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 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, 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.”

I will affix my signature to that and pass that to Sheilagh, again.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): For the three members who are in the House, the time for petitions has expired.

This House is recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1205 to 1500.

MEMBERS’ STATEMENTS

FUSION YOUTH CENTRE

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I am pleased to rise today to recognize the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre, which has now been successfully helping Ingersoll’s youth for two years. On Thursday, May 8, they will be celebrating this accomplishment and National Youth Week with a community open house, and I want to add my congratulations to those of the community.

The vision was to create a “leading youth service facility where youth want to be.” With 680 youth members and up to 120 of them using the centre daily, I believe they are succeeding. The centre offers a safe lo-

cation for youth to build skills, from sewing to rebuilding computers, and to access many resources such as a media lab, the Internet and a gymnasium. Up next are the completion of the community arts program and a recording studio.

In addition, the Fusion Youth Centre has brought together services for youth in one location. The centre gives access to employment counselling and job training, an OPP liaison officer, Oxford Child and Youth Centre and the children’s aid society of Oxford county.

I want to commend the CAO, James Timlin, Mayor Holbrough and the Ingersoll council for their leadership in investing in youth through this centre. After two years, it is clear that the Fusion Youth Centre is contributing to a bright future for our youth and is an example for other communities to follow.

I want to thank the Fusion Youth Centre, Jason Smith, his staff and the many volunteers for everything they have given to the community and our youth, and I want to wish them all the best in the upcoming year.

SAINT BERNADETTE

Mr. Joe Dickson: I rise in the House today to join the congregation of St. Bernadette’s Roman Catholic Church in Ajax, my home parish, on the 150th anniversary of the apparition of Our Lady appearing to St. Bernadette at Lourdes.

This occasion is a year-long religious celebration that is being marked not only by St. Bernadette’s in Ajax, but by all Catholic churches around the world that share the names Lourdes, Massabielle or St. Bernadette’s. Once a month, my parish of St. Bernadette’s in Ajax is marking this religious time with activities such as prayer services, masses, the movie about St. Bernadette, church lunches and dinners.

I would like to extend my best wishes to the pastor, Father Jim Bussanich, and associate pastors Father Steven Szakaczki and Father Joseph Lam Tran. I would also like to recognize the efforts of Father Jim for organizing these events through many dedicated parishioners such as Betty Bujold and others.

St. Bernadette’s was honoured recently with the presence of Archbishop Thomas Collins, and will be further blessed with the visit from Auxiliary Bishop Hundt in December for a year-end closing mass.

COMMUNITY LIVING WORKERS

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Today I am here to speak on behalf of the non-unionized developmental workers who were promised by this government a pay increase over 10 months ago. In my riding, non-unionized workers with Community Living Owen Sound and District are still waiting on the Ministry of Community and Social Services to deliver on the promised wages.

As you know, Community Living workers are advocates for people who have intellectual disabilities. They provide their clients with the opportunities to live and participate effectively in society.

During July 2007, unionized workers with a number of Community Living organizations across the province went on strike. The Ministry of Community and Social Services told negotiators to deal with the situation quickly. To end the strike, it was agreed that the striking employees would be paid an extra \$2.60 per hour over a three-year period. The same increase was also promised to non-unionized workers. But according to Community Living Owen Sound and District, they're still waiting for their fair share.

The non-unionized Community Living workers have asked the ministry to respond to their many inquiries, but have been given no clear answer. What is most discouraging about the situation is that the management of those Community Living organizations who chose to strike received a wage increase over three years, like their employees, while non-unionized developmental workers throughout the rest of Ontario providing the same services have been denied the same opportunity.

Will the responsible minister please deliver on her promise to the non-unionized Community Living workers, or is this just another Liberal broken promise?

POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue: There are hundreds of thousands of people in this province who are poor. Some of them live on ODSP allowance, some on Ontario Works, some work for minimum wage or less, and some of them work for less than minimum wage if they work for agencies. Poverty is widespread, and if we can believe Statistics Canada, which I do, it is getting worse.

I've had the terrible experience this week of trying to find out the government's agenda on poverty. I was in Peterborough yesterday, and I have to tell you, there was a disgraceful display in Peterborough where two senior citizens, one 76 years old and one 80, were literally picked up and shoved out the door by people operating on behalf of this government. They were ushered out and they were refused to even be told who was doing the pushing and the shoving. The people identified themselves as police officers but would not give identification. I doubt very much they were police.

Today I saw the same thing again: the police circling to make sure that the poor could not get in to the meeting to meet the minister. On both occasions, people were treated abysmally, and I, as a member of this House, felt I was too, because I was not allowed inside either of those locations, but Liberal members who showed up were. I don't know what this government intends to do but, really, I think it is a disgrace what has happened today.

HEART DEFIBRILLATORS

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I rise in this House today to speak of a wonderful event that I attended last Friday at the YMCA in London, announcing four new defibrillators for the YMCAs in London and Strathroy. This was a

joint announcement with the Heart and Stroke Foundation, the YMCA of Western Ontario, the Frank Cowan Foundation, Middlesex County Emergency Services and the Ontario Minister of Health Promotion.

I would like to take this time to thank our Premier and the government of Ontario for their ongoing support provided to that HSFO initiative to distribute 100 AEDs in Ontario.

Heart disease touches every family in Ontario and Canada. It accounts for more deaths of Canadians than any other disease. The latest stats report says that 74,626 deaths in Canada were caused by heart disease. I think it's a very important initiative to protect lives, and that's why our government is committed to support many different organizations across the province of Ontario, to display those machines. I saw them myself; I got trained on them. I think it's a very good initiative and I wish everyone in this House would visit a location that has those machines in order to see them. It's important to all of us to commend the government and the Minister of Health Promotion for this initiative.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: The Central West Local Health Integration Network, or LHIN, serves Etobicoke, Brampton, Caledon and Dufferin. The Central West LHIN has the lowest level of per capita funding for mental health services when compared to all other LHINs. Even more troubling is the fact that resources for mental health services in Dufferin and Caledon are the lowest across Ontario.

Lack of access to mental health services has an impact throughout Dufferin and Caledon. Headwaters Health Care Centre does not have a designated mental health bed, yet they are forced to care for acute mental health patients because they cannot access mental health beds within or outside of the Central West LHIN.

As I highlighted in my question to the minister this morning, accessing mental health beds for adolescents is even more difficult. I have heard from many constituents who cannot get access to service. Once young people reach the age of 18, there are even fewer care options available. For example, there are not enough support programs for either patients or families dealing with mental illness.

Two years after the release of the Central West LHIN's integrated health services plan, the LHIN hosted a series of forums throughout Dufferin and Caledon. Rather than more consultations, my community needs action. The government needs to provide the residents of Dufferin-Caledon with their fair share of funding for mental health services now.

SOUTH ASIAN COMMUNITY

Mr. Kuldip Kular: It's a pleasure to rise before my colleagues to speak to the month of May as South Asian Heritage Month.

Minister Chan spoke to the House in April to recount the legacy of those of the South Asian region who have settled in Ontario and throughout Canada. Their work to make this great country, already among the most diverse and prosperous in the world, an even greater one continues through their activity as families, communities, professionals, tradesmen and businesspeople.

Canada's 2006 census revealed that there are some 1.26 million South Asians living in this vast country, a country I am proud to call my home. My own region of Ontario is home to one of our largest South Asian communities, as they continue to recognize in this land the promise of prosperity and security and continue to raise their families here.

1510

South Asians are among the most industrious of Canada's peoples. One need only look to the great city of Toronto and its sprawling suburbs, even to my own riding of Bramalea–Gore–Malton, to bear witness to this fact. Indeed, many of this nation's most recognizable symbols—its railways, its industries and Canada's dynamic communities—are owed in part to the labour and vision of South Asians.

It is with immense pride as a legislator, South Asian and Canadian citizen that I encourage my fellow Ontarians, established and newcomers alike, to consider throughout this month the achievements of these remarkable people.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: This week is Emergency Preparedness Week right across Canada. Emergency Management Ontario, in partnership with Public Safety Canada and other provinces, is marking the 13th anniversary of this important week.

The theme of this year's national campaign is "72 hours—is your family prepared?" It is meant to encourage Canadians to be ready to cope on their own for at least the first 72 hours of an emergency. By doing this, first responders can then focus their energy on those who are most in need.

I'm pleased to say that this government's emergency preparedness management legislation is one of the most comprehensive in North America. Further, the provincial emergency operations centre monitors events inside and outside Ontario to make sure that we have 24-hour coverage, seven days a week.

Ontario families can also do their part by preparing an emergency kit with important items such as water, food, a flashlight and batteries and a first aid kit. Families should also prepare and practise an emergency plan that outlines information including safe exits from your home and neighbourhood, and meeting places to reunite with family and friends. This is especially important in rural and northern areas where isolation can further complicate an emergency plan.

I encourage all Ontarians to take in Emergency Preparedness Week and learn more about how to be prepared.

POVERTY

Mr. Dave Levac: There is no question that our economy is facing some tough, challenging times right now, and my riding is not immune.

We are contending with a serious economic slowdown in the US, the high cost of oil, a high dollar, emerging world competition and non-level trade practices. However, it is in these times that the measured, key investments in the people of Ontario are more important than ever.

We are helping families with low incomes reach higher with a wide array of initiatives. Since we took office in 2003, we have increased social assistance by 9%, not cut it by 21%. We are investing again in new affordable housing and rent supplements, not cutting them. We're doubling the funding for the student nutrition program. We are investing \$135 million over three years for a dental plan for kids. There are more programs that, when put together, tackle the issue of poverty. But we all agree that more can be done.

Unlike the Conservatives, who had a record of freezing the minimum wage for nine years, we have raised it five times and will continue to increase it responsibly.

Unlike the NDP, who voted against the Ontario child benefit and against raising social assistance rates, we firmly believe that these measures will be helpful to our families that need it the most.

The McGuinty government will not turn its back on the people of this province. We believe that a balance must be found.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments, dated May 6, 2008, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 107(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROVINCIAL ANIMAL WELFARE ACT, 2008

LOI ONTARIENNE DE 2008 SUR LE BIEN-ÊTRE DES ANIMAUX

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 5, 2008, on the motion for second reading of Bill 50, An Act to

amend the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act / Projet de loi 50, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société de protection des animaux de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm pleased to address this bill on behalf of New Democrats, and I'm excited by the presence of so many legislators in this Parliament, with this new sitting schedule. I witness a sea of green: the empty chairs in the government ranks.

Mr. Bob Delaney: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: It is contrary to the standing orders to refer to either the absence or the presence of individual members.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the member for the point of order, but I do remind him that the standing orders refer to individual members.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Did the member from Mississauga—Streetsville get beat up a lot in high school? Is this what motivates him, during debates, to want to get involved in other people's comment-making?

I want to tell you about the member for Willowdale, Mr. Zimmer, whom I like. I've admired him since he was first elected here, in not the most recent but the provincial election before that, and I've enjoyed working with him. He's been a parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General.

I recall how pleased I was when he introduced legislation that dealt with the offence of speeding in a motorboat and made sure that the same consequences applied to a conviction for drunk driving in a motorboat as applied to drunk driving in a motor vehicle. I was pleased to see his bill advance, as a private member's bill, to become law, because it was good policy.

I was also very excited for the member for Willowdale, Mr. Zimmer, when he introduced his Bill 154, An Act to regulate zoos. Like other members, I was inundated with e-mails and letters from people, not just across Ontario but across Canada and throughout North America, supporting the member for Willowdale's bill that regulated these roadside zoos, private zoos. We're all familiar with them. I in fact recall sitting as NDP House leader in House leaders' meetings, urging the then House leader Jim Bradley to assist Mr. Zimmer in advancing his bill through to third reading, because I told him the New Democrats would support Bill 154, An Act to regulate zoos. I was as disappointed as, I'm sure, Mr. Zimmer was when he wasn't successful in getting the Premier's office to accept his proposition, his act to regulate zoos.

I remember the pre-election promise of then-Solicitor General, Minister of Community Safety Kwinter, when he announced that there was going to be legislation and implied that it was going to regulate roadside zoos. I was proud that Mr. Zimmer—he's a Liberal; I'm not. That doesn't in any way restrict or inhibit my respect and regard for him and my best wishes for him in his career and in his riding. Indeed, I was optimistic, I was hopeful that he'd be elected in his riding. I knew a New Democrat wasn't going to win that riding and that Mr. Zimmer would, as he has, serve his constituents well. So I was happy when, in the government press release of August 31, 2007—you know something's coming, don't

you? I was happy when, on August 31, 2007, Mr. Zimmer's comments were included in a press release issued by the Minister of Community Safety, the Solicitor General. Mr. Zimmer, responding to the minister's announcement, said, "I'm very happy with our government's action on the issue of roadside zoos."

1520

Mr. Zimmer believed the Solicitor General on August 31, 2007, when the Solicitor General announced there was going to be legislation regulating roadside zoos, presumably legislation somewhat akin to his Bill 154. Indeed, not only was Mr. Zimmer pleased, but the Canadian Association of Zoos and Aquariums was pleased as well. Bill Peters said, "The Canadian Association of Zoos and Aquariums is delighted that Ontario is committed to moving ahead with tough new legislation and standards that will fix the roadside zoo problem."

Not only was Mr. Peters from the Canadian Association of Zoos and Aquariums enthusiastic about the promise to regulate roadside zoos, as Mr. Zimmer had proposed in his Bill 154, but Melissa Tkachyk was excited too. She spoke highly of the government's announced intention to regulate roadside zoos. All those people who had lobbied Premier McGuinty's office, calling for the passage of Mr. Zimmer's Bill 154, An Act to regulate zoos, felt that their wishes were being given effect to. I remember the day that Bill 50—that's the bill we're debating today—was introduced for first reading, and I recall thanking Mr. Zimmer for his commitment to regulation of roadside zoos and even speaking with him afterwards. I said, "David"—that's what I call Mr. Zimmer when we're speaking privately—"you appear to have won a battle with your Premier's office and it appears that your work on the regulation of roadside zoos is finally coming to fruition." I know you can't answer, Speaker, but perhaps you could nod or shake your head if the answer is in the affirmative or the negative, but I think you were pleased for Mr. Zimmer too.

Imagine my disappointment, my shock, my dismay when I discovered that there's no reference to roadside zoos whatsoever in Bill 50. Was this some sort of hoax? Was it some sort of cruel joke? Or was it simply Mr. Zimmer getting the shaft?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Yes.

Mr. John O'Toole: Absolutely.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. Hudak responds. Mr. O'Toole responds.

I thought, "Surely there is a mistake. Mr. Zimmer is one of the brightest members in the Liberal caucus and one of the most capable." Well, he is.

Mr. Tim Hudak: He should be in cabinet.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I agree. Mr. Zimmer is a lawyer with substantial experience in an adjudicative role. I've worked with him on any number of committees when he's been the PA to the Attorney General, and his intellect is beyond reproach, one of the best intellects in this chamber. I can name right off the top at least half a dozen cabinet ministers who pale in comparison to Mr. Zimmer. I don't expect you to be telepathic, but I think

you can read my mind. You can arrive at that list as readily as anybody else could.

Why would they do this to Mr. Zimmer from Willowdale? Why, when the member for Willowdale worked so hard on the regulation of private zoos; why, when there was so much support for that proposition from across North America—and don't think for a minute that the Premier's office didn't know about it; why would they—the government, Mr. McGuinty—let Mr. Zimmer run as a Liberal candidate in that October election, thinking that his regulation of roadside zoos was going to become law? It simply wasn't the case and never was and, as long as it's only but Bill 50, never will be. Shame on all of you for doing that to a colleague. Shame on you for embarrassing one of your better members. Shame on you for holding out false promise to those people who believed you when you said you were going to regulate roadside zoos. Shame on all of you.

I wouldn't blame Mr. Zimmer a bit if he didn't show up at all for the next three and a half years. I can't begin to imagine the embarrassment that he feels in his riding. I want to tell the residents of Willowdale that it was no fault of Mr. Zimmer's. I want to tell the residents of Willowdale that their member fought the good fight and that the people of Willowdale shouldn't be angry with Mr. Zimmer; they should be angry with Mr. McGuinty, because it's Mr. McGuinty who betrayed them.

All those people across North America who sent e-mails to every member of this chamber and to the Premier's office: You've been had. You've been taken to the cleaners. You've been sent out to hang and dry, and all of your wishes for the regulation and licensing of roadside zoos—and let's understand: We don't need laws and legislation to regulate good people, we don't need regulation of roadside zoos to regulate the responsible operators of these things; we need them to regulate the bad apples, the bad players, the MarineLands of the world.

There's no regulation of private roadside zoos, private zoos. I am truly saddened by that. I'm saddened by that because I was enthusiastic in my support for Mr. Zimmer's Bill 154, and I'm saddened because so many people have been let down.

Bill 50's going to pass. One of the remarkable things during the course of the debate of this bill—and New Democrats are going to vote for Bill 50. I'm going to tell you some stuff, though, about section 6—you know that's coming—because we have real concerns about some nasty work hidden away in the bowels, the entrails of this bill. You know what I find remarkable? People who can stand up in this chamber and get teary-eyed discussing animal welfare but who have far less time talking about kids and poverty in this province.

Don't get me wrong: I'm an animal liker. I like animals. To paraphrase a colleague, I suspect I like them more than I like most people. I like animals. I always had animals as a kid and until a few years ago.

1530

Just the other day I was talking to you about Cheech, Bruce and Charlotte's dog next door. Folks here have

heard about Charlie; that was my old beagle. He's gone on to where old beagles go. Well, they die; that's what happens. Charlie's dead. He's so dead he couldn't be deader. While he was alive he was a darn good dog, but he was a beagle. As a matter of fact, I bought Charlie from a beagle breeder up near Highway 6, in the Puslinch area. There's a lot of dog breeders and trainers there, aren't there? Delightful folks.

I've got to tell you that I found it remarkable that as a part of that August 31, 2007, press release by the then-Solicitor General, there was also an announcement of funding. This one sneaked through. You might like this one. Again, I tell you, it's how cockeyed this government's priorities can be. On August 31, 2007, the Solicitor General announced \$80,000 in funding for temporary housing for pets of women fleeing domestic violence.

I'm not pulling your leg. There was an announcement of \$80,000 for emergency housing for the pets of women fleeing domestic violence. The suggestion was that women stay in violent households because they're fearful of leaving their pets behind—nothing about their children. My colleague's jaw just dropped—I heard it hit the ground—the member for London-Fanshawe. I share his amazement.

The McGuinty Liberals announced immediate funding for emergency housing for pets of battered women. What a trivialization of a very serious subject. Tell me, has the funding flowed? Has there been accommodation of the pets of abused women as a result of this \$80,000 in funding?

If you listen to my colleagues—the women's critic, Andrea Horwath, the member from Hamilton Centre; Cheri DiNovo from Parkdale-High Park—to any one of us talk about the plight of women in our own communities who can't access emergency housing or second-stage housing, even more importantly—you heard us talk a couple of weeks ago about Noellee Mowatt, a young woman who was getting beaten up and called the cops, and they put her in jail instead of the guy who was pounding on her. Remember that?

So, you've got a government that sends beaten women to jail. I'm talking about a beaten woman, the innocent victim. We know that the beatings are deadly. She gets sent to jail and the government calls this some sort of get-tough policy on domestic violence. And then we have a government that announces \$80,000 in funding for emergency shelter for the pets of battered women. The announcement actually says it's because we know that battered women don't leave violent households out of fear for their pets.

Horsefeathers. I've never heard such unadulterated bullspit in this chamber before in my life. There are a whole lot of reasons why women are held imprisoned in violent households, and it's got to do with things like the lack of emergency shelter, the lack of second-stage housing, the lack of adequate supports for unemployed people who are forced to apply to Ontario Works or even ODSP. Good God. To suggest that a woman in Ontario stays in a household being beaten because she is worried

for the goldfish or the budgie is just plain stupid and an insult. It's just an incredible denial of the reality and the seriousness of the ongoing epidemic of domestic and spousal violence.

I have a good relationship with the humane society down in Welland and other humane societies across the Niagara region and beyond, including the one here in Toronto. I go back to when I was practising law, many, many, many years ago now. Ah, I was young; I was thin. I had colour in my hair; I had lots of it. Back then, the head of the local humane society, Bernie Webb, a man for whom I have the greatest of regard—he and I did a fair number of trials together. He was prosecuting. He most recently worked, like more than a few other people did here, with local humane societies when we had the pit bull ban legislation, because the humane societies, as you know, had some interesting things to say about that.

For the life of me, somebody get up on their feet and explain what in Hades section 6 is doing in this bill. “No corporation or other entity, other than the Society or an affiliated society”—that's the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the one with, what, the 50% kill rate? If I'm wrong by one or two percentage points, I apologize in advance. Maybe it's only a 48% kill rate; maybe it's 52%.

“No corporation or other entity, other than the Society or an affiliated society, shall,

“(a) hold itself out as being the Society ... ”—well, that's not rocket science, as the cooking guy says, is it?—“or”—this is the kicker:

“use the name ‘humane society’ ... alone or in combination with any other word, name, initial or description.”

What is the motivation here? What is the government doing? May I, for a minute, be cynical and suspicious? May I?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Trust the government.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Oh, Mr. Ramal says you can trust the government. I want to remind you of the world's three greatest lies: “Your money cheerfully refunded,” “Your cheque is in the mail,” and, “Hi. I'm from the government and I'm here to help you.” I'm sorry, but generations of Ontarians and Canadians have learned in the hardest way that you can't trust the government. Please, let's not be so naive and presumptuous as to try to pretend or say to Ontarians that they can trust the government.

People trusted the government in August 2007, when the Solicitor General stated that he was going to introduce legislation to regulate zoos. Whoops. That trust, she's gone. Because I'm afraid Mr. Zimmer's bill, Bill 154, the one that would regulate zoos, is nowhere to be seen in Bill 50.

1540

Shall I go on? I've only got an hour. If we're going to spend time talking about breaches of trust by this government, we're talking filibuster time, and the rules simply don't allow that anymore, do they, Speaker? It's like Mr. Baird and his rule changes, or, as we have now,

the most recent rule changes by this government House leader.

Why would section 6 be in this legislation? Why would this government want to effectively shut down the Toronto Humane Society with its century-plus history of looking out for the welfare of animals? Century-plus. You see, the existing legislation already has a cut-off point: 1955. What it did was preserve the right of any animal welfare organization that identified itself as a humane society to ensure that it could continue to be able to call itself a humane society, but no new associations.

Folks might recall that there has been more than a little bit of tension from time to time between the OSPCA, the Ontario Society for the Prevention of the Cruelty to Animals, and the Toronto Humane Society, which has a euthanasia rate of, I think, 6%. They take great pride in not slaughtering the animals that they rescue. Again, if somebody has different data, come forward with it; we'd all be pleased to hear it.

I know that this is of great concern. Tim Trow, for whom I have a great deal of regard and for whom I have a whole lot of time, wrote on April 29 to the minister. May I, Speaker? Will you indulge me by letting me ensure that the contents of this letter are on the record? It's only fair, isn't it? It's an important part of this debate.

“April 29, 2008....

“Dear Minister Bartolucci:

“We write to ask you to remove section 6 from Bill 50. Section 6 provides that community-built shelters that either don't want to be affiliates of the Ontario SPCA, or shelters that the Ontario SPCA itself does not want as affiliates, will be stripped automatically of their names by the Legislature.

“Historically in Ontario, the many voices of the province's animal welfare movement have been its strength. If the result of Bill 50 is but one voice, Bill 50 will have stifled debate and diversity and will have weakened what has been built up in communities over generations.

“Bill 50's role for the Ontario SPCA appears to be one of insurmountable conflict of interest because the Ontario SPCA will become both regulator and fundraising competitor to its 32 affiliates.

“In addition, Ontario's animal welfare movement is wider than the Ontario SPCA or its affiliates. Bill 50 will instantly, upon enactment, strip the names and identities of other charities amongst the 235 Ontario animal protection charities registered with the Canada Revenue Agency.

“Bill 50 provides for no decision-making process and no appeal to the courts. It provides no explanation as to why it is necessary for the Legislature to take away the identities of any charities.

“Sanctions against holding out or infringing a corporate name already exist in Ontario law. In the case of the Toronto Humane Society, there could be no confusion because there is no similarity between ‘the Toronto Humane Society’ and the ‘Ontario SPCA.’

“The Toronto Humane Society is a well-known Ontario landmark, a hospital and a shelter, caring for both

wild and domestic animals. We employ 150 caregivers, and, at any time, 500 volunteers provide recuperative or palliative care as foster parents, feed orphan kittens in the nursery, groom cats, or walk dogs.

“We serve province-wide, one-third of our clients coming to us from far beyond our Toronto area.

“The Toronto Humane Society has grown and prospered since 1887 because of the generous support of financial contributors and members. We do not receive, and have never received, government funding or funding from the Ontario SPCA.” Hmm.

“Our name is how we have been identified for 121 years. It has been entrusted to us by successive provincial governments and it represents the goodwill and trust of generations.

“Our name is how we speak to supporters and donors, and it is how they identify us in their wills or in other giving. It is how volunteers and animal caregivers find us and it is how clients access our services—rescuing animals, re-uniting lost animals, saving injured wildlife, providing veterinary care, extending shelter and providing homes.

“Take away our name and identity and you jeopardize our ability to provide essential animal care to citizens when they are desperate and in need.

“Please remove section 6 from Bill 50.

“Thank you.

“Yours truly,

“Tim Trow, president” of the Toronto Humane Society.

This has been one of the hottest little subjects of e-mail in this province for a good chunk of time now. Well, not a good chunk of time; just since we’ve begun second reading debate on Bill 50. This is just an example. This is illustrative of the types of e-mails and communications that members in this chamber have been getting since this nasty little bit of work in section 6 of Bill 50 has been exposed.

Here’s a letter to NDP leader Howard Hampton, an e-mail:

“Dear Howie”—so familiar, but “Howie” doesn’t mind—“I support animal welfare societies amongst other charities. I learned today that Bill 50 is going to debate on May 5. I’m e-mailing you to exhort you to expunge s. 6 of the proposed PAW act which would divest those animal welfare agencies across the province not affiliated with the Ontario SPCA of their charitable status and their names.

“... as a private citizen, I see a government”—and put an ellipsis there, please, if Hansard will accommodate me: dot, dot, dot. Not because Hansard doesn’t know what an ellipsis is, but I just want to make sure I’m not asking for anything inappropriate. Thank you, Hansard, for the ellipsis.

“... as a private citizen, I see a government initiative which has the retrogressive effect of reducing diversity in the great, compassionate and dedicated group of animal welfare communities.... [I agree with] Tim Trow....

“There are other problems with the bill as well which include the absence of protection for lost pets used in laboratories, no protection for millions of farm animals, or animals in the wild. These issues will have to be addressed. In the present, I ask you not to support s. 6 of Bill 50.”

Well, I can tell that correspondent, that Ontario resident—she’s from Ottawa, by the way. She could be in the Premier’s riding. And I’m not sure—far be it from me to predict how people are going to vote. Trust me, far be it from me to predict how people are going to vote. I’m still waiting for that long-overdue conversation with John Tory about October 10, because I had made predictions and I was proven entirely wrong. I have every intention of continuing to hold him to account. Mr. Murdoch might agree with me. But this woman in Ottawa could be living right there in the Premier’s riding, and I just get the feeling—because there are some things that people are concerned about but that are not vote determiners. But the passion in her e-mail is such—similar to the passion in almost all the other communiqués around section 6 and this attack on the Toronto Humane Society and other stand-alone humane societies—that I’ve got a feeling, I’ve got a distinct feeling, that this voter is highly unlikely to ever vote for a Premier who continues to keep section 6 in Bill 50.

On behalf of New Democrats, I want to make it very, very clear: We will be seeking to delete the reference to “humane society” from section 6. Indeed, we will suggest that paragraph (b) of section 6 be deleted in its entirety, because the OSPCA has an at law monopoly on the word “OSPCA.” We believe that section 10 of the existing legislation should be allowed to prevail.

1550

You know that I don’t tend to be anthropomorphic. But, having said that—and look, I confess I’m not a cat person; I’m a dog person. But my neighbour Ms. Rosie has cats. She has Charlotte and Bruce on the one side and they have Cheech, the dog. Ms. Rosie is a delightful woman. I love her dearly, her husband is great, they’re wonderful friends of mine and I’m just so lucky to have them as neighbours. But Ms. Rosie, well—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: “How many?” somebody interjected.

I promise to stop reporting it at three. Ms. Rosie, like other cat owners, knows there is a regrettable stigma that is unfairly applied to cat lovers and to feline fanciers once they exceed that somehow very arbitrary number of three. What she’s done is—this is remarkable—she’s been a little humane society of her own. The cats that she has—three, maybe more—are all semi-feral. That suits me just fine because they don’t tend to rub up against your leg when you’re sitting out on the patio. They keep their distance. They won’t take food from your hand, but if you lay it out for them they’ll come and get it.

Ms. Rosie, my neighbour, spent a fortune at the Main West Animal Hospital because all these cats get neutered and spayed, they get the teeth cleanings, the grooming

and the clipping. They're incredibly kempt cats, and they're a delight to have in the neighbourhood. I've got to tell you this: no mice; no problem with mice at all. You could leave a basement window open all summer and you're not going to have to worry about finding a mouse in the basement. The cats are remarkably territorial. I've learned a great deal about cats. I'm hard-pressed even to tell one from another. There was a one-legged one—no; a one-legged cat would be remarkable. There was a three-legged cat, which was not called Lucky, I can tell you that. But one of them is called Road Warrior. He's the one with the tattered ear and the one blind eye. He's got all his legs. When you're called Road Warrior, man, oh man, you need all four legs.

I've acquired an understanding of cats that I never, ever thought I'd have. I'm not a cat person. Dogs: Listen, I think dogs are great. Dogs are just the neatest sort of things to have, especially when they come into the living room with muddy paws or they do the butt-end scrape across the carpet. It's just a delight. Who could ask for anything more pleasant than just these wonderful dog ownership moments? Dogs are amazingly faithful, and I've been lucky. I've had two dogs. My first dog was Smack. Smack, unfortunately, was tied up in the yard—this was quite a few years ago; I was only a teenager—somebody came into the yard and Smack bit him, which is what the dog is supposed to do, in my view, when somebody comes into the yard and they're uninvited. Nonetheless, Smack had to be escorted out of town because he faced some criminal consequences.

The humane society was out on Merritt Island at the time, and some friends and I went down there. I said I wanted to see my dog—because he was locked up. I remember my friends distracted the staff—I was only 17—and we busted Smack out. I said, “Run, Smack, run,” and we got away. Smack lived out the rest of his life with Dave and Vicky Wiwcharyk up in St. Davids, until one day, in his elderly years, he decided to not only chase a tractor—St. Davids is rural country; it's fruit-growing country—but to grab hold of the rear tire and not let go. It was one of those big tractor tires, about six feet high. Smack just didn't survive the tractor tire.

Charlie died. He lived a full life. I do have to mention Joanne—St. Joanne—another neighbour, who cared for Charlie far more than I did. Charlie would acknowledge my return home and then want back outdoors because he knew Joanne was coming to take him over to her place and pamper him. Charlie cost me a whole pile of money in vet fees too, because Joanne believed in exploratory surgery—so did the vet, interestingly, at \$1,000 a pop. It's amazing, isn't it, how enthusiastic vets can be about exploratory surgery when you're prepared to write the cheque every three months? “Well, let's have another look inside Charlie.” It got to the point where I'd wait 60 days before I paid it, because I figured the dog better live at least 60 days or else they're not getting the money.

It's imperative that this bill go to committee, and in fact it's already been the subject matter of discussion at House leaders' meetings. I suspect that this bill may well

require a committee to sit during the summer break, because you've got some real concerns about section 6. You've got some tension, because you have fears from people in the agricultural community that this bill may be overreaching and inhibit even best practices when it comes to the agricultural community.

I find it interesting that the bill exempts, effectively, farmers by virtue of—this is the language that's used—“activities carried on in accordance with reasonable and generally accepted practices of agricultural animal care, management or husbandry.” I'm not sure that some sharp-eyed lawyer, in a moment of heightened pettefoggery, may not distort that language and achieve a result that isn't intended. I think that all people will want to ensure that farmers, people in the agricultural business, if you can dare call it that in Ontario today—it's hard to call a losing proposition a business, isn't it?

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Come on. When farmers' spouses are subsidizing the production of livestock and food, it's called negative income. So I'm not sure that farmers would mind if I didn't refer to them as being in business. Farmers are farmers because they love it. Farmers are farmers because they were the second or third or fourth generation of farmers.

1600

Then there are farmers who don't farm anymore, like the peach producers and the pear producers down in Niagara, because the McGuinty government turned its back on the only fruit processing plant east of the Rocky Mountains in this whole great country. It not only eliminated the hundreds of jobs at CanGro, but will be, at the end of the day—mark my words: When the intense pressure exists to pave over some of that scarce agricultural land, the tombstone can bear the name of Dalton McGuinty.

There's concern from people in the agricultural community. Ms. DiNovo, the member for Parkdale-High Park, raised this yesterday. She talked about the now-notorious Ontario case of the—what do they call themselves?—gentlemen farmers. There was a lawyer who owned a farm and who kept dozens of horses on it—dead. The concern—

Hon. John Wilkinson: Speaker, what bill are we on?

Mr. Peter Kormos: The minister doesn't know what bill we're on. I can tell him that we're on Bill 50. For Pete's sake, Minister. I understand how a government backbencher's mind would drift once in a while, but with the big salaries that ministers are getting, you expect them to know what's going on in the Legislature on any given day. The bill we're debating is the one that his government House leader called: Bill 50. So when I've got to listen to the Minister of Research and Innovation ask, “What bill are we on?” I wonder whether these early morning starts are maybe just a bit much for him. It may be that he's doing some nodding off mid-afternoon. I just wonder. Here's a minister of the crown saying “God, Speaker, what bill are we debating?” My goodness. Surely he should know.

Ms. DiNovo, the member from Parkdale–High Park, expressed what I think is a very legitimate concern. It's not to say that there's no legislation that addresses that, but we have to be very clear. Are farmers exempt? I think not. Farmers are very much covered; let's be clear about that. But it's six of one, half a dozen of the other; it's neither fish nor fowl. Yet, at the same time, we want to make sure that animals, like horses in a farm context, are protected from abusive treatment that is in no way consistent with good farming practice or legitimate farming practice.

The interesting thing—and this is what struck me, because here you get into the silliness of it all—is that the bill doesn't apply with respect to native wildlife and fish in the wild. Does that mean that we're going to tolerate any type of behaviour with respect to wildlife? I certainly hope not. I would think that one would want to have, however unlikely the enforceability is, some understanding of the fact that there are legitimate hunters and anglers, nimrods amongst others, who do what they do in the course of hunting wildlife or in the course of angling, but I think we need some specificity in that regard.

New Democrats, I'm sure along with our Conservative counterparts in opposition, are going to make darn sure this bill goes to committee. We will not let it go to third reading until it has had committee hearings. New Democrats are being very clear that we will not support section 6. We stand with Tim Trow, the Toronto Humane Society and other humane societies that are not associated with the OSPCA, the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. I, for one, wonder what exactly prompted section 6 in the first place. Other members have already questioned whether there are Liberal friends on the board of directors of OSPCA. And please, OSPCA, before you start sending me e-mails, you explain how it is that this neat little attack on the Toronto Humane Society is part and parcel of this legislation.

I do, finally, want to once again commiserate with the member for Willowdale. I can't think of a crueller thing to do to one's own than set him up the way the McGuinty government has set up David Zimmer. Zimmer has carried some of the worst junk bills that the McGuinty government has ever produced.

It was Zimmer who ran with the pit bull ban, that ill-conceived bit of legislation, and who took all the flak—it was. And he did a darn good job. The Attorney General was nowhere to be seen. Here's the member for Willowdale, who, as PA, runs with the pit bull bill, and the government treats him like this?

Here's David Zimmer, once again—the Ontario Human Rights Commission demolition. It was Zimmer. You remember that. He did all the heavy lifting on the demolition of the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

Then, to add insult to injury, you remember how it was the member for Willowdale, Mr. Zimmer, as PA, who agreed to accommodate folks lined up for committee hearings, and then the Premier's office—what did you call those people in the Premier's office, Mr. Murdoch?

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I have no idea; I don't remember. But the people in the Premier's office shut down Mr. Zimmer and the committee after Mr. Zimmer had put his reputation on the line in the course of serving his Premier.

I don't know about where you come from, but where I come from, we don't treat our friends that way. Down where I come from, if you're going to stab somebody, you do it up front. You don't stab them in the back. I think the poor member for Willowdale has a dotted line that says "Insert knife here" on the back of all of his suits. Well, think about it. You laugh, but how would you feel?

How would Mr. Murdoch feel if his leader did that to him? How would Mr. Murdoch feel if Ernie Eves did that to him? Well, he wouldn't be pleased at all, and I tell you, there'd be payback. If Ernie Eves did that to Bill Murdoch, Bill Murdoch would make Ernie Eves pay the price. And do you know what? I respect Bill Murdoch for it. Bill Murdoch, whom I also happen to like, didn't sneak around behind anybody's back. He's a person of honour, a darn good MPP, and I have a great deal of respect for him. He represents the people in his community in an admirable and exemplary way.

I didn't want to do anything as tacky as passing around a card that we could all sign for Mr. Zimmer, because I like David a great deal.

This isn't just about a betrayal of one member; it's the betrayal of all the people who thought the government was going to introduce legislation regulating private zoos. There's nothing in Bill 50 about regulating private zoos. Go figure. So I'd suggest to folks who bought the bill of goods that was being peddled by the government back on August 31, 2007—I'd suggest that folks like Bill Peters, national director of CAZA, Canadian Association of Zoos and Aquariums, and Melissa Tkachyk, programs officer with the World Society for the Protection of Animals, mobilize their members and get those faxes and e-mails working on the Premier's office, telling the Premier that he didn't deliver once again, that he failed them.

1610

I, like others, read Peter Worthington's column on the issue of Bill 50 and the attack on the Toronto Humane Society by this government, the acknowledgment that the regulator is also the fundraiser if section 6 of this bill is enacted. Worthington notes:

"A spokesperson for Bartolucci says the controversial wording in Bill 50 is mere 'modernizing of the language and not intended to change the existing situation.' The intent is to have better control over cruelty and abuse of animals, and not to prevent people caring for animals." Then what the heck do you need section 6 for?

Worthington, who's worthy of our considering his comments, is not a dumb guy by any stretch of the imagination; he's been around a whole lot. Worthington said:

"If the ministry believes this, it doesn't understand the issue.

“To avoid a snakepit of future controversy, before the next reading of Bill 50, the words ‘humane society’ should be removed from the sentence that says the OSPCA has sole disposition of who can use that name.

“It’s ludicrous, when one thinks about it. Both the OSPCA and Hamilton have abandoned the ‘humane society’ identification for themselves, but want to prevent any except those affiliated with them from using it.

“Bartolucci is to be commended for updating the act, but he should familiarize himself with the OSPCA’s turmoiled history, and that in the past it has proved unreliable in dealing judiciously with power.”

New Democrats are eager to see this bill go to a vote so it can get on to committee today. I think the committee is going to have some considerable work to do, and it would only be fair that they get around to doing it. The parliamentary assistant for the Attorney General, who has monitored the debate of this bill—and he’s to be applauded for doing that—is going to be squiring this bill through the committee process and has been present throughout the debate—and he’s to be admired for that. I’m sure that David Levac, the member for Brant, will prove himself worthy of status far beyond mere parliamentary assistant by virtue of his handling of this bill, but I would ask the parliamentary assistant from Brantford to perhaps, in a private moment, away from other colleagues, perhaps over a soda pop after we’ve left at 6 o’clock—

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Kormos: He’s a soda pop drinker; he’s a temperance man. I’m not sure it has served him well, but he’s a temperance man, and I admire him for that. But I’m not sure that Mr. Zimmer is. So maybe after 6 o’clock, the parliamentary assistant might take Mr. Zimmer aside to some entertainment establishment down the road here, buy him a soda pop and explain to him how he, Mr. Zimmer, could have been so thoroughly betrayed by Premier McGuinty, by Bill 50, and how all of the goals of Bill 154, An Act to regulate zoos, introduced by Mr. Zimmer, have been abandoned, forgotten, deserted, left behind in the dust.

I’m looking forward to this bill being in committee. I look forward to the input from members of the public and I encourage people who have any interest in this, whether from the agricultural perspective, from the animal welfare perspective, from the zoo perspective, to apply promptly to get standing before that committee. New Democrats will do everything we can so that all who are interested are accommodated and heard from.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I’ve been listening for almost an hour to the member from Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: It was a whole hour.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Yes, a whole hour. It was entertaining, for sure. I also was listening to the minister when he introduced this bill, plus I was listening to the member for Brant, who is the parliamentary assistant to the minister, when he spoke in detail about the importance of this

bill. No doubt about it, our colleague from Willowdale was the inspiration behind this bill and he convinced the government and many people across the province, maybe across North America, of the importance of protecting the animals in our society.

As you know, many of us have animals in our homes and many of us treat animals with respect and look after them very well, because as you know, animals cannot express their feelings and cannot protect themselves. It is our responsibility, as human beings with the ability to control animals and protect them, to look after them very well. That’s why this bill came, as a protection mechanism.

As you know, this act has not been touched since 1919, a long, long time ago. Life has changed and so many issues and also so many aspects of our lives have changed. I think it’s about time to open this act and look after and protect animals.

I want to commend the minister and the government for introducing this bill in order to create a protection mechanism for the animals in our society, because so many people abuse animals, take advantage of animals. They kill them, abuse them, don’t feed them, put them in small areas. It’s like the story of Tyson in my riding of London–Fanshawe. Tyson the kangaroo was put in a small box for a long time. As you know, kangaroos like to jump, like to go, like to move around. I think it was cruel, and many people from my riding came and told me about this animal. That’s why I’m supporting this bill.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: First, I’d just like to congratulate the government on their new rules. It certainly has enhanced the membership in here during the day. I can see it really brought a lot more people in to listen.

We’re here to talk about the member for Welland and his great speech that they say he had for an hour—excellent. He talked about many different things. But I have some concerns about this bill and, as he mentioned, a lot of trust has to be given to the government in passing a bill like this, because we don’t know the regulations, and we are especially concerned on the farms. One of the things that causes distress—I’m telling you, a lot of members over there wouldn’t understand, but there are certain things we have to do as farmers that I’m sure would cause them distress.

Mr. John O’Toole: Give an example.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Well, you have to castrate your animals, and I’m sure that’s going to cause a bit of distress. There are horns you have to take off certain animals, and there’s a lot of distress when you take those horns off, and there’s blood.

Interjection: Tails.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: No, we don’t take tails off; that’s one thing we don’t do.

Mr. Toby Barrett: You take them off sheep.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Sheep, yes, you do; that’s right. So things like that will cause distress in animals.

Interjection: Why do they do those things?

Mr. Bill Murdoch: They have to be done. There are certain things—the member is a bit of an urban fellow,

but he does have a few rural people. He wants to know why we do some of those things. We may explain that at a different time.

When I was listening yesterday, the member for Brant went on about protecting our cute and cuddly animals, our pets. Well, that's fine, and I agree with him that we have to do things like that. But with a bill like this, you've got to be so careful, and there's a lot of trust. And you know something? People out there don't trust this government. How could you trust them with all the different things that they've done, that they haven't lived up to?

I have great difficulty in supporting this bill. Yes, I want to protect animals—nothing wrong with that. But if you're on the farm, it's going to be tough to support this bill as it sits now.

1620

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I listened intently to the comments made by my colleague the member from Welland-Thorold, and I thought he touched on pretty well most sections of the legislation and spoke to some of the issues at hand. As he said, we as New Democrats support generally where this legislation is going. We believe that it is high time we moved towards the protection of animals in a way that is in keeping with where we should be at this point in Ontario. He does make the point, and I heard him talk about it earlier that it's unfortunate that people sometimes have higher concerns for this issue than others—not that animals are not important, but sometimes it is a bit frustrating when you do look at it. I'll talk about that a little bit later.

I've just got to say a couple of quick things. One is, everybody was waiting for roadside zoo legislation. I almost got that one wrong. That was a Freudian slip. In the end, the legislation does some of that—

Mr. Peter Kormos: No, it doesn't. There's no regulation of roadside zoos.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: There's no regulation, but there is an attempt in the legislation to deal with it.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm going to have to go back and read the legislation, because I was under a totally different impression. I'll go back. I'll stay with my first comment, then. It was supposed to be roadside zoo legislation and it ain't here, I'm being told by our critic. I've got to believe what he says is the case, although I thought from an earlier conversation that it said otherwise. But that's something else.

The government has decided to go a different route. I think that roadside zoo legislation is needed. It's something that needs to be dealt with. The whole issue—and I heard Cheri DiNovo speak to this yesterday—is that we understand that farmers take good care of animals they have because it's their livelihood, but there needs to be some sort of mechanism in the case where that doesn't happen. There have been cases—a lawyer who owned some 50 horses and starved them to death. You have to have legislation to get at that kind of stuff. But I'll have a chance later in debate to talk about where I'm at.

Mr. Dave Levac: I want to tell the member from Timmins-James Bay that I think he really got it right the first time, because the words "roadside zoo" might not appear but the powers and the expertise that are going to be needed to inspect those zoos on animal care and to prevent cruelty are in the bill. It's going to happen. It has been committed in the bill, if the bill is passed.

The gentleman from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, who tends to purport to say what I said in the debate, I ask and challenge to go to Hansard and say where I said "cute and cuddly." As a matter of fact, I would also challenge him to understand that farms being exempted brings me to the point I want to make that the member from Welland brought up that implied that there wasn't—but there is, in terms of the different ministries out there that have different enforcement agencies responsible for animals on a farm and are responsible for wildlife as well through the MNR. He knows that.

The second thing is the intent of the bill in section 6, which might need some work in committee. I have said that before and I'll say it again: That's why we are going to committee, which other governments tended to avoid quite a bit. We're going to be moving into that discussion. But it was designed specifically to avoid the bogus scam artists who were using any kind of name that would imply that they are with that humane society, including the good work that the Toronto Humane Society does do for the prevention of cruelty to animals, so that no one else could pull a scam on people's heartstrings who do want to take care of our animals. That bill needs some work, and we were going to talk about it in committee. That's the commitment we made when we said that from the beginning. The minister said that we would look at this in committee, and that's going to happen.

I agree with the member from Welland, who tells us, inside his stories, which were rather fascinating, that there is an important part of the bill that needs to be discussed, and that's to ensure that all of the stakeholders, including the various ministries, have an opportunity to give us input, which we are looking forward to in committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Welland, who has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I appreciate the candor of the parliamentary assistant. I suggest that perhaps Bill Murdoch might have misunderstood, or maybe the parliamentary assistant was speaking of Bill Murdoch as being cute and cuddly, although from my perspective, he's many things but neither of those. He may have more intimate relationships with people who don't share my view, and I understand that.

To the parliamentary assistant, through you, Speaker: I understand what his job is. I also understand that the parliamentary assistant didn't write the bill. He doesn't have to accept responsibility for its shortcomings. He isn't the one who shafted Mr. Zimmer, the member for Willowdale. I didn't ask him to apologize to Mr.

Zimmer; that's for the Premier to do. But it's only for the parliamentary assistant to take Mr. Zimmer out for a soda pop after work and perhaps explain to him how this could have happened—if, in fact, he knows.

These things come out of the Premier's office. We know that. It's the brain trust in the Premier's office that produces this stuff and that signs off on it. That should be of some concern, because what little bill was it that Garfield Dunlop and I were in there with, that sex offender registry bill? It was about two pages long and the government had to move 14 amendments in committee. Lord love a duck, it was an amazing exercise in flawed draftsmanship. So the brain trust in the Premier's office fumbled that ball. They fouled that one up.

And, please, to the PA: We're friends still, aren't we? I say to the PA, let's just make this the bill it should be. Work with me, not against me. That's all I'm asking of you. There are some things to be dealt with here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to participate in the debate on this bill. I will be addressing four key areas of the bill that I have some concern with, and I believe my colleagues in the official opposition do as well. One of them, of course, relates to this famous section 6, which has already been referred to in debate. It's an issue with which I have personally had a great deal of contact, with constituents e-mailing, calling, sending me letters and appealing to me as their representative to advocate for an amendment to the bill that would remove that section. I want to speak to that.

I also will speak to other areas of the legislation that, quite frankly, cause concern. On the surface, perhaps not; but when we consider the implications and potential abuse of those sections, I think we as legislators have a responsibility to deal with them.

One of those areas is the right to enter premises without warrant, really conferring upon agents the same powers as police officers. I am not sure that the government fully thought their way through that one, and so I want to speak to that.

The third area is the right to seizure of property without warrant. Once again, I'm concerned that we're conferring upon agents of the society, as it's put in this legislation, powers that are, first of all unnecessary for the purpose of the intent of the legislation; and second, to just even provide an opportunity for abuse of power. I think that in that regard, this legislation is going too far.

My final point is a section of this bill that could be used—euthanization made simple, which is a serious concern to me.

I'll deal with those four areas in my remarks. But before I do that, I want to speak to another bill, the consequences of a bill. The reason I bring this into debate is that all too often, this government has presented the Legislature with a bill that, in intent, can be supported by all of us, and the purpose, as set out even in explanatory notes, has certain benefits that I think we could all embrace. It's when you get down to the details of the

legislation that we as legislators have a responsibility to analyze and to draw the government's attention to those areas where there may well be unintended consequences, certainly imperfections, in the legislation.

1630

I want to just draw our attention back to another piece of legislation presented here, namely, the famous pit bull legislation brought in by the Attorney General of this government. We warned the government at the time that, first of all, the Attorney General himself couldn't pick out a pit bull in a lineup if he was asked to do that. There was so much generality in that legislation that we knew there was going to be a challenge and that there would be unintended consequences as a result of that bill.

Which brings me to the specific issue I want to bring to the attention of my colleagues here, and it's the case of Rambo. You may well be familiar with this. Rambo is a dog, a much-beloved pet of a young lady by the name of Gabriela Nowakowska. Because of the legislation brought in by the Attorney General of this government, Rambo is now separated from Gabriela, and there's actually a lawsuit—a lawsuit—under way in this province. Gabriela has had to retain counsel so that, hopefully, she can be reunited with her pet.

I wrote a letter to the Attorney General on behalf of Gabriela. I'm going to read it into the record, because I want others to know just how ridiculous some of the legislation is, and the unintended consequences, that poorly drafted legislation—perhaps sometimes with the best of intentions—can cause distress.

My letter to the Attorney General reads as follows:

"I am writing on behalf of the teachers and students of Armitage Village Public School in Newmarket, who have contacted me regarding the plight of 'Rambo.' Rambo is currently impounded at the Mississauga Animal Services awaiting the outcome of a court challenge with respect to the provisions of Bill 132.

"Under this legislation, what defines a 'pit bull' is given wide latitude, with the burden of proof resting with the owner in each case. In Rambo's case, it is now well-established that he is not a purebred American Staffordshire. Under the regulations of Bill 132, Rambo also lacks any of the characteristic menacing qualities of Staffordshire Terriers or related breeds.

"Rambo's owner, Gabriela Nowakowska, loves her pet and is enduring great personal distress and suffering at being separated from him. She is also enduring the hurtful stress of a court challenge which could result in her losing her pet companion forever."

I appeal to the Attorney General to, for goodness' sake, use his ministerial power and order the release of this pet, knowing full well that it's his legislation that's causing this kind of confusion. What we're into is yet another one of those pieces of legislation that on the surface sounds good to many people, but is causing an equal amount of distress already—and we're not even at committee yet.

I want to read into the record some of the notes I've received from my constituents. The first one is from

Catherine Burgess of Newmarket, Ontario: “As a supporter of the Toronto Humane Society, I support their concern about section 6 of Bill 50. Section 6 of Bill 50 should be removed.”

From Patricia Hatton: “Remove section 6 from Bill 50. Do the right thing for your constituents and the animals. I want to know how you vote. Thank you in advance.

“Patricia Hatton....”

She will know how I vote. The way I will vote on this is—I fully support the intent of the bill when it comes to the protection of animals. What I will vote against are the wrong-headed aspects of this bill that will have unintended consequences. The minister and the parliamentary assistant can give us all of the assurances that they want here, but as long as we have a legislative framework that allows for a misinterpretation, that allows for those who—by the way, when the parliamentary assistant and the minister are long gone from government, and some of us hope that’s sooner than later, there will be others who will interpret the legislation, and all of their best intentions may not be followed through on. So we’re saying, let’s fix it now. Don’t allow the legislation to be implemented as faulty legislation. Let’s get it right, let’s take it to committee, and let’s put forward the appropriate amendments. And one of the amendments that I, as the member representing Patricia Hatton and others who have written me—I will be voting to remove that section to bring clarity to the bill to ensure that the intent, as noted in the explanatory notes, is in fact followed through on in the actual legislation.

I have another letter here, from Eva Klos: “Remove section 6 from Bill 50—this is extremely important.”

Doreen Miller: “I am writing to you with the hope that you will please do something to help with the removal of” section 6 from Bill 50. “Please support the humane society and the animal welfare movement in Ontario by removing section 6 ... before it’s too late.

“Thank you on behalf of the animals who have no voice.”

Vivian Ho writes: “I am writing to urge the removal of section 6 from Bill 50. The risk for the 235 Ontario animal protection charities to lose their name—a name that has meant goodwill and trust—just because of the breakage of their affiliation with one single organization, the OSPCA, is an insurmountable conflict of interest for the reason that the OSPCA will become regulator and fundraising competitor to its affiliates. Moreover, the OSPCA has a poor record with saving animals, and always needs money. Furthermore, the OSPCA has always operated secretly and won’t tell how many animals it adopts and how many it kills. From the statistics, roughly 50% of animals were killed in the pound and a far cry from the Toronto Humane Society’s 6%.

“Please do the right thing, remove section 6 from Bill 50!...

“Vivian Ho....”

I have many others like it.

To my constituents, I will simply say, yes, I agree with their reasoning. I think it is inappropriate. I’m not certain what the intent was when this section was allowed to appear in this legislation, but I will certainly do what I can to ensure that it’s removed.

I want to move on to the new section 11.4 of this bill, which authorizes inspectors and agents to enter, without a warrant, places used for animal exhibit, entertainment, boarding, hire or sale in order to determine if the animal’s care meets the prescribed standards. The parliamentary assistant earlier indicated, “Oh, yes. This legislation will in fact deal with roadside zoos.” No doubt he’s referring to this section that empowers agents to enter these facilities. My question to the parliamentary assistant, to the minister, to the government, is this: Why without warrant? Why the overkill in this legislation? If there is a suspicion that something inordinate is going on in these places, then simply get the warrant, make your case and enter the premises. That’s all.

1640

We’re not living in some foreign Third World country; this is Ontario. This is a place where we fully expect that our privacy rights, our property rights, our personal rights, will be respected. To now introduce legislation under the guise of protecting animals—we’re taking rights away from human beings.

I’m sorry; I can’t support it. I don’t know how any right-thinking member of this Legislature can support that. So I will argue vehemently in committee, and here in this place, and ask the minister to reconsider this section of the legislation.

I want to refer as well to the new section 12.1. Here’s what it does: It “authorizes inspectors, agents and veterinarians who are lawfully in any building or place to take and conduct tests and analyses on samples of substances and carcasses; it also authorizes inspectors and agents who are lawfully in any building or place to seize any thing presented to them or in plain view that they have reasonable grounds to believe will afford evidence of an offence or needs to be removed to prevent further offences.”

“Anything.” It’s the wording of this legislation that causes me great concern—that they believe on “reasonable grounds.” It’s one thing, on the one hand, to give agents the authorization without warrant to enter someone’s premises. Then, on top of that, you’re going to say, “Take whatever you want. Remove it.” Where is the responsibility that we expect from those individuals who are authorized to carry out inspections? I’m suggesting that it’s not here. There is a problem. There’s an overstepping of bounds. I feel very uncomfortable in supporting legislation that will do that.

I want to make reference to the current subsection 14(2) and the changes that are being proposed there. The current subsection 14(2) of the act sets out the circumstances in which the society may destroy an animal. The current clause 14(2)(b) requires a written statement by a veterinarian that “the animal is ill or injured and is incapable of being cured or healed without suffering.”

Those are conditions that I think we would all agree are reasonable. It requires a stating of fact and a justification for the euthanasia. However, this legislation amends that section “so that the veterinarian’s written statement is now required to state only that destruction of the animal is the most humane course of action.” Euthanasia made simple.

I thought this was to protect animals. I thought that this legislation was there to provide some additional protection. What it’s doing is now simply making the paperwork a lot easier. If you want to put an animal down, you simply say, “That’s the most humane thing that can happen.” I’m sorry; I’m simply not prepared to accept that.

The parliamentary assistant or the minister may argue, “We’re going to trust the veterinarians.” I don’t think the veterinarians want that responsibility either. I think what they want is to know that they can operate within a specific framework that allows them to conduct their business in a professional way.

There are a number of areas in this legislation that should give us cause for concern. That’s what the committee is for. That’s why we have public hearings. I look forward to that. I look forward to stakeholders coming forward and expressing their concern to the government.

I will take the parliamentary assistant at his word, and that is that perhaps for the first time in something in the order of five years now the McGuinty government will actually allow the public hearing process and the standing committee to function as it was intended to function; that when amendments are brought forward, not just by the government but by the opposition members of that standing committee as well, they are considered seriously; that the vote that takes place in that committee will take place based on what the members of that committee feel is in the best interest of enhancing the legislation before us; that the vote won’t be whipped, that members will actually be given the latitude and the respect to vote on those amendments as they believe is right.

We’ll be watching. I’ll be looking for the kind of direction that the parliamentary assistant gives the members on that committee when those amendments come forward.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yet again I want to say, at the beginning of this, that New Democrats will be supporting this bill to second reading. We understand that there are issues that need to be dealt with in committee. I thought the member—I forget the riding name; the Conservative member—raised some interesting points about some of the issues that he saw. I read through the legislation and I’m not sure I came to quite the same conclusion, but I understand his argument. I think for that reason this type of legislation really needs to get off to committee.

He is right—and I was right in the first place—that this bill doesn’t deal with roadside zoo legislation, as was promised by this government to certain people. Yes, it deals with being able to inspect animals that are being cared for by roadside zoos, so that inspectors can go in

and verify if the animal is being mistreated. But the whole regulatory issue that has to be dealt with around what a roadside zoo is—how is it to operate? what are some of the rules of the game?—in order to make sure that we have a standard when it comes to providing roadside zoo events or attractions to people in Ontario, has not been dealt with in this legislation. I think one of the things that we’re going to hear at committee is a wish to insert within this legislation sections of the bill that could more properly deal with roadside zoo issues.

I know that the industry and those who have been lobbying for roadside zoo legislation were promised, first, that they would get their own legislation. Then they were told, no, there’ll be more of an omnibus bill—that is, I suppose, Bill 50—and it would be contained within that. But as I read it, many of the issues that I’ve been brought up to speed on by people who have come into my office aren’t dealt with.

I’ll get a chance a little bit later in debate to talk about some of the issues, such as section 6 of the act, that I think sorely need to be dealt with.

Mr. Bob Delaney: It is always a pleasure to follow the erudite debate from my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora, and especially to be able to pass comment on it.

When was the last time that legislation protecting animals was reviewed? It was the same era as the time in which women were considered property. World War I had just ended. It’s been that long since we’ve reviewed how we treat animals in Ontario. That gives you an idea, I think, of the scope and the sweep of this particular bill.

It’s a very ambitious bill. It’s a bill that brings the protection of animals into the 21st century. If passed, this legislation is going to have no impact at all on the vast majority of Ontarians who treat animals with kindness and respect and concern, who treat animals as if they were part of their family, if they’re pets. But it would allow the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals to take action effectively against those who don’t.

1650

I can recall, back in the 1980s, taking a ride on my bicycle, and I remember going on a very, very hot day in July into a field and seeing a number of dogs chained in the sun. I was just horrified at this. I went home and called the police. I went up with a cruiser. The officer looked at it and he said, “I can’t cross that line.” I said, “But you can see that these animals are very clearly in distress.” And he said, “Yes, I can, but I can’t cross that line.” We eventually did get it sorted out when the owner came out and the officer persuaded him to take the animals in. But this is the kind of bill that in its very many reforms would enable the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals to do exactly the types of things that the children in the classrooms and the schools that I visit in Mississauga say really need to be done, and that’s why I will support it.

Mr. Jim Wilson: It’s a pleasure to comment for a couple of minutes on remarks made by my colleague the very capable member from Newmarket–Aurora. He did

an eloquent job as usual, and as usual his remarks were factual.

He mentioned Rambo, and I think of Rambo all the time because I have a constituent, Lori Gray from Alliston, who's a member of the Dog Legislation Council of Canada, and she and I worked very, very closely during the pit bull debate, which was legislation that I think was just more grandstanding—as the member from Newmarket–Aurora alluded to that legislation—and probably didn't get to the real problem out there, that being that some people don't treat their animals very well. Most people do.

The member talked about the fact that Rambo's owner had to hire a lawyer in order to try and get access, visiting rights, while Rambo sits on death row. It turns out that Rambo is not even a certified pit bull. The Attorney General at the time the pit bull legislation was brought in was Mr. Bryant, and as the honourable member for Newmarket–Aurora mentioned, he couldn't even identify a pit bull in a lineup of dogs. I argued then and will always argue that it's bad pet owners, irresponsible pet owners, that frankly should be hung out to dry, and not the animal itself. People shouldn't be training their dogs to be mean. They shouldn't be abusing their animals, nor should they be siccing them on the neighbour. They should be responsible.

The honourable member mentioned warrantless entries, and I'll have a chance this afternoon to talk about that. That is a real worry. It's certainly always a worry for the Progressive Conservative Party. I can remember being in cabinet and having a number of bills where bureaucrats wanted to put in warrantless entries, and we just wouldn't do it. We wouldn't do it as a matter of principle. You never know when you'll get a cranky neighbour that just wants to make a false complaint and all of a sudden you've got the Ontario Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals rummaging through your house and taking whatever they want. I think—

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

Mr. Dave Levac: I want to assure the member from Newmarket–Aurora that I was paying attention, and I have been paying attention to the member from Welland in the two-minuters that are going on and taking seriously the role that I have been asked to play here in shepherding and discussing the bill in the House and in committee. I take it very seriously, as I do all the business that we're asked to do in this place. The commitment I make to him is that the deputants that come will be listened to clearly and we will be listening carefully to the opposition. We will be listening to the concerns that are being raised in the House, and we are going to get them looked at. We are going to review them. The minister has made the commitment that he's going to listen carefully to the arguments that are put forth to us to make the best bill that we can in terms of the protection of and the prevention of cruelty to animals.

I would be remiss if I didn't take a moment—given the member from Welland's stories, and I know that you

shared a few—with my own pet, Taz. If I don't mention him, my kids will be upset. Taz is an absolutely beautiful dog, a shepherd-lab mix, an outdoor dog that absolutely disdains being inside the house and is very rarely in the house but is cared for completely.

The member mentioned the concern that he has regarding giving too much authority to those individuals to take action. Under present legislation, there are a tremendous number of pets—dogs, cats, a large number of animals—that have died because the SPCA had their hands handcuffed and couldn't get access fast enough to protect those animals. I gave examples of that in my original 10-minute speech when we introduced the bill. I understand his concern for the balance of how much authority is provided. We will listen carefully, we will respond and we hope we can write the best piece of legislation that needs an update.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Newmarket–Aurora has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to thank the members for Timmins–James Bay, Mississauga–Streetsville, Simcoe–Grey and Brant for their comments.

I will take the parliamentary assistant's word that this will be a meaningful next step in the legislative process. I will also be looking for the minister to take the parliamentary assistant's attitude to heart and give the parliamentary assistant the latitude to do what he has committed to do here, because ultimately it is the minister's responsibility.

We all, I believe, have common ground in this place in terms of what the intent is. We want to ensure that animals have the protection they need, as my colleague from Simcoe–Grey indicated, from people who should rightfully have consequences for their mistreatment of animals. We will be the first to say that those consequences should be there and that there needs to be the appropriate amount of authority to deal with those who would abuse animals.

But bringing it back again to the issue before us in terms of the concerns I expressed, we would be looking for the balance that is so important in terms of the authority, the power that is given, so that we don't move from animal abuse to abuse of power, for which I think we inherently have a concern regarding this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm so pleased to be here among the multitude of members who have gathered in the Legislature this afternoon, and the hundreds of people sitting in the gallery—oh, a few people sitting in the gallery this afternoon. It's a little bit sad the way this place has gone since the new schedule. There seems to be less interest in this place than there normally is, but I suppose for the government that's a good thing. The least amount of attention we have in the Legislature is always better for a government; the least amount of scrutiny of the government is always better for them—and the ability to control the message. So I understand where the government is at. I understand what they're up to.

Today we're talking about roadside zoo legislation—oh, no, it's not roadside zoo legislation; I forgot. We're speaking about legislation to protect animals from cruelty.

I just want to say a few things on this particular bill in the time that I have. The first thing is that, like you and all of us here in this Legislature, we've been approached by many people over the last number of years about the need to regulate roadside zoos. I was, along with others, expecting that legislation would be brought forward this spring in order to deal with the regulation of roadside zoos. Unfortunately, only part of this has been done by way of this legislation. We're dealing with the ability for either the Society for the prevention of cruelty to animals or somebody else they would name, such as a municipality or others, to go in and inspect that the animals are not being cruelly dealt with as far as their treatment. But we don't have in this legislation some of the issues that need to be dealt with when it comes to the regulatory side of the industry.

There are some really good operators in the industry who are doing a great job; we all know them. Many of them are in our ridings. But every now and then you get an operator who is maybe not as—how would you say?—good as they need to be as far as how they run their operation. It's not just a question that the animals are sometimes mistreated, but, quite frankly, that the public is not provided the type of experience they should be getting in such a facility. It will be interesting when we go to committee if others in the industry will be coming to us to talk about this and how they feel about what needs to be done and was not done in this legislation. So that's the first thing that I want to say.

1700

The second thing I want to get at—this is a bit of a motherhood-and-apple-pie kind of issue, because all of us here in the Legislature at one time or another, I would think, have had a pet in their home—a dog, a cat, a budgie, whatever it might be. Many of us know that the pet becomes an extension of the family.

Our family is no different. We have Misty the dog. Misty is a black lab retriever. She runs the household. She has been with us now for five or six years. Both my wife and I enjoy her company, and we think she enjoys our company. At least, she wags her tail every time I come home every four days, after the Legislature, and she gets excited. So I think that she's okay with me—

Mr. Peter Kormos: I hope that's your dog you're talking about.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's my dog, Peter, that I'm talking about. You know Murielle; she's always excited to see me.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yeah, sure. I do know Murielle.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Exactly. Thanks a lot, Mr. Colleague.

Anyway, I want to say that it's a bit of a motherhood-and-apple-pie issue, because most of us understand that pets in our lives are a really nurturing thing, a very positive thing, and a great—

Mr. Peter Kormos: I have a funny story to tell about your dog.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I wish I could tell that story about the previous dog. It passed away because it was 15 or 16 years old. It died of eating too many greasy foods, as my good friend Mr. Kormos knows.

It's one of these issues that's motherhood and apple pie. Everybody understands that pets are important to our lives and that we should respect pets in some sort of humane way, that we're not mistreating them. Unfortunately, there are people in our society who, for whatever reason—and we've seen it in the papers and we've heard about it in our communities—have done some pretty cruel things to animals, and we need legislation to deal with that.

Does this legislation do that? Partly. But it doesn't go to the extent that some in the communities who are interested in animals and cruelty to animals would like us to go. For example, and for good reason, the government has not extended the power of the person who is going to be responsible for going to investigate what is going on when there is cruelty being reported to an animal. They won't have the ability to go into somebody's home. Of course, the search warrant is going to be the way to deal with that.

One of the issues is that most of the cruelty, unfortunately, doesn't happen necessarily at a roadside zoo or other type of organization or businesses. Unfortunately, it happens by way of individuals, and that's going to be much tougher to deal with. Why? We don't have the resources to do it.

Typically, there has been about \$100,000 a year given to the OSPCA in order for them to do the work of trying to investigate when there has been a complaint about an animal that has been cruelly treated. We're now going to bring that funding up to \$500,000. It sounds like there's a 500% increase, and that's such a great thing. But you know as well as I do, that's for the province of Ontario. Where are you going to go with 500,000 bucks when it comes to the ability of the OSPCA to do their job? What do they do if there's a complaint up in Rainy River? Do they have the ability to have somebody there to do that? What happens if it's in Cornwall, Sarnia, Toronto, Timmins or James Bay? The OSPCA is not going to have the ability to dispatch people to investigate in a timely manner, because 500,000 bucks won't even cover the city of Toronto, quite frankly.

The government is going to say, "But the OSPCA could work with the municipalities, because much of the enforcement actually is going to be done by municipalities." The city of Toronto—we call them dog catchers or animal control officers—or the city of Timmins, Sudbury, wherever it might be, will have authority under this act to act on behalf of the animal in order to check if cruelty has been, as you would say, administered to the animal.

Again, this is the downloading issue. We are saying to municipalities, "Here's some wonderful legislation. We're going to give you more authority to go out and to

inspect and to charge in the event that an animal is being treated cruelly.” Good stuff, but where are the bucks? Where’s the ability for the municipality to have the wherewithal financially to be able to enforce this legislation? Simply put, this is just more downloading.

I don’t disagree that it’s a good idea to give the municipalities that same power through the OSPCA. I think that’s a great thing, but we need to make sure that municipalities have an ability to pay the people necessary to provide the services that have to be done under Bill 50. That’s one of the things that I want to say. Every time I see legislation coming through here, far too often—somebody has a great idea. It normally starts by way of a private member’s bill and then it’s eventually adopted by way of a government bill. We stand here in this Legislature and pontificate about how great it is, what a great idea I or my colleagues have had, and how we’ll stand together and pass great, wonderful legislation, but we never look at how much it is going to cost the municipality and those who are charged under the legislation to administer whatever we’ve done by way of law. Let’s be clear: Should this bill pass second reading, and I assume it will, and should it pass third reading, and I hope it does, and be proclaimed into law, the municipality, along with the OSPCA, will have the ability to go out and do inspections in particular facilities where they think there has been cruelty to animals. But who, in the end, is going to pay? Is the OSPCA going to have to fundraise the remainder above the \$500,000? Do they have the ability to do that? Can they? I don’t know. That’s a lot of money.

Oh, thank you very much, Dario. Much appreciated. I didn’t even ask for that. This is how great the pages in this chamber are. They are just absolutely great pages. They could see that I would like a glass of water with a little bit—no, no. Just water was fine, thank you.

But I just want to say that it’s going to be more downloading onto the municipality, and I think one of the issues that we need to look at when this bill goes to committee is what is going to be the cost to municipalities and what can be done to assist the municipalities and the OSPCA to be able to properly administer this law when it does become law. Otherwise, it’s just more of the same: great laws that are passed that at the end of the day nobody can enforce. Why? Because we haven’t got the personnel to go out and enforce them.

That’s maybe where we’re going to end up with this. We might end up in a situation where somebody calls the OSPCA centrally or calls their municipality and says, “The neighbour down the street is abusing the dog,” or the cat, and the response is going to be, “Thank you very much for the call.” Then nobody will be dispatched because the municipality or the OSPCA will not have the financial means to send somebody in to do the investigation—the inspection and then the investigation, I should say. And all of that leads to court, which means that, again, the municipality is going to be caught with the burden of having to take this into court, and who pays in the end?

So the province is really a great missing—how do you say that?—an absentee landlord when it comes to its fiduciary responsibility to municipalities to make something like this work. That’s one issue I think we need to take a look at: Who is going to pay for this in the end?

The other thing that I want to talk to, and my colleague the member from Welland-Thorold, Mr. Kormos, I thought made the point quite well, and including the member from—I forget where it is. Mr. Klees. I’m sorry; I don’t know the riding name, Speaker. Please humour me.

Interjection: Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The member for Newmarket–Aurora made the point as well, and that is the whole issue of section 6, I believe it is. Section 6 basically says—I’ll just pull it out here very quickly. This is something that is going to be troubling to about 200 charities out there in the province of Ontario that deal with the whole issue of providing care to animals in the province. It says:

“No corporation or other entity, other than the society or an affiliated society, shall,

“(a) hold itself out as being the society or an affiliated society having authority under this act;”—I understand that for inspection purposes—“or

“(b) use the name ‘humane society’, ‘society for the prevention of cruelty to animals’ or ‘spca’ or the equivalent of any of those names in any other language, alone or in combination with any other word, name, initial or description.”

The effect of that is to basically rename a whole bunch of associations that have been out there for a very long time; for example, the Toronto Humane Society. They’ve been around for, I don’t know, 100 years? They have been very successful in providing services to people to adopt cats and dogs and other animals and to care for them. They have babysitting services. When there is a cat or a dog that’s been mistreated or found as a stray on the street, often they end up with the humane society. Unfortunately, they are going to have to change their name. How do you fundraise when you have a seal or you have a brand or you have a stamp that everybody recognizes? So when somebody gets on the telephone, either telemarketing or directly from the Toronto Humane Society—and I just use them as an example; they are one of over 200—they are going to call and say, “Hi. I’m calling on behalf of the Toronto Humane Society.” Well, you have a picture of what that means. “Oh, yes, I know. I got my cat there.” As a matter of fact, Simba, the cat at my house, comes from the Toronto Humane Society. So I’m likely to give them money if they call me. Don’t get my number—it’s unlisted. That’s a whole other story, telemarketers. My God, you get a whole bunch of calls from them. We need legislation on that sometime.

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But the point is, people have an image when they hear “Toronto Humane Society,” and they’re more apt to give a financial contribution because they know the good work that they do. If you, in this legislation, say, “I’m

forcing all these organizations to change their names so that you don't use the words 'humane society' within the title," it's going to have a financial effect on the organizations who are now doing the heavy lifting, as my good friend Mr. Kormos uses the line, to provide for the needs of animals not only in Toronto but across this province. So I do want to say that is one part of the legislation that I think needs to be looked at.

I want to take the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, with a bit of indulgence, to talk a little bit about a few people who I see are in the galleries here with us today, and that's Nancy and Bill Steele, whose son lives in the city of Timmins out at Kamiskotia Lake—my lake, where I live during the summer and seasonal. It's Kamiskotia. I see that their granddaughter, page—what's the first name again? Sorry—Evelyn is here, and she's so proud to be here as a page. She's here with her grandparents, but she's going to be going back to Kamiskotia Lake later on this summer, and I know that she wants to see Misty the dog because she heard about Misty here and to find, when she does come, that she likes the Milk-Bones. Bring those along.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for the time in this debate.

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

Mr. Dave Levac: I appreciate the opportunity. I too listened very carefully to the member from Timmins–James Bay and was looking forward to a few more minutes of breathtaking debate—Inside joke.

I want to respond to the concerns he expressed regarding the municipalities and the OSPCA's capacity to do the job that this Legislature, if passing this legislation, will have them do. Let me talk about what the OSPCA has told us. They've said that if these regulations come into effect, their efficiencies in terms of how they provide that function—they will have enough efficiencies to cover off any expected expense that's coming.

The second issue is that when you mention municipalities, you're talking about animal control officers versus the act, which is to deal specifically with cruelty. So when you put those two together in a package, that answers the concern that's being raised. Apparently, we're being told, it's not going to have an impact on a monetary basis on the municipality or the OSPCA. That's what we're told right now, and we'd like to talk about it further in committee. I would gladly enter into that discussion.

The second point I want to make, and I want to make again on some of the other conversations that have gone on, is, remember that this particular bill does not change any aspects of other ministries' capacities to do their enforcement. You're talking about wildlife protection and you're talking about animals being protected on farms. The same regulations that exist today will not be changed by this legislation. Therefore, I think that when we package this, we have to be seeing this in concert with other ministries, other enforcement agencies and our capacity to find the efficiencies that I expressed.

Mr. Jim Wilson: It's a pleasure to rise and comment on the brief remarks from the honourable member from Timmins–James Bay. He mentioned the cost to municipalities, and the parliamentary assistant said, "At this time we're being told that there won't be a policing cost to municipalities." It's clear in the legislation that the police are to enforce this new legislation, not just the Ontario Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals.

In my own municipality, this government is responsible for policing in the province. In Wasaga Beach, we're nine officers and one civilian short at this time. I've raised it several times in this Legislature. This will be more work. The member from Timmins–James Bay is absolutely right: This could even become quite a large caseload in some areas of the province, because we all love our pets. I grew up with a little mutt named Toby. She was just the most beautiful dog in the world. I can tell you, every time the furnace goes on in my parents' old house, we still think it's the dog and yet the dog has been dead for 30 years. So maybe Toby's ghost is around. I don't know how dogs know the time of day, but that dog would meet us kids getting off the school bus. She'd stay on the property all day, and then at about 3:30 she'd make her way up the street and sit right at the school bus stop and wait for us to get out every day. You sure miss the darned things.

This could become, as the honourable member said, quite a cost to municipalities. As usual, the government just can't continue to download things.

Section 10: He talked about the use of the name "humane society." That will be proprietary to only those animal welfare groups—some 245 in the province—that are affiliated with the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the OSPCA. I just don't understand why it's in there. I don't know enough about the long history of the feud between the Toronto Humane Society and the OSPCA, and I don't really want to know it all, but certainly this bill, as the honourable member said, needs to go to committee. Things like that—warrantless entry and other things—need to be considered.

Mr. Peter Kormos: In the midst of this, who is speaking out for the newly born reindeer at Toronto Zoo? Look, Councillor George Mammoliti—Giorgio, as he would prefer to be called—has no qualms about undressing in council chambers displaying his hirsute splendour because he's upset about people sunbathing nude, but he has said nothing about the slaughter of newly born male reindeer at the Toronto Zoo—outright slaughter—when there are appropriate farm locations and wilderness locations across Ontario eager to adopt these reindeer. I find that an incredibly objectionable thing. So, Mr. Mammoliti—as a junketer, Jean-Marc is but an apprentice—who junkets across the world, over and over and over again, at the taxpayers' tab, visiting zoo after zoo after zoo, professing his affection for these animals, has no trouble taking a newly born reindeer, trussing, I'm sure, its tiny legs as it howls in protest at being taken away from the mother's teat, and then holding it down while it delivers that lethal dosage of toxin. It's

happening right here in the city of Toronto, and George Mammoliti—he's the guy responsible for the zoo—has not had a word of protest about it. I find that reprehensible.

People should be telephoning Mayor Miller's office. People should be telephoning Councillor Mammoliti's office—e-mailing, faxing, condemning the slaughter of newly born male reindeer at Toronto Zoo.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'll remind all members to confine their comments so as to at least make reference to the speech that they're replying to.

Questions and comments? The member from Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's a pleasure to add my comments to those of my colleague from Timmins—James Bay.

I'd like to touch briefly on a couple of points that some of the members may have missed in the bill. One is that in return for the powers granted to the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the key thing to remember is that the government has quadrupled the funding to the OSPCA since having taken office.

Some of the members have expressed reservations about allowing OSPCA agents to inspect premises. One of the members suggested that perhaps they could go into homes. Well, homes are one place they can't go. But the places that they can go are the ones where, right now, OSPCA inspectors and agents can hear the howls of animals being abused, can see the acts of abuse being taken, but somebody can stop them at the gate and say, "Sorry, pal. You can't go in here." After this, they can. After this, they can say, "We can. We can hear it, we can see it, and we know it's happening. We're coming in."

I think it was a year or two ago that this Legislature passed a measure making it mandatory for the reporting of gunshot wounds. We all supported it. In this bill, it becomes mandatory for a veterinarian to report animal abuse. If we can support the reporting of gunshot wounds to people, I don't see a problem in reporting what a trained, experienced veterinarian may know to be systematic abuse of an animal. All of the members have referred to the fact that they love their pets; we all love our pets. This bill gives veterinarians and the OSPCA the teeth to do something about it.

1720

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Timmins—James Bay has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To the member who just previously spoke—again, I don't remember the riding—I just would caution you that members of the opposition are supporting this legislation, and many of the assertions you made that we may not support some of those things I think were a bit over the top. What I heard from the Conservative caucus and certainly what you heard from the NDP caucus is that we think, yes, you need to move in this direction. But we are raising, I think, some valid points. The point is, it is a cost to municipalities, and if you're saying it's not—and I heard the former whip from Brantford say that it won't be—let's talk about that at

committee, because I'm hearing differently from those who've contacted me.

The other issue of what happens to charitable organizations by the humane society—those are legitimate concerns. What I heard the previous member talk about is nothing that I said in this speech. He tried to characterize the opposition as somehow not supporting some of the basic elements of the legislation. I've heard nobody in this House, on the government side or opposition side, saying that we shouldn't give the authority to municipalities or the OSPCA or agents under the OSPCA to be able to carry out inspections. Nobody's argued that. It's not a question of all of us standing here and thumping our chests and saying, "I love my cat, my dog or my bird." The issue is that we all expect animals to be treated with some respect, and that's what this legislation attempts to do.

I just want to correct the record. Earlier, I talked about the young page's brother who lives on Kamiskotia Lake, and I erred. It's not her brother. I'd met her brother on the lake because he was fishing one day. That's another story. They travel there every summer. It's uncle Tom who lives on Kamiskotia Lake. I look forward to seeing Tom as he rolls by my cottage every morning in his scull or whatever it's called. I can almost set my clock by the time he comes by the front window of the cottage.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's my pleasure today to get up and respond to Bill 50 at second reading.

I would say, to start with, that all parties, to my understanding, are in support of this legislation in the general sense. That being said, I think the best reference from our position on this would be by our critic Garfield Dunlop, the member from Simcoe North, who gave a one-hour response to the bill yesterday. In preparation for that, I certainly want to listen to his wise advice and advocacy on this bill.

There's a long history to this important theme—certainly emotion, if you will, on this bill. Everyone in the Legislature would support actions to ensure that animals aren't treated cruelly, and I think that in a general sense we have full agreement on that, and all parties would say that.

In fact, if you look at the work that's been done on this, just in recent history, you'd certainly have to respect the work that was done by Julia Munro, the member from York—Simcoe; as well as by Bob Runciman, from Leeds—Grenville, who is the interim leader from our side; as well as the work done by David Zimmer in 2006 in his private member's bill, Bill 154. That should be recognized, as these changes are more or less supported by each party.

I think what you have to look at is the detail. A good part of this bill—and it's no surprise—is really what's the most controversial. I think at the end of the day all that's being said and often repeated here is a regurgitation of Bill 50.

The complaints and e-mails that I'm getting in my riding of Durham would be encouraging me to support the bill in the general sense. That being said, there are portions bringing to my attention—I can cite their names, as Mr. Klees from Newmarket–Aurora did earlier today, and read those same e-mails. In fact, many of the e-mails that are broadly and strongly in support of the legislation are precipitated from the OSPCA website. As stakeholders very much affected by this, they have a generic letter that's being mailed to every member—generally e-mail, sometimes hard copy—and I could read those. They're generic.

What we're trying to do in our office is to look at the clauses within the bill that cause us some concern. There's no such thing as perfection; we're all aiming to improve the bill, and we would call for public hearings, to have persons who love animals of all sorts, of all descriptions, come forward—not just the vested interest groups—and express their views and try to improve the bill.

That being said, I should be clear. My riding of Durham has three or four different facilities that could be at risk because of this bill. The media response on this has really been—these are broad interpretations, and they're my interpretations—that the idea here is to shut down all small zoos. That's it in a nutshell—close them, end them, crush them. If you see the precipitous implication here, in my riding I certainly have more than two, as many as four, that operate in various capacities as zoos. In reading the media, this bill is all about shutting down the small roadside zoos, period, that's it, full stop. That's what it's about. The only logical zoo would be the Toronto Zoo, where there is lots of government money, government funding, blah-blah-blah.

I'm just going to start by saying that the Bowmanville Zoo is an example. The Bowmanville Zoo is a very long-established, privately operated zoo. Michael Hackenberger is the owner of the zoo.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Is it a good zoo?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a very good zoo. It's my understanding his wife is a veterinarian, and Mr. Hackenberger is a professional in animal training. I believe his educational studies are the same. They are rather famously involved, if you will, in the production of movies and things like that, and they have a production studio there on the site at the Bowmanville Zoo. I would encourage people to attend this summer, if you have a chance. They have lions and tigers and elephants and other exotic and interesting animals of a variety of descriptions. When my wife was teaching, her school's primary grade classes went there, and there were shows put on with a variety of animals. Some of them are domestic animals. But the fact is, it is very widely respected, a very definite tourist destination for people in the GTA, and I would encourage you to attend. That may be the only experience for some young children to have the joy of seeing exotic animals—in a proper setting, I put to you.

However, if you look at what's been printed—CAZA, I think, is one of the groups and Zoocheck is another.

Zoocheck does an audit of the zoos in Ontario. It goes around and randomly arrives on the doorstep and makes some sort of audit. They didn't speak very highly of the Bowmanville Zoo. I'm wondering how much of that is to put them out of business or make it difficult for them. They put a lot into the protection, care and environment of the animals, I can say with some knowledge. I've talked to them over the many years that I was on council and in other roles, knowing that particular operation.

There was the Oshawa Zoo, which was a very small zoo in the northwest part of my riding and it was often a destination for trips of various groups, but it didn't have a huge budget. I'd be clear about that. There was another with small farm animals—miniature horses and that kind of stuff—they had a few emus, and I think they had a giraffe. They had some really strange animals, sort of a Noah's Ark kind of location. I say that respectfully, because I've been there, and the people were very fond of the animals. I wouldn't say they loved them—that's an improper use of the word—but they certainly were fond of and cared for the animals very much. In fact, I'm sure in many cases they were spending money on food for the animals that they maybe could have used themselves. There's another one in my riding of Durham that most people would know—it's a beautiful riding. If you want to take a trip from Toronto into the countryside of the GTA, there's no better place to go, honestly. This does relate to them, and that's why I'm speaking here this afternoon, to respect the work of these small, mostly family-operated businesses—quite successful businesses, I might say.

1730

The other one is Jungle Cat World. Jungle Cat World is on Highway 35/115, north of the 401, en route to Peterborough or the city of Kawartha Lakes. It's operated by the Klose family and has been for a number of years. Jungle Cat World, as it says, has lions and tigers and a lot of exotic animals. I think they may even have a cheetah and the rest of it there. They're very, very professional people who operate without any public money. There's not some kind of OPSEU sign-up bench as you walk in the front door or something like that. They are professional as well. They're often commented on in Zoocheck. Those other visitors who aren't invited, who just show up and start to—some of these groups, CAZA and others, I think, are really out there and have a broader and different agenda. They're almost part of the PETA group. It's hard to express that. Cruelty, to some people, would be a dog with a collar on. Do you understand? It's the freedom of the animal.

The intent we support is the protection and the prevention of cruelty to animals, but then, when you start the interpretation of some of the bill, you see there's a bit of a political agenda here.

One of the other comments I had is on section 6—and this has been mentioned today. The minister's here, and I do respect that he is here. Section 6 should be looked at. There shouldn't be a proviso that everybody bows down to the organization in section 6, the society.

Also, who are these chief inspectors? Are they qualified? Do they have a degree in history and they're showing up at a zoo telling people—no. If they're a veterinarian, I can see that they're qualified and trained and meet standards, as any self-regulatory body would. Of course, they'd have public members on their advisory group. But the leadership, the chief inspectors, should certainly be veterinarians, I would think. But I'll leave that. Most of these details are to be worked out in regulation.

Section 6 is providing a lot of protection. Just briefly for the public, section 6 is where there are the most public complaints from people who love animals and want the right thing done. You wonder if this is tied to the long-standing disagreement between the OSPCA and the Toronto Humane Society.

In my own family, growing up, we had a dog. We lived on farms most of my life, and then when we were in the city, it wasn't as comfortable. We all had pets, whether it was a dog or a cat or a calf or a horse. In fact, I remember having a horse as a young person. Even now, my grandchildren love horses. I have one grandchild who has a dog, a guinea pig and a rabbit, I believe. It's almost like a small zoo.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, it's not a roadside zoo. It's a home, and they're well cared for.

I will say, though, that my son lives here in Toronto and has a lovely dog. He's a golden lab. His name is Wicklow. He's a beautiful dog, the most well-trained, beautifully behaved dog, but he does take care. They have a new child now, and he takes as much care. Animals never grow up. They are always dependent on having the attention and compassion or caring of the master or whoever. Hopefully, it's not a child that's being cruel, tugging the chain or perhaps playing roughly with the animal.

If someone was to see a child being rough with a pet, some neighbour could say, "That child's being cruel," and the inspector could show up and lay a charge. If you look in sections 11 or 12 here, the fines are pretty onerous—up to \$60,000. Watch your Ps and Qs if you're playing roughly with Fluffy the cat. You could end up not being able to afford university. I'm speaking to the pages now because many of them find this unusual.

This is on liability for the owners. There's a provision here for the fines in regulation, but it does state, "Offences." Here it says:

"Penalty—individuals

"(2) Every individual who commits an offence under clause (1)(a), (d) or (e) is liable on conviction to a fine of not more than \$1,000 or to imprisonment for a term of not more than 30 days, or to both.

"Same

"(3) Every individual who commits an offence under clause (1)(b) or (c) is liable on conviction to a fine of not more than \$60,000 or to imprisonment for a term of not more than two years," which would be a provincial offence.

I want to see the provisions and the regulations of, who's the checker, who's the person knocking on my door, saying, "You committed a violation"? That is not in here.

Section 11 goes on to state the standard of care and those kind of things, but they're all defined in section 22, which is the regulatory section. The regulatory section gives significant power to the minister. I'm going to read this, because this is where the trouble starts. "Clarity, openness, accountability"—these "transparency" words we hear from the McGuinty government all the time—it's saturated with regulations. This is where the trouble begins, not with the premise of protecting animals.

We're going to define in regulations such words as "wildlife" and "fish in the wild." A fish in an aquarium is not the same as a fish in the wild. The little goldfish? That's one thing. Hopefully you're taking care of it. If somebody comes in and says you're not, if the fish is floating in the tank, well, you could be in trouble. In that section, classes of animals will be described.

But in subsection 22(2):

"The minister responsible for the administration of this act may make regulations,...

"(b) prescribing standards of care for the purposes of section 11.1," which I mentioned earlier.

This is where the need for public hearings has been eminently established. I think we will hear from those who love and care for animals as part of their day-to-day life, perhaps their jobs and pursuit of happiness in life. Also, the enforcement issues from bylaw enforcement officers in the community, who will say, "Where are the resources for these new tools to go around and super-impose these rules?"

It could get into the height of a fence. What's the proper height for a fence so a pet can't jump over the fence? What types of pets would be allowed to be kept? Can you keep pets in an apartment? Is it appropriate to have a large dog in a condominium?

These are the working, everyday questions that need to be clarified if we're going to deal with this thing. I know that there are condominiums in Toronto where there are no pets. My mother-in-law loves pets and would love to have a cat, but she's not permitted.

These are issues that stakeholders will have the opportunity, with Bill 50, to come forward and point out to the public.

I've talked about my riding. I've talked about the three destinations. I want to mention one that sent me a letter. They're very concerned. This is Northwood Zoo. The operator there is Norman Phillips. The zookeeper is Anthony Vanzuilekom. I've talked to them and I'm visiting that destination at Northwood, which is just north of Port Perry. If anyone knows Highway 12, off 401, go up there.

There's another destination up there I want to visit as well that I haven't been able to contact yet. Again, they're protectors of animals. In some of these locations they often take animals that have been injured or rejected by a zoo because they're not healthy and nurse them back

to health through their own resources. I want to make sure that there's proper, due care and attention. One thing—that is, entering a premise without a warrant—is quite questionable. Who is coming on the premises? What are their qualifications? If there's some political appointment of Dalton McGuinty coming on my premises and arresting me or laying a charge and then I have to get a lawyer—these are intimidating things that we need to have clarified so that it is a matter of administration.

I'm going to mention in conclusion a very important and yet—in this section, as I said, in the definitions, section 22, there was a provision to talk about defining the classes of animals and exempting of persons.

But there's also a section in there, section 22(1)(b), and it says, “prescribing activities that constitute activities carried on in accordance with reasonable and generally accepted principles of agricultural”—wait a minute here. Animals and agriculture? Houston, we have a problem. You understand? Now, they say they're exempt. They'd better be exempt. I'm not convinced. When I've dealt with this government—not to mention names, but on general principles—they have broken more promises than they've kept. Always be leery. I need to have that.

I'm going to read this in respect to—this is from Zac Cohoon, who is a young professional farmer in my riding, a very widely respected family. He is writing to the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and here is what they say:

“On April 3, the Ontario government introduced Bill 50, amendments to the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) Act.

“The OFA and its partners have been following the development and progress of the amendments. While we do not condone cruelty towards any animal, be they livestock, pets or wildlife, we do believe that some of the proposed amendments require study and clarification, particularly in relation to their impact and/or application to agriculture.

“It is our understanding that second reading debate on Bill 50 will begin ... May 5th.

“We urge farmers to speak with their MPP and request that Bill 50 be sent to a legislative committee for public hearings following second reading.”

I'm fully in support of that—not just of Zac Cohoon, but of agriculture itself. Clarity and certainty. And it's not just the minister; the minister only gets to read the bill. It's all about the Premier, Dalton McGuinty, and can you trust him?

If I go back to the PETA argument, the goal here isn't just roadside zoos; the goal here is any animal in captivity. All you have to do is look at the science issues, the agricultural issues, veal calves and other issues: Look around at what you're doing.

I caution members on the government side to listen to your constituents. Put the provisions forward. We want to work with you. We want the prevention of cruelty to animals, for sure. And I ask for public hearings on this bill.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being very close to 5:45 p.m., this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1742.

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