



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

First Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 29 May 2008

Jeudi 29 mai 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

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*The House met at 0900.
Prayers.*

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. David Caplan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion regarding division of time for debate on the motion for third reading of Bill 80.

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

Hon. David Caplan: Thank you, Speaker. I move that the time available until 10:45 this morning be divided equally among the recognized parties to debate on the motion for third read of Bill 80, An Act to establish Algoma University and dissolve Algoma University College, following which the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the motion for third reading of Bill 80 without further debate or amendment.

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

Agreed to.

ALGOMA UNIVERSITY ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR L'UNIVERSITÉ ALGOMA

Mr. Milloy moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 80, An Act to establish Algoma University and to dissolve Algoma University College / Projet de loi 80, Loi portant création de l'Université Algoma et dissolution de l'Algoma University College.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. John Milloy: It's a pleasure to be here this morning to address this bill once again. We had an opportunity yesterday to participate in second reading debate and pass it. I just want to indicate at the outset that I'll be sharing my time with my colleague the member from Sault Ste. Marie, where Algoma University College is located, and he, of course, will want to speak at some length about the importance of this bill to his community.

I just plan to spend a minute this morning, before turning it over to my colleague, to really summarize what I had a chance to say yesterday, that in my mind this bill is really recognizing three things: first of all the excellence in education that takes place at Algoma University College. As members know, it has been in operation since 1964. It operates offering degrees from Laurentian University and in many ways has a degree of independ-

ence already. It has a board of governors and an administration which puts forward really an excellent program for students who go there. By taking this step, we'll be able to enhance the educational experience.

The second point is the special role that Algoma University College already plays in the north and, as an independent university, would play in northern Ontario, allowing students from the Sault Ste. Marie area and beyond in northern Ontario an opportunity to study closer to home, to pursue it at an outstanding undergraduate institution, receive their skills and stay in the north. I know President Ross was indicating the other day, very correctly, that she hopes they will have students from across the province and the country, and we certainly hope to see Algoma flourish. It still has that special role in the north in providing a place for those from northern Ontario.

The third point is its special role in terms of aboriginal education. As I had a chance to indicate yesterday, and I imagine my colleague from Sault Ste. Marie will go into it in some detail, right now at Algoma University College, 20% of the students are First Nations. It has a very, very special link with the First Nations community in the area and again will serve as a bit of a beacon in northern Ontario for First Nations education; indeed, if members look at the bill, it's one of the special missions going forward.

I am absolutely delighted that this is my first piece of legislation as a minister. I want to congratulate the administration at Algoma University College. I also want to make reference to Laurentian University, which has played such an important role in Algoma's life and is very supportive of this move. I also want to congratulate the community of Sault Ste. Marie, which came out in force. I had a chance to mention yesterday a delegation here in the gallery as well as a large delegation which was joined by TV link in Sault Ste. Marie itself, and they expressed their appreciation for this. I want to pay a tribute to the local MPP, David Oraziotti, as well as Mike Brown, from the area around it, and all the northern members, who have been supportive of this. Finally, I do want to pay tribute to my colleagues in the opposition who have been supportive of this bill and have worked co-operatively to have it go through. I think it's an excellent symbol, when we can all come together for a good piece of legislation and work to see it passed in an expedited manner.

With that, I urge all members to support this bill. I think it takes another important step in ensuring excellence in post-secondary education in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. David Oraziatti: This is a very exciting bill for our community and for Algoma University College and their community. First of all, I have, obviously, a long list of individuals to thank and congratulate. Of course, you run the risk of not including everybody, but we're going to give it an attempt here anyway, because I think some of these individuals certainly deserve some recognition for the very, very important role that they have played in helping us arrive at this particular point. I have some time this morning, and I do want to be able to speak a little bit about the importance of the institution to our community, to what this bill means to our community, as well as the important role that the First Nations play in Algoma University College, and a little bit about the history of the institution and how we've arrived at this point.

First of all, I can't say enough about the Premier's leadership on this. This is very, very important to the community and it's not every day that we move forward with legislation that has the effect of creating a new university in the province of Ontario. It is indeed historic. The Premier has been behind this from day one, so I want to thank him very much for his support. I also want to thank Minister Bentley, who came up in June 2007 and met with the university community and announced that we would be moving forward with legislation for independence. And today we're here speaking to Bill 80 in third reading. It's been a fairly quick week.

0910

I will also want to congratulate my colleagues across the floor here, who have been supportive as well. I have heard nothing but positive comments from them. I know the Conservatives and the NDP have both been supportive of this, so I want to thank them for that as well.

Minister Milloy and his political and ministry staff have been exceptional in their support for Algoma University. I want to congratulate them and thank them very much on behalf of our community, and our school community, for the very important role that they have played in moving the legislation along this quickly.

The school community has worked very hard. I should tell you that, having had the privilege of serving as a board of governors' member at Algoma University College in 2000 as a second-term city councillor and being a part of the charter steering committee for independence at Algoma University College, this is something that has been supported for some time. It has seen a somewhat long history.

In 1992, the school made it public that they wanted to be an independent university, and they've had challenges in getting there. But today is obviously a very proud day for the institution and for our community.

There are a great number of individuals who have worked very hard at Algoma University College in preparation for this and are very hopeful, obviously, that this bill will pass: Dr. Celia Ross, the president of Algoma University College; the academic dean, Dr. Arthur

Perlini, the chair of the board; Bud Wildman, who is no stranger to this place—he was a member here in the Legislature for some 24 or 25 years—as well as all of the staff. There are a lot of unsung heroes at Algoma University College who really support this move and care about the future of their institution.

We're going to go over just a couple of important points about the college. The college was established in 1964 as an affiliate college of Laurentian University and currently has about 1,200 students. This is not a college that has been around for five, 10 or even 20 years; this college has a very long history in the province of Ontario, and they're ready for independence. They've reached a level of maturity and critical mass, I would say, that allows for a very smooth and productive transition as an independent university in northern Ontario.

Algoma University College specializes in undergraduate liberal arts and sciences education. Its location and historical roots provide the basis for the institution's distinctive awareness and commitment to northern Ontario and native communities in the region.

Algoma's enrolment has been growing significantly over the last number of years, certainly over the term of our government. Everyone recalls the double cohort that sent many students out of the high school system into colleges and universities across the province in significant numbers. They've grown by about 17% in the last five to six years.

The school currently has its own board of governors and its own senate, but they receive all approval for their programs from Laurentian University. Graduating students from Algoma University College currently see "Laurentian University" on their degrees. That would obviously change if this bill is passed.

I also want to thank Judith Woodsworth, the president of Laurentian University, for her support in moving forward. Laurentian has been very co-operative, very supportive, and knows that this is important for Algoma University. In a competitive age, where universities and colleges are vying for programs and for students, I think it is very commendable of Laurentian, to say "We fully endorse and support the direction that the province wants to go in with the university college, as well as the school community."

You should also know that Algoma offers degrees in over 30 programs, including programs like computer science, business administration, biology, chemistry, geography, geology, community, economic and social development.

As well, under our government, we have approved a master's in gaming technology at Algoma University College. It's the only program like it in the country. It's a very important program. I had an opportunity last year to visit the school with Minister Bentley and meet some of the students who were enrolled in this program. It's not a large group of students, but it's a very unique program that is based on the knowledge economy and has an extremely high job placement rate. The students were from all over the world; there were students from Brazil, China, Europe, the United States and throughout Canada.

I was very impressed by Algoma's ability to attract students from different countries to this program. I know that when I was on the board, Krista Yetman was out doing recruitment in southeast Asia and different parts of the world to try to bring students to Algoma University College. They have a significant presence of international students, and I know they're continuing to work to enhance the international presence at the school. That's certainly very commendable.

If the legislation passes, it would make Algoma University the north's fourth independent university. I think it's important that we take a few minutes to look at the history of the institution so we can understand how we've arrived at this point. As I said, I think Algoma is frankly quite ready for independence and has been for a number of years.

"The desire to establish an undergraduate liberal arts college in Sault Ste. Marie originated as a broad citizen movement in the 1950s. In October of 1964, Algoma College Association was incorporated by letters patent through the province of Ontario. One year later, Algoma College was established as a non-sectarian institution affiliated with Laurentian University.

"In September of 1967, Algoma College opened its doors to students. Its program for full-time students was limited to the first year of the B.A. and B.Sc. degrees. In part-time studies, the college was permitted to offer the full-time B.A. program. In the early years, part-time enrolment expanded rapidly to over 1,000 students by 1969-70." The school was going strong.

"The strong community support that led to the founding of the college continued during the early years of its" ongoing work and "development. The citizens of Sault Ste Marie, through their municipal government, provided major assistance to the college in the form of capital and operating funds. In addition, local industries, businesses, service clubs and individuals established a scholarship program for students attending the college."

This is a deeply entrenched institution in our community, and our community is passionate about it and the region is passionate about it. I see my colleague sitting over here, the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, who is a long-standing member of this Legislature and whose communities in Algoma-Manitoulin greatly support, and whose young people greatly support, Algoma University College. I know he has worked very hard as well to support the legislation today, and I want to thank him for his work. I should add that one of his daughters had the opportunity to go to Algoma University and has recently graduated—

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Paula.

Mr. David Orazietti: —Paula, he's telling me. He's quite proud of that experience, and I think she's still in Sault Ste. Marie.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Isn't she getting married soon?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: She just got married two weeks ago in Sault Ste. Marie.

Mr. David Orazietti: She just got married two weeks ago in Sault Ste. Marie. I think the member is more proud of that.

Applause.

Mr. David Orazietti: The year 1971 marked a great turning point in the college's history with respect to both program and facilities. In recognition of the rapid process of growth of the college, the department of university affairs at the time authorized the expansion of full-time in arts to the full three years. In September 1971, they added the second year and in 1972 they added the third year of programming. "In addition, in September 1971, the college was relocated to its own campus. The college acquired by lease Shingwauk Hall and the Shingwauk site, including 53 acres of land fronting on the St. Marys River. Extensive renovations were completed to Shingwauk Hall," and temporary buildings were erected to provide a science laboratory, music conservatory, language laboratory, office and classroom facilities.

In 1973, there was the additional construction of the library wing. "In 1975, with the assistance of a grant from the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, the college purchased Shingwauk Hall and 37 acres of land surrounding the buildings. In 1989, the Arthur A. Wishart Library was opened and other renovations were completed." Some of you may remember the name Arthur Wishart, from my community of Sault Ste. Marie. He was a former Attorney General, and the Arthur Wishart Act was something that he was probably most remembered by. He was certainly well respected in our community, and very fittingly, a library wing was opened in his name.

0920

"In 1992, the George Leach Centre was opened for athletics and recreation." The 39,000-square-foot George Leach Centre provides a wide range of facilities. The centre's gymnasium features three regulation court surfaces that can accommodate all types of sports: badminton, basketball, volleyball and tennis. I know the folks at Algoma University College are very proud of their athletic centre and it means a lot to the community. It's also available not only for students, but for community use. They can play indoor tennis there in the winter months. Having gone through the winter we just went through, certainly in northern Ontario, I know it was well used.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Is it over?

Mr. David Orazietti: I think it is over.

A student residence was completed and occupied in September 1995, with an additional building opened in September 2001. "With the completion of this construction, Algoma's facilities are as modern as any in the province."

The university is sensitive to the educational needs of the community and certainly responds to these needs. I want to congratulate Algoma University on their very active engagement of students in the Sault Ste. Marie area as well as throughout the Algoma region, who are tremendous supporters of the school. The Arthur Wishart Library is also accessible for public use, as is the George Leach Centre. Many students, faculty and staff lend their knowledge and actively support many community organizations, from government and research, to cultural agen-

cies who participate and are actively involved at the university. Obviously, independence would enhance this role in the community.

I want to spend a couple of minutes speaking about the role of the First Nations at the school. The aboriginal component at AUC is alive and well and very strong at the school. In fact, 20% of the enrolment at Algoma University College is First Nations, and it's expected to grow. That is a credit to those folks working at the college, and the First Nation community representatives who are very actively engaging First Nations in the region to undertake post-secondary education and training, knowing how important it is for all of us.

I know the First Nations folks are very progressive in their thinking about the programs that they want to see offered at the college and that they are currently offering. Algoma currently offers unique programs in Anishnawbe and Ojibwa culture, history and language, including the only B.A. program in the Ojibwa language anywhere. Again, Algoma does considerable outreach with its First Nations.

The Shingwauk Education Trust and the historic relationship of the First Nations people with Algoma University is incredibly important to the school. The trust has the ultimate goal of establishing the first native university in Ontario, coexisting with Algoma, and they view Algoma's independence as a positive step in that direction. I can certainly recall comments by National Grand Chief Phil Fontaine at Algoma University College around First Nations education and the importance of educating and engaging First Nations peoples, and having them very involved in the post-secondary education experience, to give them the skills and education they need to participate in today's knowledge-based economy.

They recognize that, their leaders recognized that, and they are working well together at Algoma University College to ensure that this goal is met. The Shingwauk Education Trust was founded based on a vision of an Ojibwa chief, Chief Shingwauk, in 1875. His vision was to create what was referred to as a "teaching wigwam," with an overall goal of providing education to Anishnawbek students.

The goals of the trust have not changed since the Shingwauk vision in 1875, and the organization continues to strive to meet the goals for the success of the Shingwauk University Centre of Excellence for Indigenous Studies. They have a number of goals. I just want to mention a few of these here, because they are very important to the First Nations community at the college. They want to be able to provide opportunities for educational development of Anishnawbe people and other students of native heritage, to deliver educational, social, cultural and economic development programs designed to advance the goals of aboriginal people in the province of Ontario and to initiate co-operative education programs of cross-cultural education between Anishnawbe people and others.

Their mission statement: The organization would like to see the creation of the Shingwauk University Centre of

Excellence and to see the centre become a post-secondary educational institute with the seven Anishnawbek First Nations in Sault Ste. Marie, dedicated to the vision of Chief Shingwauk and the original mandate under the site and guise of the Shingwauk trust.

They strive to deliver holistic learning to advance Anishnawbe people and other students of native heritage. The Shingwauk University Centre of Excellence for Indigenous Studies will be committed to fulfilling the Shingwauk Education Trust mandate to carry on educational programs for Anishnawbe people and other students of native heritage in order to increase knowledge respecting teaching methods, teaching skills and teaching aids through research, education, and publication and distribution of books, papers, reports and other documents that are relevant to First Nation peoples.

The Shingwauk Education Trust has a legacy to carry on the vision of one man who had the insight to look at an important way to meet the needs of his people, to ensure that the children were able to develop the capacities to develop their own land and resources. The trust believes that as native peoples have evolved from hunters and gatherers to the agricultural age and the industrial age, they recognize that they are now in a knowledge age where their advancement through post-secondary education is key to their success, and I think we probably all agree. They have stated that the tool needed to move from the industrial age to the knowledge age is the medium of post-secondary education.

In recent years, the trust has noted that Statistics Canada reported that from 1901 to 2001, the aboriginal ancestry population increased tenfold while the total population of Canada rose by a factor of six. They recognize that many corporations have been made aware that the fastest-growing population is the Anishnawbe people of Canada and that they will play a major role in the workforce of tomorrow. It's very important that we encourage and support the goals of First Nations to gain post-secondary education and the skills and training they need to be successful participants.

The trust is forging ahead to develop a First-Nation-owned, managed and controlled education institute with relevant curriculum and course content. They seek to develop programs to meet the needs of First Nation communities in the areas of leadership, administration, policy development and analysis and financial accountability, and to assist with the implementation of new national and international government initiatives.

I want to just read very briefly here. Here's what Darrell Boissoneau, who is the president of the Shingwauk trust, said in a letter in reference to the introduction of the legislation this week:

"On behalf of the board of the Shingwauk Education Trust we want to extend our congratulations on achieving legislative support" for independence for Algoma University.

"We believe that an independent post-secondary institution situated here in Sault Ste. Marie on lands that are

set aside for Anishnawbe education will be of significant importance for student needs and excellence.

"I wish to convey the sentiments of Chief Lyle Sayers from the Garden River First Nation"—my understanding is that Lyle Sayers is a descendent of Chief Shingwauk, who is now the chief of Garden River First Nation and who completely endorses this legislation and supports the independence of Algoma University College—"and myself that the success of our efforts are linked to the common understandings of the covenant and that also requires Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig to achieve ministerial consent as soon as possible. In this regard we look to your continued support for Shingwauk's vision to take its rightful place."

I really want to thank Darrell Boissoneau, who is the president of the Shingwauk trust, as well as Chief Lyle Sayers of the Garden River First Nation, for their wholehearted endorsement of this legislation. This is a very significant step in helping the institution move forward.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the work of a Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities from a number of years ago. The member from Vaughan, Greg Sorbara, was, as you know, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities some time ago.

0930

I was related a story by an individual who was the chair of the board at Algoma University. His name was Geri Nori. He passed away some time ago, but before he did, he told me about his time at Algoma University College as the chair of the board and how important provincial support was to them. He told me that at one point the school was in debt around \$1 million or \$1.5 million, I think it was. Back in the 1980s, that was a little more than it is today, but it was significant for a university college of this size.

Geri Nori was a well-known lawyer in our community. He actually practised law at the Wishart firm in Sault Ste. Marie. Wishart was a former Attorney General here at Queen's Park. Geri told me about a discussion with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. He was asked to come, with the president, to Toronto and meet with them around their circumstances. He anticipated at the time that Algoma University College was in fact going to be closed, that there wasn't going to be a future for Algoma University College and that the opportunity for young people in our community to gain a post-secondary education locally was not going to be there any longer. Geri was very impressed, when he had the opportunity to sit down with Minister Sorbara at the time, that they were going to find a way to meet their financial commitments and obligations despite the struggles of the school at that time. Certainly, their future was very much in question.

I asked the former minister about that conversation and I said, "Here's what Geri Nori from Sault Ste. Marie told me about this. What do you remember about this? It sounds like it was a very important decision that was made and your support was instrumental in ensuring that Algoma University College remained open in Sault Ste.

Marie." He said to me that when he was the minister he had travelled to British Columbia for some type of meeting. A small community college was closed in a community in BC and he remembers the circumstances around that, how unfortunate that was and the lack of opportunity that resulted from that. He came back here and certainly did not want to see that happen to any school in Ontario.

I want to thank Greg Sorbara who, in recognition, was made an honorary member of Algoma University College in 2000. In 2005, Greg Sorbara was part of a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the ICT building, the Information Communication and Technology building, at Algoma University College, which is now the Great West Life Amphitheatre, a 32,000-square-foot facility on campus—very fitting. In a speech in Thunder Bay, he congratulated Algoma University and said it was, according to him, his favourite university campus in Ontario. I want to thank him for his historic support of the university. It was very fitting to have some of the information from the previous board members at Algoma University College in recognition of a contribution by the Peterson government of the day in supporting and ensuring that Algoma University College remained open.

It was also quite fitting that just this past week Minister Milloy and I had the opportunity, with Dr. Ross and Bud Wildman, to participate in a live video-link conference from the Great West Life Amphitheatre. The theatre at the university was packed, there was standing room only, and through a live video link we were able to talk a bit about the importance of this legislation and celebrate that together with the Algoma University community. I did want to mention that, because it was instrumental and very important in terms of the school remaining open.

Our government very clearly recognizes that a degree-granting charter would not only strengthen Algoma University College but would also have a very significant positive impact on our community's economic, cultural and social landscape. The projected enrolment at the school is expected to double to around 3,000 students as they continue to attract students from throughout Ontario and all over the world. Degrees would be granted under Algoma University's name rather than under Laurentian's name and would provide for more autonomy at Algoma to pursue its own aspirations in programming to better address the needs in the community and throughout the region, in partnership with the First Nation peoples of the province and in the region—again, a long history, established in 1964, I think. Algoma has reached that level of maturity and independence on its own.

Through a legislative process here, I'm very hopeful that the bill will pass. Again, I want to recognize the opposition parties and members, and to thank them for their support in helping to move this process along at a little more rapid pace. I know it's greatly appreciated by the community and by the institution.

I want to just read very briefly what Dr. Ross had to say about the importance of the legislation being introduced: "Algoma University College is delighted. The

introduction of the charter legislation and the passing of the first reading in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario today” is a giant step toward the launching of a new university. “Algoma U students are future leaders” who will “use their education” earned here “to transform their communities. We will be the university for students who want innovative, community-based, hands-on programs in technology, science, business and liberal arts.”

So Dr. Ross is certainly very excited about the university’s opportunity to become independent. I know that our mayor and council have supported this initiative as well. Council supported a \$250,000 contribution toward the Information and Communication Technology Centre that was built at Algoma University College and opened a number of years ago. As well, they’ve recently supported independence with another \$200,000 contribution. The mayor was part of the video conference and spoke very glowingly about the importance of this and about council’s commitment to it.

I want to thank Mayor Rowsell and members of city council in Sault Ste. Marie for their ongoing support and endorsement. Jamie Caicco, who is a councillor in ward one, is the current member from council on the university board. I know he has been very supportive of it as well. Brady Irwin, who is vice-chair of the board, was able to participate in the video link and actually helped to host that event as we, I think for the first time at Algoma University—I’m not sure whether that was the first time we were able to do that at the media studio; I think they had to get some equipment to make that happen. I want to thank them for all their support as well.

As members of the House know, we have made significant improvements in post-secondary education over our term in government. I want to congratulate Minister Milloy on his ongoing leadership when it comes to post-secondary enrolment opportunities, funding and support. We restored grants for students; we have 100,000 more students in our colleges and universities today than we did when we came to government; and we have doubled funding available for student aid to \$1.5 billion—very significant increases and support.

We froze tuition for the first time in the province’s history, until we could find the resources to ensure that we move forward in a way that is manageable and affordable for students. I’m very pleased with the support our government has shown for post-secondary institutions. Certainly in my community, Sault College has been a beneficiary of our government, as has Algoma University College.

Certainly this is a historic opportunity for Algoma University College. I am very pleased and so supportive of this legislation. Again, I really want to thank Premier McGuinty, members of cabinet, our caucus and Minister Milloy for their support. Without their support this wouldn’t happen.

It’s not every day that this happens. The school indicated in 1992 that they wanted to be independent. There were other opportunities to make that occur, and it didn’t happen. We’re here today to get that job done, that very

important work of moving Algoma University College forward to Algoma University.

I think it’s an incredible opportunity, not only for students in Sault Ste. Marie, throughout the district of Algoma and the province, but beyond. I know that the officials at Algoma University College will do a fantastic job of moving forward with Algoma University if the legislation passes.

0940

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I rise to make a few brief comments about this bill.

I’d also like to congratulate the member for Algoma-Manitoulin on the marriage of his daughter and on her graduation. Can grandchildren be far behind?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Another daughter—in two weeks.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Two weeks?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: A different daughter.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: We’ll make that point clear: It’s a different daughter.

Interjection.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: This will be the fourth grandchild. That’s a great landmark. As we pass through this life, grandchildren are one of the joys we all will hopefully enjoy eventually. Personally, I have 13 grandchildren, and they keep me very busy, especially at Christmastime and birthday time.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It’s a huge issue.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It’s a huge issue: grandchildren and the joy they bring into the lives of seniors in this province.

Secondly, I’d like to congratulate the government on bringing forward this bill to convert Algoma University College into a university. It’s important that these educational facilities are there for our future. Ontario has one of the great bases for educating college and university students. Our college system and the expansion of our university system began in the 1960s under former Premier Bill Davis, when he was education minister—a Conservative government, I might add. We grew and expanded our college system and our university system, so that Ontario is perhaps the most well educated jurisdiction in North America. That puts us in a very enviable position to be able to take advantage of wherever the world economy and world business takes us. Having a well-educated population gives us the flexibility to take advantage of where we might go in the future.

I would also put an oar in the water for the expansion of Wilfrid Laurier University, which is currently looking at opening a campus in Milton, which is the fastest-growing community in all of Canada and will continue to be for some time in the future. A large university site—I think it’s 150 acres—is hopefully going to be created there if this government sees fit to do some funding in that process. We look forward to that coming to fruition as well.

I’m very pleased to see that the new university will have an economic development program within it. That’s very important, because the people of the north, the peo-

ple of Algoma and indeed the people of Ontario should understand that economic development is extremely important in the future of the province. In fact, if this government had understood the importance of economic development, we might not be having the difficulties we're seeing in the manufacturing industry today.

It would seem that this government, in their search for the future in Ontario, has decided that the future of Ontario is based on biotechnology, information technology and digital information—going down that path—which sounds all very well. It's very futuristic; those are the industries of the future. That is what this government has decided, and I take issue with that, because I think that in a well-rounded economy there are many different facets, not just two.

Everything the government seems to be doing is moving down the road toward digital information, biotechnology, information technology and all the futuristic jobs they would bring. I think the theory—of course, in a university you would learn a lot about theory and economic development—that leads the government in that direction is that information is the future and education is the key. Of course, it's focused on two important assumptions. One of those two assumptions is that the price of energy remains low enough in order to ship manufactured products around the world. In an economic development program at the university, you might look for other options and you might look for other opportunities, because perhaps the energy prices in this world are not going to remain as low in the future as they have been. For instance, we're seeing today that the price of a barrel of oil is moving through \$130. A year and a half ago, it was \$40 a barrel. It would seem to me that shipping manufactured products around the world while our manufacturing industry goes through a demise may not take place. Perhaps the death of our manufacturing industry in this province, which the government seems to have accepted, is a little premature.

One of the other key assumptions is that the borders around the world will remain open to trade. Something that we have seen just recently, especially since 9/11, is borders that are far more difficult to cross. Therefore, it would seem to me that the two assumptions that the government is working on have some serious problems associated with them, in that we may not be going in the direction that the government's philosophies perhaps would suggest that the province should be going.

High energy prices, of course, are going to cause a flip-flop in the way the world trades goods. It seems to me that shipping automobiles from China and washing machines and refrigerators from the Orient is very expensive. As energy prices increase, it becomes more expensive and we become more dependent on those items as our manufacturing industry disappears. However, if we look at digital information and information technology, which the economic development part of Algoma University will be teaching, I'm sure—what that would say is that it's far cheaper to ship information technology from the Orient and from India than it is to

ship refrigerators and automobiles. So the flip-flop of what we expect to happen in the future may not happen at all. The flip-flop is that we may be set with manufacturing being the main industry in Ontario in the future, while information technology, biotechnology and all those things that are easily transported around the world become part and parcel of development in the Asian theatre. Those are some thoughts that we might have concerning economic development.

One of the problems that we see here is that when governments make decisions as to what direction a province or a jurisdiction may take, it's extremely dangerous because that government is quite often wrong in their assumptions. Who would have believed a year and a half ago that we'd be looking at \$130 for a barrel of oil, and the consequences that the shipping costs and the disruption of manufacturing sources around the world would be having on us today? Those kinds of things are not necessarily predictable. I think a government's main thrust should be—in economic development and in the care of the provincial economy—to ensure that we have as many options open to us in the future as is humanly possible, making sure that we have the ability to manufacture, we have the ability to be involved in biotechnology, that we have the ability to be involved in information technology and digital information, to have the ability to have a strong agricultural unit, to have the ability to have a strong tourism industry and to have the ability to be in as many different sectors as we can possibly be. We do that through education, through the expansion of universities—such as we're debating here today—and we do that through good economic policy and tax bases that a jurisdiction can offer to industry around the world, so that they can come into this province and be competitive with other industries around the world, rather than a government trying to guide the direction that a province should go in. I consider that to be an extremely dangerous process. Why? Because so often in the past, when governments have tried to do that, they've been wrong. You can look around the world and see examples of government-led economies that have failed and are in poverty today, where they had opportunities in the past.

0950

Government choosing various industries is something that has led to failure in many different areas. I know that in the granting of monies to industry, for instance, this government has given out huge amounts of money to the automobile industry to encourage them to stay in Ontario. They've given money out to the Big Three—Ford, Chrysler and General Motors. Precious little money has been given out to the foreign car companies that have come here and are assembling or manufacturing cars in this country; however, those car companies are increasing in size, and they're increasing their market share. Foreign companies are manufacturing more and more automobiles, and hiring more and more people, while the traditional automobile industry in this country is shrinking. That's a very dangerous situation to be in. When the government inserts themselves into that marketplace,

they do so at great folly; they are supporting companies that may not be here in the future because of their inefficient and traditional ways of doing business. They can't seem to break out of the mould of doing business in the same way today as they've done it in the past.

I thank you for allowing me these comments that have perhaps strayed a little bit from the motion at hand. However, education in this province is extremely important. It is something that is going to dictate our future and should provide for the well-being of our children and grandchildren, which we started out talking about today. I look forward to further debate and to seeing this bill pass, and to this university coming into place. I also look forward to the university coming into place in Milton, as we move down the road in that debate as well.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm happy to rise and speak to Bill 80. Welcome, citizens of Ontario, to the parliamentary channel. It's not yet 10 o'clock in the morning. I'm hoping and assuming that you've had your espresso or your regular coffee, and that those of you who like tea have had your tea and that you're steady, ready, willing and happy to listen to the debates in this Legislature—at 9 o'clock in the morning, courtesy of the House leader of the Liberal Party, the Premier and the whiz kids in the Liberal Party. I'm assuming that most of you are at home and not golfing, but if you're golfing, you might be able to catch it later. It's not a big deal.

This is one of those rare opportunities where we get to co-operate with the government and collaborate from time to time. It's a good thing. I was happy to hear the history from the member for Sault Ste. Marie, and I was happy to have respite from the usual oppositional kind of role we play—until the last two or three minutes when he started praising his government about what it does, and then I thought, "Oh, my God. He's provoking me." Right? Because here I am trying to be so nice and trying to collaborate with the government, and then he spoils the 35-, 40-minute speech with what the government is doing. So I asked myself, "Shall I be provoked by that, or shall I simply try to maintain my composure and be nice and avoid that," because this is clearly an occasion to celebrate. It's a bill that speaks to the possibility of a promising new post-secondary education opportunity in this province, and we should be celebrating that.

The member from Sault Ste. Marie gave so much history that makes so many of my comments redundant, but he does make a good point about what Algoma University College does that is unique to education in the north. It's a point that I wanted to point out but I'm glad to repeat it for emphasis, and that is that the school has a special focus on serving aboriginal students and that they offer a BA program in the Ojibwa language. As many of you know, aboriginal people have virtually lost their languages across Canada, which in my view is a tragedy. It's something we should be promoting, supporting. Where many of us think of aboriginal people, of First Nations people, as a nation, they ought to have that privilege and the right to their own language. When you have Algoma University College currently having a BA

in the Ojibwa language, it's a big deal and it's something that should be honoured by those of us who take pride in such things. It is something they're doing that is a unique program and a learning opportunity for many aboriginal kids in the north, and that's something I wanted to make mention of.

It's an opportunity for me to briefly say, as I work with the government on this, that I had the honour of meeting with Bud Wildman, as the chair of the board, and Celia Ross a couple of years ago. I saw the university and some of its programs and was a witness to some of the programming and environment that the university offered. I wanted to remind some of the members in the Legislature about what he told me, because in 1999, their board made a commitment to operating in the black, to steady expansion, to further development of their partnership with the Anishnawbe community and to moving toward independence.

They opened discussions with SET, which is the Shingwauk Education Trust, and established a joint working group of representatives of SET and the Algoma University College to explore avenues of co-operation and to map out directions for the future post-secondary education at the Shingwauk site, especially how they could work collaboratively to bring Shingwauk's vision to fruition. He reminded me about the difficulties and the relationships to be worked out on all sides for all of them: the Algoma University College board, the administration, the senate, faculty, staff, students, alumni, SET, GRFN, Batchewana First Nation and other First Nations organizations, CSAA and the wider community of Sault Ste. Marie and Algoma district.

It's a reminder about how long the process takes from when the discussion begins to the final bill that is before us, that there were difficulties, disagreements that had to be worked out, and many had to be involved in that process. For that, I thank all of the participants. Obviously for my part, I thank Bud Wildman, the chair of Algoma University, and the dean, Celia Ross, for their efforts and their work over the years. I know that the government members smile when I thank Bud Wildman in particular, but he has been the chair for many years.

Hon. George Smitherman: What was that name again?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Bud Wildman. He has been the chair of the board for many years, since 1999. The government members have already thanked themselves and thanked us too, and I already said I'm happy to collaborate with the government on this bill, so we are all in this together. This is true.

I wanted to remind the folks that a covenant was signed in a very impressive and emotional ceremony at the GRFN by Grand Chief Phil Fontaine of the Assembly of First Nations, SET president Darrell Boissoneau and Bud Wildman, who was representing the AUC board, before representatives of residential school survivors, national and Ontario aboriginal organizations, members of the Batchewana First Nation, the GRFN and the AUC community in Sault Ste. Marie. It was an impressive ceremony where this covenant was signed.

The work has been done. There are obviously many challenges they will be facing and some of those challenges will be the work to reach out, to recruit many other students across Ontario and Canada, which I'm convinced they will do and they will do successfully. Many other challenges we'll have will have to do with funding. We are hopeful, based on the comments made by the member for Sault Ste. Marie, by the minister himself, that whatever funding is necessary for this university to work will be provided, because if it is not provided, they will be in difficulties. That's a challenge they face and I'm hoping it's not a challenge the government will face in providing the support. If the support does come, then this university has a lot to be proud of, and the government too, because, after all, it's their bill. They can take credit for all of the years of work done by so many, including themselves, presumably, based on what I hear. So we can all, in the end, take credit.

I'm hoping that the support will be there, and with that, I end my remarks and congratulate all who have been involved in bringing this bill forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Seeing none, Mr. Milloy has moved third reading of Bill 80. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Hon. David Caplan: I seek consent for the House to recess until 10:45 a.m.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Agreed? Agreed. We're recessed until question period.

The House recessed from 1002 to 1045.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning, members. Good morning, guests.

On behalf of the member from London North Centre: in the east members' gallery, we'd like to welcome Janet Collins and Celia MacDonald.

On behalf of the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek: in the west members' gallery, John Hall from Kamloops, BC; Karen Cerniuk from Kamloops, BC; and Larry Bancroft from Kamloops, BC. They're here visiting the Canadian Labour Congress convention.

On behalf of the member from Brampton–Springdale: Richard Boyes, president of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs and the Oakville Fire Chief; and Chris McDonough, president of the Ontario Municipal Fire Prevention Officers Association and fire prevention officer of the town of Georgina.

On behalf of page Dina Gang: her mother, Yaffa Gang, and her father, Barry Gang, in the west members' gallery.

On behalf of the member from Richmond Hill are a number of guests joining us today: Faheem Khan, Khalid

Qureshi, Lal Khan Malik, Naseem Mahdi, Abdul Aziz Khalifa, Kaleem Malik, Aslam Daud, Asif Khan, Farhan Khokhar, Nasir Khan, Ashraf Sial, Tanya Khan, Qudsia Hamid and Amtul Rafiq Zafar.

On behalf of the member from Sarnia–Lambton, in the west members' gallery: Ron and Jean Bell, Jim and Nancy Hibbert, Larry and Sharon Watson, Ken and Christine Jaques, Bruce and Marg Gray, Gary and Dolores McGregor, Rick and Shirley Redmond, Jim and Bev Maitland—hi, Jim and Bev; friends of mine—Gerald and Edith Bailey, Mike Watson, Bill Allingham, Gord and Bernice Whiting, and Ernie Williams.

As well, I'd like to ask all members on behalf of the Speaker to welcome in the Speaker's gallery today a delegation from the Republic of Latvia, led by His Excellency Gundars Daudze, the Chairman of the Parliament. Accompanying the delegation is His Excellency Margers Krams, ambassador of the Republic of Latvia to Canada. Please join me in welcoming them and our other guests as well. Welcome today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is to the Minister of Health. For several years now, you have been travelling the province and touting your interest in building public confidence in Ontario's health system. However, your actions in recent weeks—in fact, your actions during the term of your office—when it comes to dealing with infectious diseases such as *C. difficile* indicate that there is tremendous doubt and concern in the minds of the public, rather than any confidence whatsoever. I ask you today, are you prepared to restore public confidence in our health care system and implement an investigation into *C. difficile*?

Hon. George Smitherman: The matter of *C. difficile*, amongst other infectious diseases, is a substantial matter for the health care system. I just don't tend to agree entirely with the premise of the honourable member's question, which places all of the expectations of the public on the back of the minister at Queen's Park.

We share in a health care system that has not performed as well as it can. On that, everybody would agree. I agree that this is a matter of confidence, most certainly. I think that the actions that have been taken, which have been responded to positively by the health care system and especially the hospital sector, are a very big advantage for patient safety initiatives in Ontario. I have confidence that Dr. Baker can lead Ontarians forward in a way—the health care system and patients alike—that enhances the requisite confidence in our public health care system. Those are the steps we're focused on.

1050

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Despite the warning you got when the *C. difficile* outbreak occurred in Quebec, despite

the recommendations of the Canadian Medical Association to develop an outbreak plan and to deal with it, and certainly despite what happened in the Soo, you have failed to protect people in the province of Ontario. As Minister of Health, you are accountable to protect the health of the people.

I ask you again, are you prepared to instigate a public inquiry now, an investigation into what happened, in order that we can restore public confidence in Ontario's health system, which is currently sadly lacking?

Hon. George Smitherman: I would say, just on the matter of confidence, that the honourable member is not the only arbiter of this kind of circumstance. Indeed, 650,000 more people in Ontario have access to a family physician. This is an ingredient of confidence in our health care system, and I don't think it's appropriate for the honourable member to conclude that only one matter is the determinant.

I know that we can do better and we have to do better. Where the honourable member is a little bit off base is when she speaks about circumstances in Quebec as if that is a warning to only one individual and that the CEOs of hospitals that have experienced challenges with *C. difficile*, as an example, or the chiefs of staff or the workers in those environments don't share the health system obligation to do our very best for our patients. I know that we can do better. We have all the opportunity, through the investigation that has been done by the coroner, through the work that's been done by doctors like Dr. Gardam, to implement their best advice and to have immediate effects for patients. That's what I'm—

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: The member seems to forget that this is a very tragic and very sad situation and that these deaths were preventable. I believe that we owe it to the people whose family members have passed away and to the people who are going into our hospitals to ensure that we have all of the information as to what happened and why.

Yesterday you indicated that we were going to do reporting, but what you didn't indicate was the plan to ensure there are no more of these preventable deaths. That's why I call upon you again, Minister. Will you commit to an investigation, an inquiry, into *C. difficile* in order to ensure that we know why this happened and make sure that no other family has to suffer in the future?

Hon. George Smitherman: I note that even your staff are clapping on the sidelines.

I think that the honourable member and I have disagreement on one point. It's not that anyone questions that these are challenging circumstances and tragic events for families and communities. It's not that there aren't lessons that can be applied, but it is that we have the lessons at hand. The honourable member's approach is to take a few years, appoint some lawyers and spend a lot of resources on these considerations. Ours is much more clearly to put in the hands of Dr. Michael Baker, an accomplished leader in this field, the capacity to begin

implementation of strategies that can have effect much more immediately.

I agree with the honourable member. This is a very challenging circumstance. It's a health care system circumstance that requires a response across the breadth of health care. We're going to lead that, and Dr. Michael Baker is going to be a very effective advocate on behalf of patient safety in the province of Ontario. Our strategy is about immediate benefit.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Minister, you have had almost five years to lead and demonstrate that you are prepared to tackle issues such as *C. difficile*. You had the ability to restore public confidence, and you haven't done so. Right now, there's doubt and concern. You called upon us to do an inquiry into SARS when 44 people died. We now know that at least 270 people have died, and as I said yesterday, if you extrapolate, it could be 5,000.

I call upon you today to give peace of mind to the family members whose loved ones passed away. Make sure that no more deaths occur in the future which we know are preventable. Call an investigation in order that we have a plan to save lives in the future.

Hon. George Smitherman: I do want to say to the honourable member, firstly, I think that her continued insistence on this suggestion that we've only now, as a health care system, been aware of *C. difficile* is not the appropriate circumstance. The events in Quebec are a lesson for everyone. That's why I think it's important to acknowledge that those who are on the front lines of health care, who have the responsibility for running health care organizations, also bear responsibility for implementation.

Dr. Richard Schabas, a former chief medical officer of health, on CHCH, recently offered the following: "I'm not sure a public inquiry is necessarily the next logical step. They often make for good theatre, but they don't get us where we need to go, which is to address the problem in a vigorous and effective way."

I think, largely, we already know what the underlying problems are with *C. difficile*. We're going to work under the leadership of Dr. Baker to make sure that all hospitals are applying those things that we already know, to the immediate benefit of the patient.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: What the coroner's report of over a year and a half ago proves is that this government has done nothing since that report came out to prevent further outbreaks and, certainly, to prevent further deaths.

In the Hamilton Spectator on Saturday, there was a description of what people go through when they die of *C. difficile*, and I'd like to read that. They are "mired in feces, suffering constant diarrhea, in pain and withered away except for grotesquely bloated stomachs."

That's what happened to Jack Elliott, who went into hospital for knee replacement surgery.

Jack's wife, Dorothy Elliott, and his daughter, Fern Merchant, are here today. Mr. Minister, will you commit

to Jack Elliott's family today that you will call an immediate province-wide inquiry—

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

Hon. George Smitherman: I do want to extend to this individual family and to any family in the province of Ontario that has had an involvement with the health care system that hasn't been as positive as it possibly can be, that have suffered this kind of a loss—we share in the burden, on behalf of those individuals, of doing better work.

The matter at hand is the difference in approach between that which is proposed by the opposition party—an inquiry which would take a very substantial amount of time—and our approach, based, as an example, on Dr. Richard Schabas, who said in his quote that we have the information that we need to do a better job for our patients related to C. difficile and other infectious diseases and patient safety risks in our hospitals. Our strategy is to implement reporting which is rigorous and mandatory and which will place a very, very strong emphasis on these challenges. I think that this is the approach, in the name of those who have suffered and struggled—

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

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: It would be my hope that the ministry has the depth to accomplish all those tasks at the same time and that we don't just have to do one after the other, so the investigation can go on to teach us about how to prevent these things into the future while we're working on preventing deaths in the current time.

A year and a half ago, the coroner's report said that we should be doing certain things. Not all those things have been implemented, and people like Jack Elliott continue to die unnecessarily. Jack's family deserves to know why. Minister, will you look Jack's family in the eye today and tell them that an immediate investigation will take place province-wide?

Hon. George Smitherman: Firstly, I'm not sure where the family is sitting, but as I had a chance to say a moment ago, our sympathy is with those in the circumstances.

You're not calling for an immediate inquiry. You're calling for a method of inquiry which is, by its nature, not immediate at all, and that is the central piece. You keep referring to the coroner's report, but the coroner's office themselves said they do not see the advantage of further inquiry because, like Dr. Schabas, they believe that we have the information that we need and that hospitals, including the hospital in Burlington, have the information that they need to implement strategies and policies which are more effective.

Our strategy is to work on relentless implementation, with mandatory reporting that will dramatically enhance the transparency associated with patient safety risks in our hospitals, under the leadership of Dr. Baker. This will produce the most important, beneficial and timely results for the patients in the province of Ontario. This is the

way to act in the name of those who have succumbed to circumstances associated—

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

1100

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton: To the Deputy Premier: This morning, we learned that Canac Kitchens Ltd. is closing its Thornhill plant, which will result in the destruction of another 1,000 manufacturing jobs. This is added on to the over 100,000 manufacturing jobs already lost in the greater Toronto area over the last three years.

My question is this: With manufacturing job loss announcements coming on almost a daily basis, why does the McGuinty government continue to refuse to implement the policy tools that have been so effectively put in place in other jurisdictions to help sustain manufacturing jobs?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I do appreciate this question, because I know the people of Thornhill have had this company in their community for 41 years, and we're very sorry to see its demise with this announcement today.

What I can tell you is that we have had a number of fronts coming forward to help our manufacturing sector; this, in the face of a lineup of challenges that our manufacturing sector has never seen before. We all know that the dollar is stronger than ever, that oil is extremely expensive—all of these factors, and then on top of those, an American market that is not as strong as we would like. With this comes a budget from our government that puts cash on the table for our manufacturers—\$190 million in last year's budget initiative alone, some of which is retroactive to the year before—so that we can help with this kind of investment that companies need to make to be more productive, to face these challenges.

I look forward to the supplementary so that we can speak to some of our other initiatives.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The Canac jobs are leaving, going to the United States.

The fact of the matter is that jurisdictions like Manitoba and Saskatchewan, which equally have to face a low-value American dollar and equally do not have their own sources of oil, are in fact doing a much better job than the McGuinty government in Ontario in sustaining manufacturing jobs. Manitoba is adding manufacturing jobs as hundreds of thousands of them leave Ontario. What's the difference? Manitoba has implemented a refundable manufacturing investment tax credit. Quebec has implemented a refundable manufacturing investment tax credit. Both jurisdictions see the wisdom of a reasonable industrial hydro rate, while the McGuinty government drives the industrial hydro rate through the roof.

I say again, when is the McGuinty government going to start implementing policies to sustain manufacturing jobs rather than killing—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: To follow this member's logic, you would think that those jobs in fact would be moving to Manitoba or Quebec. That is not the case. This company also has a factory in Statesville, in the US, and they are consolidating their operations to that site.

As we say, every time we hear news of this, we recognize the stress it causes families. That's why families expect our Ontario government to come forward with real solutions for companies to see to a brighter future. That means us stepping forward collectively and every member of this House being supportive of initiatives like our advance manufacturing strategy, like our Next Generation of Jobs Fund. Every time we've brought forward these initiatives, this particular member has voted against them. Every time we've have a budget that has put cash in the hands of our manufacturers to see them through these struggling and challenging times, these members opposite have voted against these initiatives.

I say again, when it comes to manufacturing, we plant our flag—

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: I would say that under the McGuinty government, the flag is barely flying at half-mast and dropping every day.

The minister says these jobs are simply being consolidated. The fact of the matter is, these jobs are moving to a jurisdiction which has a manufacturing investment tax credit. These jobs are moving to a jurisdiction where a reasonable industrial hydro rate is guaranteed by the jurisdiction, something that you cannot find in Ontario any more. Jobs are moving to jurisdictions like Manitoba, which is now selling state-of-the-art, energy-efficient buses into states like California, New York, Illinois and elsewhere because they've had the wisdom to implement some of these policies.

These were good-paying jobs at Canac—\$30 an hour. When is the McGuinty government going to stop holding photo ops and start—

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

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Everything this member has just tabled is patently wrong. He's just incorrect. When we talk about energy prices, we know that there's a challenge across North America, but our competing jurisdictions in manufacturing—those same jurisdictions—have higher prices than Ontario. What you have tabled today is just inaccurate, and you need to be called on the carpet for this. Just because you say it's so does not, in fact, make it so. You're just wrong.

What we are facing is a slowing of the US economy. That is absolutely going to affect a company like Canac Kitchens, which makes products for the housing market. The housing market in the US has slowed, and we know this. It affects lots of our businesses that are involved in housing products.

What we know is that we are committed to our manufacturers. We are stepping forward in innumerable ways

to help make investments so that they will be more productive—

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: The only thing that is inaccurate around here is a McGuinty government that boasts about manufacturing jobs as they leave Ontario in droves virtually every day.

ABORIGINAL RIGHTS

Mr. Howard Hampton: To the Deputy Premier: I want to ask the McGuinty government about its latest flip-flop. In the Court of Appeal yesterday, two months after requesting that the Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug leadership be hit with penalties that hurt, suddenly, the McGuinty government reversed their position. The judges thought it was almost humorous. In fact, they commented on it. I want to ask this: Instead of forcing grandmothers and respected First Nation leaders to spend two months in jail, why didn't the McGuinty government use the tools at your disposal, use section 35 of the Mining Act to declare that the disputed lands were not subject to mining exploration, and save everybody the embarrassment?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Deputy Premier?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I was given this on the front lawn, by the way. I want to thank the people who provided this.

Interjection.

Hon. Michael Bryant: It wasn't meant that way; it was meant rather to respect the wishes of somebody who provided it to me. Anyway, Speaker, I apologize.

I do want to say to the member that on this National Day of Action, it is one where, obviously, there's a particular focus on the federal government. Those have been the wishes of the national chief, Phil Fontaine, and the comments of a number of chiefs across Ontario. It's not to say that provincial governments don't take the opportunity to take stock of what has been done and what has to be done to make improvements. We have a long, long way to go. This government is very committed to making the changes in partnership with First Nations and Metis and Inuit people that will see improvement in the months and years to come.

Mr. Howard Hampton: As the judges pointed out, there's a big difference between the McGuinty government's position of asking for "hurt" two months ago and then, when forced to fess up yesterday, asking for "reconciliation."

The point is, the whole exercise—the jailing of great-grandmothers, the jailing of innocent First Nation leaders, having to go through the courts and spending millions of dollars in legal fees—could have been avoided by the McGuinty government simply using section 35 of the Mining Act and saying, "These traditional First

Nation lands will not be subject to mining exploration or mining development.”

I think the McGuinty government owes an explanation to those innocent people who spent two months in jail, to that innocent great-grandmother who spent two months in jail. Why did the McGuinty government not use section 35 and exempt the lands? Why did you use a process that sent innocent First Nation leaders to jail?

Hon. Michael Bryant: The member knows very well that what he's saying is contrary to all the facts that have been presented in this House and in the court, that the government of Ontario took the position from the beginning that incarceration was wrong and ought not to happen. The appeal was expedited because the province brought a motion to expedite the appeal. The province continued to take the position in court that the appeal should in fact take place and that the chief and council ought to be freed. That's exactly what happened, and any suggestion otherwise by the leader of the third party—he knows that this is not the case and is inaccurate. But the point is that we know in the long term it's not just about sitting down with First Nation leaders and trying to negotiate agreements where there are conflicts; it's also about making changes to the Mining Act that will see those changes that we're all in agreement have to take place, and this government is moving forward in doing so.

1110

Mr. Howard Hampton: The McGuinty government likes to throw around the word “inaccurate,” so I want to quote from the judges. “The words ‘hurt’ and ‘reconciliation’ are total opposites,” Mr. Justice MacPherson said. Further coverage: “The suggestion by government lawyer ... Wilson elicited much confusion on the part of the three-judge appeal court panel and some laughter among those in the packed courtroom.” I think it's pretty clear who is being inaccurate.

The fact of the matter is, an innocent 58-year-old great-grandmother spent two months in jail. Innocent First Nation leaders, who were merely trying to protect their traditional lands, spent two months in jail. Why? Because the McGuinty government refused to use section 35 of the Mining Act to simply say, “These lands will not be subject to mining exploration and mining development.” The McGuinty government chose a path which resulted in the jailing of innocent First Nation leaders—

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

Hon. Michael Bryant: The member is just making all that up, Mr. Speaker. He's making it up in the context of—

Interjections.

Hon. Michael Bryant: He knows very well how section 35 works. He knows very well that the crown took the position at both levels of court that incarceration ought to take place. He wants to suggest that the crown did not take the position that it did, that it opposed incarceration. But the National Day of Action is not just about what happened yesterday—which was the good

result, but that frankly never should have been before the Ontario Court of Appeal because it never should have happened in the first place; the member and I are in agreement on that—it is about those changes that need to be made. First Nations' leadership has said that the primary reforms have to take place in Ottawa. That's why the leadership is there, and we agree with that leadership.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock, please. I'd just ask the honourable member if he would withdraw the comment that he made in the opening of his answer, please.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I withdraw.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade and it deals with the latest example of how this government lacks leadership in manufacturing. After 41 years of operation, the Canac kitchen cabinet plant in Thornhill, as we have already heard this morning, is closing its doors and moving production to a facility in North Carolina. This closure represents a total loss of 1,000 manufacturing jobs in my riding of Thornhill, a riding that already has precious little in the way of manufacturing. These were good-paying jobs within a reasonable travel time for employees. I doubt there is a member in this chamber who did not at one point have Canac cabinets in his or her kitchen. Those days are over.

Will the minister accurately tell this House when the people of Thornhill and the people of Ontario can expect the McGuinty government to wake up and take real action to save our manufacturing sector?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Once again, to the people of Thornhill, we do regret that Canac has taken this decision to consolidate its manufacturing base out of its own factory in the US. We know that these are challenging times for the manufacturing sector. We recognize that last year they also laid off 600 employees. I wish that this member would have been so forthcoming a year ago, when 600 had been laid off. Maybe that would have changed how he voted in this Legislature for initiatives that are here to help manufacturers in this province. Last year's budget was a perfect opportunity for this member opposite to show support for the manufacturing sector in this province.

We are working with our manufacturers. We recognize the challenges they face, and at least this is one government that will be behind them with more initiatives to come.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Okay, I guess it's my fault.

This is yet another symptom of this government's failure to manage Ontario's economy, a failure that resulted in the loss of 15,000 jobs last month alone. One thousand jobs in Thornhill were lost from Canac as of yesterday; 15,000 lost last month, 50,000 over the past year and 207,000 since 2004.

This government claims it is leading Ontario? The only place it's leading Ontarians is into the unemploy-

ment line. Will the minister finally admit that this government's only plan to stimulate this economy is to close its eyes, cover its ears, click its red shoes together and wish the problem away?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I will say this: that Ontario-wide we have seen over 450,000 net new jobs, and 450,000 net new jobs is something that every member in this House should be proud of. We recognize that within the manufacturing sector we are seeing challenges the likes of which we have not seen before.

That is why we continue to call on our federal counterparts to help us in this matter, so that when it comes to our manufacturers, the very sector that has fed the nation for decades now—and we, above all other sectors in manufacturing, see the strain of a high Canadian dollar, see the strain of a high price for a barrel of oil. That's when we need our partners to come to the table with us.

In the meantime, we expect every member of this House to vote in favour of initiatives that are here to help manufacturers. That member from Thornhill is included. We're going to watch your vote in the future on—

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

DRIVER LICENCES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Minister, I raised in this House two days ago the issue of a person who had received a lifetime ban from driving as a result of a tragic accident where four people were killed. The individual went to jail and on coming out of jail went and applied for another driver's licence.

Your answer was, "Because there was a wrong date of birth, the person was wrongly issued a driver's licence." Could you tell me—and you can tell everybody else—why it is that MTO doesn't check basic things like a person's last and first name, a person's address, or any other information that might be inside the database to prevent something like this from happening?

Hon. James J. Bradley: What the member doesn't understand—that's because I understand you wouldn't have all the information—is that there were—

Interjection.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The member for Oxford is interjecting. He should worry about day trading at Agricorp, not about this question.

Back to the member himself: There were two records which were created. That was the problem, the ministry officials have informed me. As you know, the person does not have a licence at this time.

This is an aberration. They do very thorough checks. There are rare occasions when these things happen. We are taking specific action that I'll deal with in the member's supplementary. I'll deal with the specific actions the ministry has taken to try to avoid these kind of circumstances. Even though they may be rare, any instance—I think you will agree with me—where this

can happen is not acceptable. That's why the ministry is working hard with other ministries to try to—

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I don't think, Minister, that it's as rare as you make it out to be. You would know, as well as I do, that the CPIC database, which is the criminal database that's run by the RCMP, doesn't flag to the MTO database any criminal convictions. So somebody could be charged for an offence under the courts, it could go to the CPIC database, but there's no flag back to the MTO database.

The only reason we caught this person is because he was charged criminally and was listed in the CPIC database. That's how we found out. So I go back to you and I say again, when are you going to fix the provincial database to make sure that we have some kind of a flag between the CPIC database and there's a proper search done with the information that resides in the MTO database to stop this from happening again, because it will?

Hon. James J. Bradley: First of all, we do not control the CPIC database. We don't control that.

We have created a convictions records improvement committee with representatives from the Ministry of Transportation, Ministry of the Attorney General, the police and the courts. We've raised this issue with members of the committee and have expressed our concerns, just as the member has. We're also raising this issue on an ongoing basis.

System improvements have been put into place to ensure our records' accuracy. Once an electronic record is received, the MTO database does a search to add this information to the record. If a record is not found, a message notifies staff. Staff then perform a manual search in an attempt to eliminate any errors. If a record still isn't found, staff ask the court or respective police officer for more information. The ministry is considering the implementation of leading-edge security enhancements such as photo comparison technology which will help address fraud and identity issues.

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MUNICIPALITIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. While our government believes in working with municipal governments to ensure that the people we both serve, the people of Ontario, have access to the best possible quality of life, not every government has felt the same way. The official opposition's great legacy when they were in government was to download services to Ontario's municipalities without providing the means to finance them.

We have moved to correct this imbalance through measures such as the uploading of 50% of land ambulance and the uploading of ODSP and ODB. This is important. In 2006, the Premier also promised a complete review of the way service delivery is funded. This is a

long-overdue measure to right the wrongs imposed by the last Tory government.

But there is some concern among the communities in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry that the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review is somewhat overdue. Could the minister tell us how the review is progressing, and when we can expect to see the results?

Hon. Jim Watson: I want to thank the honourable member from Cornwall. I know he has a delegation from Cornwall with us again today, and I very much welcome them to the Legislative Assembly.

I'm very proud of the work that the Minister of Finance and I are doing, in partnership with the city of Toronto and AMO, on the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review process. We're certainly on target to have this very important body of work completed in the next couple of months, well before the AMO AGM that will take place later this summer. We want to get it done on time, but we also want to get it done right.

Many of us who served in municipal government remember that a similar process was followed by the previous government. We remember Premier Harris telling AMO that the downloading and the realignment of services would be revenue-neutral, pinky-swear. We all remember when he said "pinky-swear." It was never revenue-neutral; that was proven and—

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

Mr. Jim Brownell: I want to encourage the minister to get it right for the municipalities of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and all of Ontario. It is important for all levels of government to work together to benefit the people who truly matter: the constituents whom we all serve. Hopefully, this is not lost on our federal counterparts and they will begin to work with us to strengthen Canada's municipalities, potholes and all.

One item that was to be reviewed was the matter of compensation payments that municipalities, like Cornwall in my riding, receive annually in lieu of taxes for hydroelectric stations on their land. I was proud to work with the former Minister of Finance to ensure that this was included in the review. Again, could the minister tell us if the city of Cornwall can expect some good news in this regard when the results of the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review are released?

Hon. Jim Watson: I want to commend the honourable member, plus the mayor of Cornwall, His Worship Mayor Kilger, with whom we have a good working relationship. We understand that this particular issue is very important to the city of Cornwall and to the member's community. It's one of the reasons why this issue is before the fiscal architecture table of the review. We have a number of working tables that are working on a number of issues, and this issue is before that particular table.

Obviously, because we're still in the midst of negotiations between AMO and the city of Toronto, we want

to ensure that the issues remain confidential until we come forward with our consensus report. But I'm very optimistic that we have turned the page on the downloading and the negativity of the previous government, moving forward in a spirit of co-operation and consultation with the municipal sector, because we respect them as equal partners in the relationship to build a better and stronger Ontario.

CASINOS

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is for the Attorney General. Last Tuesday, CBC News reported that the RCMP in Ontario believe that criminals are using Ontario's casino system to launder the proceeds of crime. To prove how easy it is, CBC News members pumped \$15,000 into slot machines, cashed out the vouchers, and left with legitimate casino cheques. No questions were asked, no follow-up, not even a friendly inquiry as to the suspicious conduct. Can the Attorney General advise the House if he has ordered an investigation into this illegal activity that's taking place in our casinos, and if not, can he explain why he's turning a blind eye to criminals using Ontario's casinos to do their business?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: As the member would know, investigations into alleged illegal activity are conducted by the police. We don't direct the police. This government doesn't direct the police. We've taken a very strong stand with respect to security in the province generally. With respect to security in casinos in particular, I wouldn't comment on any specific case. Again, we don't direct the police, and the proper direction for my colleague's question and for the supplementary I suspect will be the minister. I'll wait to hear the supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: This is not a recent development. The first test of the OLG's launder-your-money game was conducted on December 1, 2005, at Casino Rama. The OPP's David Crane, who now heads the enforcement arm of the Alcohol and Gaming Commission, said that this kind of activity should have triggered concerns in the casinos. In fact, he said it should have set off alarm bells.

I would have thought it would set off alarm bells with the government, with the Attorney General, with the minister responsible. Not only have there been no alarm bells, according to FINTRAC, suspicious reports from Ontario casinos have actually dropped from 330 in 2002 to 84 last year.

Margaret Beare, a York University criminologist, said that what's happening here is basically a culture of preferring profit over enforcement. My question is this: I'm not asking the Attorney General to direct an investigation. I'm asking—

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

Hon. Christopher Bentley: That was the very beginning of your first question, of course. You wanted to know whether I had launched an investigation. Of course, the police investigate alleged criminal activity. If you

have additional information, you should get right down to the OPP. They work very closely with the casino security and the RCMP to fight money laundering. They serve at AGCO's investigation enforcement bureau. There's information sharing across jurisdictions, federal FINTRAC database collects information for use by law enforcement and—

Interjections.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Contrary to the heckles from the other side, there's a great deal of co-operation between enforcement units federally, provincially and across the border. So these are just some of the ideas. Casinos must comply with federal regulations to fight money laundering, including mandatory reporting, compliance officer, background checks; there's a lot going on. But again, if the member has additional information, get right to the OPP.

PUBLIC HEALTH

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

Medical officers of health are crucial to the protection of public health in Ontario, so important that yesterday the minister finally announced that hospitals will be required to report C. difficile to their health units so that "medical officers of health have the information they need to monitor and respond to emergent outbreaks."

Why, then, six years after the Walkerton inquiry recommended that vacant medical officer of health positions be filled expeditiously with full-time candidates, are one third of Ontario medical officer of health positions vacant, part-time, temporary or acting?

Hon. George Smitherman: I do want to thank the honourable member for her question. Indeed, it's a good one. This proves to be a substantial challenge in the health care system in Ontario as there are unequal resources because some public health units are larger than others. We're working to enhance the capacity of schools of public health to create the kinds of candidates who would do well in the environment, which requires, of course, strong epidemiological backgrounds and good administrative capabilities, given the size of the health units. We've more than doubled public health funding in the province of Ontario in the last four years, in response not just to the challenges associated with Walkerton but others that have been there. We're continuing to work with public health units in evaluating the review of work that's been done that suggests that perhaps consolidation of some of the public health units may be necessary over time.

1130

M^{me} France Gélinas: The Ontario Medical Association has said that the lack of full-time, fully qualified medical officers of health poses an enormous threat to the health of Ontarians and that a single dysfunctional health unit could incubate a nationwide epidemic.

The minister says that hospitals will report outbreaks so that the Minister of Health can monitor and respond.

He says that he will look in the future to the consolidation of health units and building strength. I hope we will include health promotion within the list of qualities that the medical officer of health should have. But what kind of reassurance is this to Ontarians right now, when there is a third of health units that continue to lack the leadership of a medical officer of health? Where is the reassurance?

Hon. George Smitherman: Substantial reassurance should come from the fact that in each of these public health units there is an acting chief medical officer of health who has a good deal of capacity to be able to address the circumstances that the honourable member speaks to.

We're working hard to create more of the kind of candidates who would do well in these leadership roles. We've created bursary programs that allow acting medical officers of health to do the necessary transitioning so that they can become permanent in those functions. We've announced, through our health human resources strategy, HealthForceOntario, the capacity to create more opportunity for foreign-trained professionals to transition into these roles and have allocated funding for up to five physicians who wish to pursue specialty training in community medicine or an equivalent, which is a master's in public health.

The obvious is there. There are vacancies, of course. They're filled by acting chief medical officers of health, and work is being done to increase the number of people who would be suitable candidates for these roles on a permanent basis. These steps, alongside—

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

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. As you know, the supply-managed sector of our agriculture industry has proven itself to be an effective way of ensuring that farmers earn a stable and profitable income. For years, FarmGate 5 has proven its ability to provide the high-quality products Ontario consumers demand at a fair return to farmers.

I've been following the World Trade Organization agricultural negotiations in Geneva very closely and with great concern in recent months. Dairy, egg and poultry farmers in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex are truly worried by reports that Canada's supply-managed sectors are at risk because the latest negotiating text presented at the WTO does not provide the necessary flexibility to accommodate all our supply-managed sectors. Could the minister please bring this House up to date on what's happening at the WTO agriculture negotiations?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I am happy to have the opportunity to share with all members of the House. You may recall, in December 2005, that all parties in this Legislature did support a motion that the province of

Ontario would remain very strong in supporting supply management. As a result of that we have, I think, staked out some pretty clear ground with respect to our position nationally as well as internationally.

We're very pleased with the progress in some of the sectors, particularly as it relates to aggressive tariff reduction formulas, as well as the reduction and elimination of export subsidies. We are, however, concerned with the most recent text of modalities that have come from the WTO that would impact sensitive products.

Again, because we've had the resolution in this Legislature, we can say that the province of Ontario is stalwart in our commitment—

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

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: It's important for our government to hold the federal government to account on this important issue. Canada and the province of Ontario have a strong interest in moving fairer trade policies forward for agriculture. Farmers in my riding tell me that we want a level playing field, and this means assurances that there will be meaningful cuts to US and European Union subsidies.

It does concern me, however, that with the stroke of a pen the federal government could negotiate supply management away. At a recent MP-MPP meeting in Lambton County, local representatives of the supply-management sector repeated the call for both the provincial and federal governments to continue defending the interests of those farmers dependent on supply management. They told me that there can be no federal plan B.

Could the minister please tell this House today what our government is doing to protect the interests of the supply-management sector?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Obviously, again, the member is a very strong advocate for her constituents and for supply management. We thank you for that.

But with respect to the issue that has been raised, in February, the two ministers of the province of Ontario and the province of Quebec did issue a joint release to say that we urge the federal government to make this very clear: Supply management was to remain intact as we know it today.

Just last week again, after the most recent text had been released, the minister from Quebec, Laurent Lessard, and I issued another joint release making the point to the federal government that we need to remain strong in terms of protecting supply management. We have followed that up with a letter to the federal Minister of Agriculture on this very issue. Tonight, in the city of Toronto, agriculture ministers from across Canada will be meeting in this city—

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

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Last week, I met with a

family in my riding that I'm trying to help, who are caring for their three children, all of them diagnosed with a rare genetic chromosome imbalance that leaves them with high medical needs. All three require care, with the youngest in need of constant monitoring and care throughout the night.

Before the boundary changes, CCAC provided overnight respite care, allowing their parents to attain much-needed sleep. While the case managers agree with the need for overnight nursing care, in 2008 they have had to go without 80 hours per month. While the CCAC has done the assessment and agrees that the service is needed, Minister, how can you ensure that this family gets the care they actually need?

Hon. George Smitherman: I do want to thank the honourable member for her advocacy on the part of this family. It mirrors, at least somewhat, a few other circumstances between me and members and my staff who have been working to try and make sure that they get the care they require. Obviously this family needs to be acknowledged for the work it's doing in support of three young children with underlying medical complications. I don't know the ins and the outs of the circumstance, but I will commit to the honourable member to work alongside her, with community care access centres and staff from the ministry, to try and find a foundation of resources which can allow this family to support the children in their family. If the honourable member would give us a chance to learn just a bit more about the circumstances, we'll see what we might be able to come up with on their behalf.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I appreciate your assurance, and I do have more details here which I will provide to you.

This family has met with representatives from the CCAC a number of times, and they've actually come up with some very proactive solutions. To date, they have been given no flexibility to do that. As I said, for 80 hours every month since January they've gone without care.

Interjection.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Minister, will you assist my constituents so that they can receive the overnight care they need to allow them to continue caring for their children at home, and before they go into crisis?

Hon. George Smitherman: I heard that the former Minister of Health from Simcoe-Grey wanted to take credit for the CCACs. It was important to remind him that for a few years there, they actually flatlined their budget. In contrast, we've been able to give, even just last year alone, \$100 million in additional resources to community care access centres.

Interjection.

Hon. George Smitherman: Now he's heckling about their further plans to cut another \$3 billion from health care.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask the member from Simcoe-Grey to withdraw the comment that he just made.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. George Smitherman: Mr. Speaker, we shouldn't allow our side comments to confuse—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): You should be speaking through the Chair.

Hon. George Smitherman: Yes, that's why I said, "Mr. Speaker."

To the honourable member: I'll work with you to do what we can on behalf of this family. They need our support. I think it's possible to get it, and together, I'm very certain we'll be able to do so.

1140

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Finance. My office has been working with Ms. Julia Sangster, a senior who lives in a granny flat on her daughter's property in the city of Kawartha Lakes. We have also had months and months of communications with Carl Eisenberg of MPAC, and the reason is because Ms. Sangster's daughter's property has been assessed \$35,000 higher due to the granny flat which is placed upon the land. MPAC says it is bound by regulations signed by you that state that structures placed on the land are assessable.

However, the city of Kawartha Lakes says that the granny flat must be removed upon the sale of the property and it is not a permanent structure. Can the minister tell this House why a temporary structure is assessable even though it has absolutely no resale value?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I thank the member for the question. I'm not familiar with the circumstances of this particular situation. My hope would be that we could work together to have a look at this. If you've corresponded with me already, I apologize. I'm not familiar with the case, but I'd be happy to look into it further with you.

Mr. Michael Prue: I thank the minister for that statement.

Julia Sangster has been living through this for a long time. There has been correspondence going back and forth between her, my office, MPAC and, I believe, your office as well. She is not alone. She is like thousands of other seniors who live on their old age pension independently and at no cost to the public. She and many others in this situation are being penalized by the assessment system.

I am thankful for what you had to say today, but this is a lacuna in the law that cries out for remedy. Will you promise to look into this to change the regulation in section 3 of the Assessment Act, not only for Ms. Sangster but for all of the other seniors across this province who live in granny flats on properties owned by their children?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I thank the member for the question. I'll be happy to review it with him, but I'd like to review a few other things with the member.

Last month we brought in reverse onus on MPAC, something you and seniors called for for ages. Do you

know what that member did? He voted against it. This government brought in a senior property tax credit in its last budget, and do you know what that member and his party did? They voted against it. We enhanced the senior property tax credit on three occasions over three years, and do you know what that member and his party did? They voted against it.

It's difficult to come to terms with a party that on the one hand says it advocates for seniors, and votes against every single positive measure for seniors—

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

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question today is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, you know that public transit is very important to the people of Peterborough. Ridership on our local transit system has increased steadily since our government made increasing public transit a top priority. I also know that certain studies clearly show that many people are still driving their cars to get to their destinations.

In my region, transit and transportation are linked together with positive economic development. We need an edge so we can stay competitive and have a future filled with prosperity. Minister, what are you doing to provide the best transit alternatives to the good people of Peterborough?

Hon. James J. Bradley: As the member would know, the government made a serious commitment when we decided to invest two cents of the gas tax into public transit for municipalities—\$315 million in all. Since 2004, Peterborough has received almost \$5 million in gas tax funding. Additionally, we recently invested more than \$930,000 in capital infrastructure in Peterborough Transit. We believe these investments will propel transit systems forward, allowing them to make upgrades and provide tangible service improvements to their riders.

I understand that Peterborough has used part of it to upgrade its bus fleet, which will soon include 15 fully accessible transit buses. Added to that, we recently informed Peterborough council of an additional \$762,000 for the Ontario bus replacement program. We've been working with the member on a regular basis. He's a tireless advocate for transportation—

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'd like to once again address the Minister of Transportation. Minister, I agree that this government has made transit a top priority. It's actually sad that the previous government cancelled transit funding altogether for two years. That lack of investment left us with a lot of catching up to do. I've received a lot of positive feedback from my constituents and from local municipal leaders and transit riders about our great investments, but we really need to look from a regional perspective as well. Minister, can you update us on the multi-million dollar question of the progress on getting

GO Transit train service to Peterborough—another transit issue?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I would first of all agree with the member that when the Conservatives got out of the funding of public transit completely, that was a major mistake that we're trying to rectify. Our government has invested over \$10 million in Peterborough since 2003. It's a fundamental shift from the era previous to that. We recognize that to address gridlock, to address climate change in a meaningful way, you have to invest in transit options.

I understand that GO Transit is currently exploring ways to provide bus service from the Oshawa train station to Peterborough. GO Transit is also committed to extending their rail service from Oshawa to Bowmanville. This extension will serve to improve the riders' experience by facilitating closer bus-train meeting locations. The ability to extend rail service to Peterborough presents some different challenges, and as you know there are significant infrastructure upgrades that will be required. This has been given to Metrolinx to lead a joint rail study.

PESTICIDES

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Constituents of mine who work in the structural pesticide industry are very concerned that they will be caught up in your cosmetic pesticide bill. In your haste to bring this bill forward, you have overlooked structural pest control. This industry uses pesticides as a last resort, keeping our homes, hospitals, schools, restaurants and other buildings free of harmful insects. To protect our health and quality of life, they often have to work on the outside of these buildings. This is not cosmetic use. Will you amend the list of exempted uses in Bill 64 to include uses related to structures?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'm very pleased to answer this member's questions and talk about the positive nature of our cosmetic-use-of-pesticides bill that we have brought in this House right now. As the member well knows, we're into second reading right now. Obviously, the bill will go to committee at some point in time. We've also at the same time posted about 80 different ingredients and 300 different products that we're contemplating being part of the regulatory framework that will actually put the act into place.

We realize that there may be certain exceptions, not with respect to lawns or backyards and playgrounds etc., but certainly with respect to the use indoors, because some of these products in effect can be utilized indoors as well to deal with issues like pest control. The bill will make provisions for it, as the member well knows. We're looking forward to this member's positive contribution with respect to this bill and we look forward to all members of this House—

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: Minister, structural pest control often has to fight some of the insects from the outside of

buildings, and that includes such insects as yellow jackets, paper wasps, hornets, ants, spiders, termites, ticks, fleas and earwigs. If this industry cannot do its work outside, it cannot destroy these threats to health. Will you commit to meeting with representatives of the structural pesticide industry to ensure that they are exempted, ideally by the bill, or at least through its regulations?

Hon. John Gerretsen: We already have met with literally dozens of groups of individuals and industry representatives on all sides of this issue. Obviously we want to hear from the group that she's talking about as well, and we will certainly make arrangements to meet with them.

PETITIONS

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to thank the congregation of St. Paul's Roman Catholic Church and Father Tad, in Alliston, the church that I went to as I was growing up, 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.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Mike Colle: I've got a petition trying to outlaw firearms in vehicles.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas innocent people are being victimized by the growing number of unlawful firearms in our communities; 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 and take the guns off of our streets.”

I support this petition and I sign it.

ALMA COLLEGE

Mrs. Julia Munro: I beg the indulgence of the House for a moment. I am presenting a petition signed by thousands of people who wanted to request, through the petition process, the saving of Alma College. I think that in respect to all of those people who signed these petitions, even though, sadly, we don't have that opportunity, it is out of respect to their concerns that today I read this petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas historic Alma College, designed in the High Victorian Gothic style, chartered by an act of Ontario passed March 2, 1877, opened in October 1881, located in the city of St. Thomas, county of Elgin, province of Ontario, has fallen into a dire state of disrepair; and

“Whereas Alma College continues to be threatened with demolition by its current owners despite the efforts of many concerned citizens, alumni and various officials; and

“Whereas an historical plaque commemorating Alma College was unveiled at the college on Thursday, October 28, 1976, by the Ontario Heritage Trust, an agency within the Ministry of Culture and Recreation; and

“Whereas the city of St. Thomas designated Alma College under part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act (bylaw 167-94), in 1994; and

“Whereas recent amendments (2005) to the Ontario Heritage Act allow the Minister of Culture to designate property as being provincially significant;

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

“The Minister of Culture immediately designate Alma College as a building of provincial significance and, in the event of a demolition order being issued for Alma, to immediately intervene by issue of a stop order, and to further identify provincial partnerships and possible funding to protect the existing buildings from further deterioration while financial resources are generated to restore the property to its former glory.”

I do this on behalf of the many thousands of Ontarians whose wish is never to become true.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today from Miss Susan Bishop, who lives at 2091 Hurontario St. in beautiful Mississauga.

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

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

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

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

I agree with this petition and I will affix my signature to it.

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with it and affix my name to the petition.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Pat Hoy: “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, entitled the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act, 2008, into law, so that we can

reduce the number of crimes involving firearms in our communities.”

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have another petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly from constituents asking for progress on the western Mississauga ambulatory surgery centre, for which I'd like to thank the office of Dr. Tom Short. It reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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....

“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'll affix my signature to this and pass it to Natalie.

ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

Mr. Jeff Leal: This petition arrived just recently.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas children exposed to second-hand smoke are at a higher risk for respiratory illnesses including asthma, bronchitis and pneumonia, as well as sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and increased incidences of cancer and heart disease in adulthood; and

“Whereas the Ontario Medical Association supports a ban on smoking in vehicles when children are present, as they have concluded that levels of second-hand smoke can be 23 times more concentrated in a vehicle than in a house because circulation is restricted within a small space; and

“Whereas the Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Ontario Tobacco-Free Network indicates that eight in 10 (80%) of Ontarians support ‘legislation that would ban smoking in cars and other private vehicles where a child or adolescent under 16 years of age is present’; and

“Whereas Nova Scotia, California, Puerto Rico, and South Australia recently joined several jurisdictions of the United States of America in banning smoking in vehicles carrying children;

“We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to approve Bill 11 and amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to ban smoking in vehicles carrying children 16 years of age and under.”

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to page Christopher.

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario given to me by a number of individuals in the Polish church in Mississauga. It's a petition in support of an initiative of my colleague from Newmarket-Aurora with which I agree. I'll read it as follows:

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

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

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

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the

private member's bill ... entitled An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day."

I'm pleased to sign this petition, and ask page Alie to carry it for me.

ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have two more petitions which have just recently arrived.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas children exposed to second-hand smoke are at a higher risk for respiratory illnesses including asthma, bronchitis and pneumonia, as well as sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and increased incidences of cancer and heart disease in adulthood; and

"Whereas the Ontario Medical Association supports a ban on smoking in vehicles when children are present, as they have concluded that levels of second-hand smoke can be 23 times more concentrated in a vehicle than in a house because circulation is restricted within a small space; and

"Whereas the Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Ontario Tobacco-Free Network indicates that eight in 10 (80%) of Ontarians support 'legislation that would ban smoking in cars and other private vehicles where a child or adolescent under 16 years of age is present'; and

"Whereas Nova Scotia, California, Puerto Rico, and South Australia recently joined several jurisdictions of the United States of America in banning smoking in vehicles carrying children;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to approve Bill 11 and amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to ban smoking in vehicles carrying children 16 years of age and under."

I agree with this petition and will affix my signature to it.

LORD'S PRAYER

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I have a petition from the residents of York South-Weston.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government is proposing to remove the Lord's Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Ontario Legislature;

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature each and every day since the 19th century;

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message is one of forgiveness, of providing for those in need of their 'daily bread' and of preserving us from the evils we may fall into; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict;

"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;

"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 will affix my signature to this petition and give it to page Taylor.

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

This House is recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1204 to 1300.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just want to welcome all our guests here today, chiefs from across the province. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ABORIGINAL RIGHTS

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise to mark the Aboriginal Day of Action, being held across the province today.

One must only look outside the doors of the Ontario Legislature to see that this government is not doing the job when it comes to our aboriginal communities. After five years in power, this Liberal government unfortunately has a record of being long on promises and flowery language but comes up very, very short when it comes to real, tangible action.

Our aboriginal peoples have played a vital role in the history of our province and stand to be a main driver of our province's prosperity, particularly in northern Ontario. Unfortunately, this government does not seem to understand that. This government stands idly by as our aboriginal communities face substandard living conditions, substandard schools and substandard community facilities.

There's no better example of this government's unwillingness to act than the Ontario Mining Act. This government has been in power for five years, yet they have failed to see the growing frustration amongst First Nation communities, and they have failed to act to change the Ontario Mining Act, which has been hurting communities and jeopardizing economic development.

We, in the Ontario PC caucus, understand the frustrations people feel when they try to deal with this government. We respect the demonstrations that are occurring across the province and on the front lawn here at Queen's Park, and we commend the various groups for these peaceful expressions of frustration.

MARKHAM MUSIC AND ARTS GROUP

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I recently attended an event hosted by the Markham Music and Arts Group to celebrate their Ontario Trillium Foundation award of \$67,500. This money will be directed to hire a professional fundraiser to develop and execute a sponsorship campaign, thus ensuring the long-term sustainability of three important cultural initiatives in my riding of Oak Ridges-Markham: the Markham Village Music Festival, the Markham Jazz Festival and the Markham Arts

Council. These three organizations came together to apply as a group for the grant.

The Markham Village Music Festival, held on the third weekend of June on Main Street Markham, is probably the best known, attracting some 15,000 to 20,000 residents and visitors. This flood of visitors allows Old Markham Village to show itself off in its best possible light and, happily, also generates much-welcomed income for the many places of business on Main Street Markham.

The Markham Jazz Festival follows on the third weekend in August.

The Markham Arts Council provides seminars, school programs, art shows and much more.

Needless to say, all of these important activities are made possible by the contributions of many selfless volunteers.

Congratulations to the Markham Music and Arts Group for continuing to enrich the cultural life of my community, and to the Ontario Trillium Foundation for recognizing their importance.

ONTARIO SUMMER GAMES

Ms. Laurie Scott: As the member of provincial Parliament for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, I'm pleased to say that the county of Haliburton has made an official application to host the 2010 Ontario Summer Games. The Ontario Summer Games have never been hosted in rural Ontario, but I'm here to tell you that Haliburton county is ready to change that statistic.

Haliburton is known as central Ontario's playground, and this event will showcase our community and, more importantly, present the athletes with down-home hospitality.

I will be in attendance at an event in Haliburton county on June 4 to meet the review team and to enthusiastically present my unwavering support for their bid.

The review team will be receiving a tour of the incredible facilities that will leave a lasting legacy for youth activity and healthy living in rural Ontario.

We're eagerly anticipating the arrival of over 3,800 athletes, coaches and officials in the summer of 2010.

And here's the exciting point: Every single young athlete will be staying at a lakefront camp, where they will experience the outdoors and recreation of rural Ontario during the four days of competition. This is an amazing opportunity for the young people of this province to see and experience what happens outside the big cities, an opportunity to see the amazing lakes, rivers, forests, trails and rugged terrain that rural Ontario offers. But most importantly, this is about our youth and what rural communities bring to this province.

As Haliburton county's bid correctly suggests, it's altogether amazing. I trust that a full, fair and objective review will be made by the Sport Alliance of Ontario, and I know they will recognize that Haliburton county is, without question, the most outstanding locale, and in 2010, after 37 years, the Ontario Summer Games will

finally come to rural Ontario and the county of Haliburton.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Mr. Joe Dickson: I am pleased to announce that the Special Olympics Ontario 2008 provincial spring games start today, and are being held in Durham region for the first time ever. I am hopeful that this is the beginning of a new trend. Opening ceremonies are at 7 p.m., and continue all day Friday and Saturday.

In Oshawa, we will see our athletes compete in power lifting, baseball, basketball and five- and 10-pin bowling. Of course, I am most eager to see the swimming competitions, which will be held in my riding of Ajax–Pickering. Our Pickering recreation centre will open its doors on Friday and Saturday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. I hope to see all of you there to cheer on these Special Olympians.

It took a lot to get here. These wonderful athletes all exhibit boundless courage and enthusiasm. Teamwork and friendship is generally displayed and, as you will see, their hearts and souls go into the games.

In 1968, Eunice Kennedy Shriver opened the first Special Olympics world games, saying, "In ancient Rome, the gladiators went into the arena with these words on their lips: 'Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.'" That was a very powerful message.

Today, all of the young athletes are in Durham. Many of them will win, but even more important, I know they will be brave and bring credit to their parents, their province and their country.

Special thanks to Deputy Chief Chuck Mercier and the entire Durham Regional Police Service for their efforts in making these games possible.

I would like to personally congratulate all of the 800 athletes who are competing. You are all winners in my books. Enjoy the competition. The government of Ontario wishes you all the very best and is looking forward to seeing you "embrace your spirit."

DURHAM MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am pleased to rise today to speak about the 20th anniversary of Durham Mental Health Services. It's a non-profit community mental health organization which services Durham region residents living with mental illness.

Durham Mental Health Services opened the doors of its first residential program in Whitby in the late 1980s with the hope that they would be able to assist a few people with mental health issues by means of giving them a clean, safe place to live, healthy food to eat, and the ability to be surrounded by trusted, caring people.

Today, Durham Mental Health Services is proud to serve Durham region by providing a wide range of community-based mental health programs that include

supportive housing, crisis services, case management, family support and court support services.

Durham Mental Health Services believes that individuals with mental health issues are often overlooked or stigmatized and works hard to remind their clients that they are full members of our community, with the same right to dignity and opportunity as all of us. There is every reason to be hopeful about the capacity of each individual with a mental illness to live a life of meaning and purpose. Once our communities acknowledge the impact of mental illness and commit to helping those afflicted through no fault of their own, we can make that hope a reality.

Community mental health programs are a vital service, and they work. I am proud to share that Durham region has such an esteemed group of professionals helping out the members of my community, all the way from the governing board of directors, the management team, to the caring front-line staff whose tireless work helps Durham Mental Health Services clients achieve their full potential in our communities.

ABORIGINAL RIGHTS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Today is the First Nations National Day of Action. Across this country, we have First Nations out, trying to educate the rest of the public on the conditions in their communities.

It's a sad state of affairs because, as we look on most First Nations communities, certainly the ones in the riding that I represent, Timmins–James Bay, as it would be in Kenora–Rainy River and others, you basically have situations where people are living in what in some cases are probably worse than Third World conditions. This, in a country that is wealthy, in a country that has brought wealth and prosperity to people for hundreds of years. This, in a province where prosperity has happened for many people.

What are First Nations people asking for? They're simply asking that we share. When we signed treaties with First Nations years ago, it was with an understanding that we would get access to their traditional territories and that there would be a sharing in the benefits of whatever economic activity took place in those territories.

1310

For the first 100 years, there has been not a lot of sharing. It has been about the Europeans, as we're seen, coming in and doing development at the cost of First Nations, with no economic benefit back to them.

Where are we today? We're exactly where we were 100 years ago. This government refuses, to this day, to enact what is called revenue sharing and to give First Nations an opportunity to benefit from the impacts of whatever economic activity happens near or on their traditional lands.

On this day, the day of action, I say that this government should take heed of the comments that are being

made and actually give First Nations the respect they should have gotten in the first place.

MUSLIM COMMUNITY

Mr. Reza Moridi: I'm pleased to recognize the centenary of the Caliphate in the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam. Established in 190 countries with members in my riding of Richmond Hill, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community continues to preach a message of peace and tolerance. The movement is a reminder that the values we all share are stronger than those who would seek to divide us.

As the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam celebrates this centenary, I would like to acknowledge a very distinct member of this community, the late Professor Abdus Salam, one of the giant physicists of the 20th century. Professor Abdus Salam won the Nobel Prize in physics for unifying the electromagnetic and weak forces and led us closer to the understanding of nature.

Over the course of its history, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has established a record of advocacy for universal love and compassion. As the centenary celebrations of the establishment of the institution of the Khalifat are fast approaching, I wish to extend my sincere congratulations to His Holiness Khalifa Hadrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad and to every member of this community. I would also like to acknowledge members of the community in the east gallery.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome.

AGRICULTURE PROGRAMS

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: Last Tuesday, students from Ontario involved in the Specialist High Skills Major in Agriculture program gathered at the University of Guelph for a two-day conference to learn from a number of current agricultural leaders.

School boards that offer the agricultural programs sent students to take part in the jam-packed two days of speakers, workshops and tours of the agricultural facilities at the University of Guelph campus. Topics included the world of work in agriculture and agribusiness, innovation in agriculture and the food sector, and the bioscience century. Former Ontario Federation of Agriculture president Peter Hannam, a leading Ontario grower and developer of soybeans and soybean products, provided the keynote speech on the implications for agriculture of new developments in bioscience.

This agriculture program provides students who complete four major credits and two co-op placements as part of their Ontario secondary school diploma an opportunity to use that skill further in life. From the words of committee member Mike St. Pierre, "Students who graduate with a Specialist High Skills Major in Agriculture designation on their diploma are prepared for success in the agricultural sector and in the post-secondary destination of their choice."

I know that a number of these students will bring the knowledge and skills that they have acquired as a Specialist High Skills Major in Agriculture and put those into practice in my own riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. I certainly look forward to that day.

CLIMATE CHANGE

CHANGEMENT DE CLIMAT

Mr. Phil McNeely: This spring, we held the second annual Ottawa–Orléans Climate Change Challenge. The goal of this annual challenge is to engage students in a dialogue about climate change, how it's impacting them and what they can do about it.

Les élèves devaient créer un vidéoclip d'une durée de deux minutes répondant à la question suivante : comment pouvons-nous, en tant qu'individus, réduire notre empreinte carbonique et contribuer à la prévention du changement climatique?

Four hundred fifty students participated in five local high schools: Sir Wilfrid Laurier, École secondaire publique Louis-Riel, Cairine Wilson, École secondaire catholique Garneau and St. Matthew.

J'ai aujourd'hui le grand plaisir de recevoir les gagnants et les gagnantes du concours à Queen's Park. Avec moi, in the west gallery, I have from Cairine Wilson: Justin Muhall, Sarah Poluha, Caitlin MacDonald, Allie Davison and their teacher, Guy MacDougall; et les élèves de l'École secondaire publique Louis-Riel : Marie Harrigan et Christine Miller, ainsi que leur professeure, M^{me} Najat Ghannou.

Thank you again to the students and teachers. Votre conscience environnementale, votre créativité et votre pensée avant-gardiste nous ont tous inspirés.

Students, you are indeed the generation of change, and you should be very proud of yourselves.

I wish to thank Enbridge, the Cement Association of Canada, Wayne French of Waste Management, the EnviroCentre, Via Rail and CTV for making this day possible.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

MUNICIPAL RESIDENTIAL SPRINKLER ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LES EXTINCTEURS AUTOMATIQUES RÉSIDENTIELS DANS LES MUNICIPALITÉS

Mrs. Jeffrey moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 72, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992, the City of Toronto Act, 2006 and the Municipal

Act, 2001 with respect to fire sprinkler systems in new residential buildings / Projet de loi 72, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur le code du bâtiment, la Loi de 2006 sur la cité de Toronto et la Loi de 2001 sur les municipalités à l'égard des extincteurs automatiques dans les nouveaux immeubles d'habitation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Brampton–Springdale.

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: The blaze started in a small brick bungalow in Toronto at 3:45 p.m. Darryl was at home at the time of the fire. He lived with his parents: a retired father and his mother, who operated a small, home-based business as well as caring for her son.

Darryl, 54, had multiple sclerosis and was confined to a wheelchair. His elderly father and a nephew attempted to save Darryl but were driven back by the smoke. They were taken to hospital with serious smoke inhalation injuries. Darryl was pronounced dead at the scene. A working smoke alarm was recovered in the house outside the bedroom where the fire started.

I present to the House Bill 72, the residential fire sprinkler systems act, 2008. It would be more appropriately named for individuals like Darryl and the hundreds of other Ontarians who might have been saved if a residential sprinkler system was present.

In the galleries today there are members of fire services from across Ontario who have travelled here today to bear witness to our actions. They can all tell you the harrowing stories of people who died or were injured, who might have had a chance if they'd had the extra precious minutes that a residential fire sprinkler system would have provided. I want to acknowledge their attendance and thank them for their ongoing dedication.

Since being elected in 2003, I've brought forward two private members' bills that would have ultimately put the onus for mandating residential sprinklers on the shoulders of the province. After consulting fire professionals, I've decided this time to approach the issue from a different perspective. The bill we're talking about today would amend several provincial statutes granting municipalities to enact bylaws requiring fire sprinkler systems in all new residential buildings. This bill recognizes that municipalities should have the ability to ensure that new homes in their communities have this important, life-saving feature incorporated during construction.

This past weekend, a family in my community of Brampton lost their home in a new subdivision, and two firefighters were taken to hospital. I believe that sprinklers would have limited the spread of the fire that engulfed one home and left two others severely damaged. Every few days, we read stories about another preventable fire and the needless loss of life. These stories raise awareness, and it's clear that the issue of residential sprinklers has finally become a provincial debate.

On the one side are those charged with public safety. Municipalities and their fire chiefs from across Ontario have petitioned our government, asking for the power to ensure that residential sprinklers are installed in all new residential construction.

On the other side of the debate are home builders and members of the construction industry who claim that new homes are safer and fire-resistant. It's true that building practices have improved, but today homes are built from lightweight, composite wood frames that are consumed by fire more quickly and fail even faster than solid wood beams.

1320

Caught in the middle of this debate are politicians. For me, the choice is clear. I'm passionate about saving lives, and I know there is more that our province can do. I no longer wonder if building codes will be changed to require residential sprinklers; I just wonder when regulations will be brought forward. It's clearly the way of the future, as witnessed by cities such as Vancouver.

Interior finishes such as upholstery, laminates and contents made of synthetic foam and plastics are routinely found in our homes. Our sofas and carpets are now largely constructed from petrochemically based materials. These contents create fires that burn hotter and quicker and produce higher concentrations of toxic smoke than natural finishes.

A new study, released in October 2007 by the Underwriters' Laboratories, adds credibility to the characterization of polyurethane foams and similar materials as solid gasoline. The furnishings that surround us today pose a higher level of risk than in the past, resulting in faster-developing fires and less time to escape. As a result of this and other factors, the time between the start of a free-burning fire and a flashover has been reduced to between 2.2 and 4.3 minutes. Homeowners have a shorter period of time to escape, and firefighters have a much more serious situation upon arrival.

Some have argued that only smoke alarms are necessary. Yet, while our first thought upon hearing a smoke alarm should be to get out, this is not always the case. People wait for reinforcing cues. What we typically do when we hear a fire alarm sounding is get out of bed, open the door, stick out our head and wait for a cue or direction, all of which takes precious time.

In a review of fatal fire data over a three-year period in Ontario, it was found that 43% of smoke alarms did not work, usually because of a dead or missing battery or power source. Smoke alarms aren't foolproof. They have a limited lifespan and need to be replaced every 10 years.

Residential sprinklers are an automatic device, a technology that requires no human intervention or reaction. It's a proven technology, like airbags. It doesn't rely on changing human behaviour to prevent an accident or loss of life.

Others have questioned the need for sprinklers. They've argued that the cost will negatively affect home affordability and may cost jobs in the housing sector. Yes, there's a cost associated with the installation of residential sprinklers. There's a cost factor with seat belts and airbags in motor vehicles. Today, these devices are recognized as essential life-saving equipment that no one would be without. Vancouver, which has had residential sprinkler legislation for nearly two decades, has not seen

housing sales negatively impacted. We spend nearly two thirds of every day in a sprinklered environment, and no one has made the argument that we shouldn't have sprinklers in public places because of cost.

Fire sprinkler systems have proven their value and effectiveness time and time again. They protect our workplaces, restaurants, entertainment venues, schools, factories, gyms and places of worship. Vancouver has had 18 years of experience with residential sprinklers, and since the city passed the bylaw, there has not been a single accidental fire death in a home equipped with sprinklers.

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario recently expressed support for building code revisions that would make sprinklers mandatory in new residential buildings over three storeys and has also expressed support for this proposed bill. The Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs and the Council of Canadian Fire Marshals and Fire Commissioners support the need for fire sprinklers in all residential occupancies. Organizations such as the Ontario Municipal Fire Prevention Officers Association and over 50 municipalities across Ontario support this legislation.

On a cold February morning at 4 a.m., a fire engulfed a family home in Toronto. Loretta managed to escape the blaze with her two-year-old daughter and was pounding on neighbours' doors, pleading desperately for help. Her husband and four-year-old twin son and daughter were trapped inside the inferno.

Neighbours reported that this young mother was frantic. She was screaming for her family members in the house. A neighbour went into the house, and he said, "I've never seen anything burn like that. There was just nothing I could do. Smoke and flames were coming out. It was engulfed."

Toronto Fire Services dispatched 13 vehicles with 50 firefighters. The fire was under control at 4:22. Paramedics pronounced Stewart, Mackenzie and Arthur Cameron dead at the scene.

This past weekend, I joined Toronto Fire Services and the Toronto Professional Firefighters' Association at a service to honour past, present and future firefighters who make the supreme sacrifice at the fallen firefighters' memorial, to mark the addition of 22 names to that monument. These brave men and women put their lives on the line protecting us. I don't want to see any more families devastated by the premature loss of their loved ones.

I want to thank the Premier for acknowledging that our province can do more with regards to fire safety in residential buildings over three stories. I want us to be courageous and take that next critical step and develop a comprehensive residential sprinkler strategy for new construction.

For more than 25 years, nearly a dozen coroners' juries and inquests have recommended changes to the Ontario building code to include residential fire sprinklers. Isn't it time Canada's most populous province took the lead on this issue and answered the call of saving lives?

When I first came to Queen's Park, I remember something the Premier said. He encouraged us to be courageous and to bring forward legislation that's meaningful. I took his words to heart. I cannot think of anything more important than demonstrating our commitment to civilian and firefighter safety. I'd like to thank my friend Brian Maltby. He's been relentless in his determination to see residential sprinklers become mandatory.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm happy to be up and speaking to Bill 72. I want to thank the member from Brampton-Springdale for reintroducing this bill. To say "reintroducing" this bill may not be quite true; obviously the other two were slightly different. I want to talk a little bit about that difference, but I do want to thank her for her perseverance, for dealing with this issue that is part of fire safety.

Having been a firefighter for 25 years, I very much appreciate anything that government and any member of government can do to make society safer from the effects of fire and, more importantly as it relates to firefighters, to make it safer for those who risk their lives to make sure others are not hurt by that fire. We saw it with the World Trade Center, but you see it every day when you go to a fire anywhere, that as everyone else is trying to get out, the firefighters are trying to go in, to help those that are there. There's no doubt in my mind that sprinklers in the house would help that cause; I do want to acknowledge that right up front.

I want to recognize all the firefighters who are here today. It's great to see you here. It makes the place somewhat worthwhile that as you talk about a piece of legislation this important, the people who are going to be impacted by it are here to hear that discussion. I want to thank them for that.

I did say that there was one thing I did want to talk about a little bit: the difference between this bill, Bill 72, and the previous ones, the first one—oh, I haven't got the right date here—Bill 141, and the second one was Bill 2. They were similar bills. The only difference was that they were bills that would amend the building code so that every house constructed after a certain point in time would have a sprinkler system installed. This act changes that somewhat.

I think one can look at it either way, but it changes it so that we would no longer have a uniform building code across the province. In fact, we could have one municipality that dictated having sprinkler systems in new houses and another municipality that decided not to go that route. We could make the assumption, I suppose, that every municipality will see the benefits of doing it and that we would then have a uniform system across the province. But if that's the case, then it would still seem to me that the most practical way of doing that is to leave it in the building code so it just becomes common practice for everyone.

So I find some concerns. The big concern is that everything else that the government has been doing in the

last while tends to take us in the other direction. I'll just use some examples.

The smoke-free Ontario legislation: Now, we all know that in every municipality the council has the power, and still does, to do what they deem necessary to protect the health and safety of their citizens, their residents. So we had a lot of municipalities—I think something like 75% or 80% of the population—covered by a bylaw that prohibited smoking in public places. Then the province came along and said, "No, we want to make sure that we have it uniform, so that 20% of that population is not deprived of that same protection. If it's good for one, it's good for us all." So the government passed the smoke-free Ontario legislation to make sure that we would have uniform coverage across the province.

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More recently, we're presently debating in this House, when we're debating government business, the pesticides act. It's exactly the same thing: Presently, the city of Toronto has a bylaw that regulates the spraying of cosmetic pesticides on lawns in the community. We have pesticides legislation now that will prohibit it across the province. The difference between those two: The smoke-free Ontario legislation applied a stronger standard or as strong a standard as we had anywhere in the province. It appears that the pesticides legislation doesn't do that; it actually lowers the bar and says that no municipality can regulate above that. So we are in fact taking away the ability of municipalities to regulate what they think is in the best interests of their citizens. We will be getting rid of what the government calls a patchwork system and we will make it all the same by uniform policy. This bill, a change from the previous bill, will do exactly the opposite: It is permitted in all municipalities, but no municipality in the province is presently mandated to do it. This legislation would allow the councils to decide whether they want to implement the building code.

I have some concern that if you do that, it's kind of difficult to say that safety for the people of Oxford county is less or more important than for the people of the city of Toronto. I don't think it's fair to suggest that firefighters' risks should be greater in any single municipality than another. So if we're all convinced that the proper way is to have it uniform across the province, then it would seem to me that that's the way the legislation should go.

Having said that, I also believe that this type of legislation—I said it the last time when I spoke to the member's bill, and we appreciated that opportunity. This is something that requires, as the member said, a considerable amount of debate. There are two views—there's more than one view, anyway; there are likely more than two. There are two sides to the story. The safety aspect of it, of course, is very important, but then there's another facet of what it will do to society in general and to the cost of homes and how well they will work and so forth. There's a lot of debate that needs to go into making the final decision.

Every so many years—I think it's every five years—there's a building code review to see what needs to be

changed for future direction in the province. I believe that's when this type of thing should be discussed, so everybody involved has an opportunity to put their position forward and then come out at the end with what is in the best interests of the province. I want to point out that I think it's rather important that between the last time I had the opportunity to speak to this bill and now, we've had such a building code review. I wasn't at that one. I've been involved in a few before then, but the last one, I wasn't there. I would presume that this issue had been discussed at that time, but it was decided that no changes would be made.

As it relates to this bill, I support the principle of what the member is putting forward, but I really have concerns that it will be any more successful in getting through the next step after today, if it passes today. I think we would have great difficulty in getting it back into this House for third reading. We know that the government House leader has to call it back. In order for the government House leader to call it back, it has to be the wish of the government for it to be passed into law. If that was true—and I'm just guessing now—and if the government was intending to pass this into law, they would have included it in the last building code review.

So I say to everyone gathered that passing it today will not necessarily make it the law of the province. The individuals I spoke to after the last debate on this bill may very well be in the audience this afternoon. I remember saying that I would be much more enthused about this if I thought that the bill was coming back for third reading in order to be passed, as opposed to just going through the process of having the discussion on second reading. At that point, it turned out to be true, and we're here to do it again. I still have that same concern that it may not make it there.

Having said that, I do want to quickly go over some of the concerns that were expressed by some of the other people. This is from March 2, 2007; and it was written in the *Globe and Mail*. I won't go through the whole thing. It was Mr. Mike Holmes from Holmes on Homes. Some people consider him quite an expert on renovations. I watch him from time to time. I know that when I get involved in that type of thing, I want to do it right, so he will tell me when I'm not. It's interesting—I've never seen him compliment anyone whose work he was tearing out.

I just want to point out this out. It says here, "We've all heard the statistics about people who had smoke detectors or fire extinguishers that didn't work when they needed them, because they forgot to change the batteries or replace them as needed." He goes on to talk about how the sprinklers will have the same problems if they aren't maintained, and there's nothing in the legislation that would encourage that maintenance. I mention that because I think it's so important. If you read the statistics and stories that are in the paper about fatalities in house fires, it will quite often include whether or not the smoke detector was working, and the majority of the time, it wasn't.

We have to remember that the sprinkler system will do a great job of helping fight the fire for the firefighters, and it will do a great job in trying to save property, but I'm not sure that it does as great a job of warning people that the house is on fire and gets them out. Most of the time—or a lot of lot of the time, at the very least—the smoke will be hazardous to your health long before the fire will set off the sprinkler system. I think we need to put much more of our efforts and our time into making sure that people have smoke detectors and that they're workable. I know that the law is that you must have a smoke detector on every level in your house. I'm here to say that I do have, but no one has ever come to see whether or not they're working. I think we need to do more enforcing the rules to do that.

Mike Holmes also goes on: "If we're pushing for new legislation—instead of a Band-Aid-like solution such as mandatory sprinklers, how about introducing something that will improve the building code standards for fire-resistant building? Let's build it right the first time." What he's talking about there is, if we're going to make that investment, why do we still use half-inch drywall instead of five eighths? Because the five eighths take much longer for the fire to get through. It's things like that that one can do to improve the efficiency of the building, to keep it from burning.

I commend the member for introducing this legislation. I think it should have had more consultation through the building code, but I understand the member's problems with getting that done. If it's not the government's wish to get this done, then this is the only alternative the member has to get it into the House, and I appreciate very much that she has persevered to get it to where it is today. Thank you for allowing me to speak.

Mr. Michael Prue: I'm here today to speak again, for the third time, on the Municipal Residential Sprinkler Act, Bill 72. I say "for the third time" because in each session since the member from Brampton–Springdale has been here, she has put forward a bill—a logical, clear, coherent, concise, doable bill—to protect lives in this province, and in each session, we have seen it die on the order paper. It has been referred to committee, but the first two times, it wasn't even called by the committee. The government refused to call the bill into committee to even allow public deputations, to even allow an all-party conference to listen to it, support it, speak to it, make amendments to it and garner public support.

On the first occasion, she spoke with extreme passion, and many people and firefighters came out. The numbers seem to swell each time this is brought forward. Each time, more and more people come out to hear about this bill. I am convinced that the public at large is totally, completely supportive of this bill.

I rise here today, as I have in the past, to talk about the merits of saving lives. I know that there are people out there who do not support this bill; we all know that. We all know that some of those people who have had the ear of the McGuinty government and the cabinet—those people who have spoken against this bill and other similar bills—have largely come from the construction

industry, the new home builders. They talk about the costs, and I've asked them and questioned them about the costs in human lives. They talk about money, and I think that the member from Brampton–Springdale and others in this Legislature have talked about human lives and talked about the importance, and which one is the most important.

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Each year that she has spoken, and this is the third time, she has asked the government, her own government, to do the right thing. I'm asking them to do the right thing again this year, and we acknowledge—the previous debater talked about this as well—that the bill has changed. I am not sure that the bill has changed for the better, and I have to say that. I understand her frustration—we all understand her frustration—in having to move an amended bill that calls upon the 480 municipalities to individually have their own fire code, their own building code, their own regulations, their own bylaws, because she understands that this government seems to be intransigent upon something that other governments have seized years ago.

We know they've done it in British Columbia; we also know they've done it in 400 other jurisdictions across North America. One only has to look at the demonstration. I was out there with the firefighters in a demonstration in front of Queen's Park—all members were invited to come out to it—a year or two ago. They showed how fast a fire can start; how fast it can reach the flashpoint, the point upon which it becomes extremely dangerous, at which the residents invariably are in danger, where the firefighters who enter the building are in danger; and how that flashpoint can be reduced to almost nothing with a residential sprinkler. It showed how fast a mock chair, I think it was, went up, and then it showed how, when the mock chair had a sprinkler on it, even though the fire may not be completely put out, it lessened the fire and the severity and the intensity of that fire to the point that it was not a danger.

We all know that firefighters across this province endeavour to get to the scene of a fire within four or five minutes of the time that the alarm is sounded and they're out the door. By and large, in the larger urbanized areas, they are absolutely and totally successful in almost every case in meeting that mandate. But we have lots of places in this province where they don't, and the firefighters are too spread out in rural and remote areas, in small-town Ontario, where it is impossible, with volunteer firefighters, to meet that four- or five-minute mandate. We know that having a residential sprinkler will allow the home to be watered down even a little, so that the flashpoint is not reached, so that lives are not put at the same kind of risk, so that the smoke doesn't engulf the entire home. Even if that buys another four, five or six minutes, it's going to save lives every single time, and every single time it's going to give firefighters who bravely come out to unforeseen circumstances that extra couple of minutes before the flashpoint is reached, and that extra couple of minutes to save their own lives and their own health, which we all hold so dear.

I too have introduced a bill three times in this Legislature. The minister from Brampton–Springdale and I work almost in tandem. She is trying to get residential sprinklers for new homes and I have been trying to get wooden fire escapes off the old ones. Each time she speaks to my bill and I speak to hers. I remember when my bill on the last occasion actually got to committee; it actually made it to committee and it was debated. I remember the sadness that I had when we tried to incorporate some aspects of her bill at that time into my bill. The Conservatives all supported doing that, and I was the lone New Democrat—it was my bill—and I supported doing that, but her colleagues in the Liberal Party wouldn't even buy into what she was trying to do in terms of this bill. My bill passed, but without any of the amendments that I wanted for her.

This is tough. I know what she's trying to do and I support it wholeheartedly. I'm not speaking to her, because I don't need to. I'm speaking to the other members. I know it's going to pass unanimously here today—or I expect that what happened before is going to happen again—that we're all going to vote for it, but it's not enough to vote for it today. You have to, as a caucus, make the determination to send this to committee and you have to, as a caucus, stand united to make it happen. It has to happen, and it has to happen there. Then you, as a caucus, have to demand, through the Premier's office and through the House leader, that it be brought back for third and final reading in this House. It's not going to happen any other way. It's not going to happen if we all sit here and are content to allow it only to happen here today.

So I'm asking members to do something I have seen all too rarely in these last five years—not that I'm ever going to see it—and that is for there to be a mini-caucus revolt, where people say, “This is an important bill.”

We've seen what the government is trying to do. They're talking about sprinklers, but in places that are not going to really affect anybody; well, they're going to affect some people. They're talking about sprinklers in residential and service areas, in common areas and in mixed-use buildings, but they all have to be in excess of three storeys. They're not talking about sprinklers in single-family homes, and that's what this bill is all about.

It would not take a huge amount of effort to take what the government is planning to do anyway and incorporate all homes, to be like the 410 or so other jurisdictions across North America that already see the brilliance of doing this. I am asking them and all of you to do that. It is not a difficult proposition.

I just want to close by quoting from my favourite former fire chief, retired, of the city of Toronto, whom I see here today, Mr. Al Speed. He wrote an editorial opinion to the Toronto Sun on January 9, 2008. He said:

“Fire sprinkler systems have proven their value and effectiveness time and again. They protect our workplaces, restaurants, entertainment venues and institutions, yet we return to our homes, where we should feel safe, and that, tragically, is where most perish in a fire, typically between 90 and 100 annually in Ontario.”

He goes on in very hard-hitting terms: "Let's stop this madness now. Vancouver introduced mandatory residential sprinklers for all new residential construction in 1990, and 17 years later they have never recorded a fire fatality in an occupancy protected by sprinklers.

"The responsibility in Ontario lies with Queen's Park, and they can bring in changes to the Ontario building code requiring all new houses and apartment/condos to be protected by fire sprinklers."

He ends with these words: "I urge the people of Ontario to call upon their local MPPs and the provincial government to introduce the necessary legislation requiring the installation of fire sprinklers in all new residential occupancies. If the government is not prepared to make this progressive move, I challenge them to at least set up an inquiry to learn the facts."

I challenge the members opposite to do the same: to learn those facts, go back to your caucus, support your colleague from Brampton-Springdale and, this time, do it right. You're making the changes anyway. Include single-family residential homes. Protect the lives of citizens and the lives of our brave firefighters.

Mr. Kim Craiton: It's a pleasure to be speaking here today at 1:50 p.m. on Bill 72, a bill that I consider very significant. Before I start, I would like to recognize two very professional firefighters from my riding of Niagara Falls who are here today to support this bill. One is Fort Erie Fire Chief Jim Douglas. He's in the east gallery, behind me, so I don't have a chance to say hello to him personally, but thank you for coming out, Jim. As well, Niagara Falls Assistant Fire Chief Jim Jessop is here. Thank you very much for taking the time.

The fact that both of these chiefs are here indicates that they know first-hand the tragedy and trauma of needless death. They also know that this bill will support not just the public but firefighters. I believe that by their presence here, they're giving strong testimony for the need for this private member's bill that the member for Brampton-Springdale has put forward, and that they're supporting it.

1350

We all have stories about fires, unfortunately. I'm going to share a couple with the House today. They're not nice stories to tell, but I think they're significant enough to be told because they emphasize why having sprinkler systems, as indicated in the bill, are so important.

Two weeks ago, when a fire broke out at Cavendish Manor, a retirement residence in my community, some of the residents were so desperate to escape that they were hanging from the open windows on the second floor and some of them were getting ready to jump. The fire was an accident, but it was a tragedy waiting to happen because this residential retirement building had no fire sprinkler system. Thank goodness the fire broke out just before 11 in the morning, in a room on the second floor of a 90-year-old former schoolhouse, when staff were present. Thank goodness it happened during the day, because the well-trained staff at that home knew what

they were doing and they did it very well. If this had happened at any other time, particularly in the evening after 8 p.m., when there is less staff on duty, Assistant Fire Chief Jessop told me there could have been a loss of at least 20 of this city's most respected seniors. Many of these seniors are personal friends of mine, and I've attended many of their milestones and I celebrate their birthdays with them. As it was, one of the residents in fact did die while being evacuated but, thankfully, was resuscitated by a firefighter. I'm happy to report that she's doing well.

I visited the home the next day. I talked to the responders. I talked to the staff. I talked to the investigators. I saw the devastating results first-hand. I saw how in just four minutes, a little, containable accident became a raging, ravaging inferno that consumed everything in its way in its quest for oxygen. I saw how the fire was contained by the existing regulations we have. I saw how the fire doors that were there and the fireproof ceiling helped. But I also know and I was told that had there been one sprinkler head, it would have limited the damage to that one room only and allowed everyone in the home to live with the peace and security of a sensible fire protection system, had it been in place.

Another situation: While no one was injured after a fire gutted a home on Casey Street, again, in my riding of Niagara Falls, earlier this year, the damage was extensive. The fire started in an area in the basement and burned through the ceiling, spreading to the first floor. The damage was pegged at \$70,000. Again, Jim Jessop, assistant fire chief with the Niagara Falls Fire Department, told me that if the home had been equipped with a residential sprinkler system, the fire would have most likely been extinguished by a single sprinkler head, with far less damage.

Unfortunately, this was not true last year in Fort Erie, as their fire department tried valiantly to rescue a mother and a child from a townhouse. The mother suffered burns to over 80% of her body and is still hospitalized. The daughter died. This fire was truly tragic. It was tragic for the loss of life. The tragedy continues today for the mother as she fights the pain of body and soul. The tragedy continues as our community copes with the horrendous medical and professional care bills. But the biggest tragedy of all is that it did not need to happen. With a single fire sprinkler head, the mother and daughter would be here today, in this gallery, alive and in good health, supporting this bill. The damage to the property would have been minimal. I want to tell you that the responding brave men and women of the Fort Erie Fire Department would in fact have faced a significantly less dangerous situation, with less risk and far less emotional trauma.

Nobody likes to see a needless death. Tragically, our fire departments across the province have seen far too many of them.

You've heard from two of the speakers before me about the city of Vancouver, and I want to say it for the third time: Eighteen years ago, by a municipal bylaw, they passed legislation requiring residential sprinklers in

all new homes. Since then, they have not had one—let me repeat that—not one fire-related death in a home with a sprinkler.

Every year, my guests, two of Ontario's best fire professionals, have travelled to urge us to amend the building code to require sprinklers in all structures over three storeys. They're back here today. They're asking us to complete the job and to cover buildings under three storeys. According to Patrick Burke, the Ontario fire marshal, who was formerly the fire chief for Niagara Falls, there are almost 13,000 fires, that result in 90,000 deaths, 800 injuries and over \$340 million in property damage in Ontario; 72% of fires occur in residential homes.

Those opposing mandatory sprinklers have said that their concerns are about the cost and the impact on new homes. I'm going to tell you that the same thing was said about seat belts and airbags in motor vehicles. Today, these devices are recognized as essential life-saving equipment. So even if there is a cost, we are talking about people's lives. That's something you can never place a value on.

Let me say in conclusion: In light of all the evidence, if we fail to act, if we fail to support this legislation, if we fail to insist on the installation of fire sprinklers, then we fail the communities we serve and we fail to protect those who protect us. If we fail to serve, then we really are being negligent.

I want to thank the member from Brampton–Springdale, my good friend and colleague Linda Jeffrey, for her passion and purpose. I am quite honoured to have the opportunity to speak in support of this bill.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am pleased to rise today to support Bill 72, the Municipal Residential Sprinkler System Act, put forward by the member from Brampton–Springdale.

I am pleased to participate on behalf of the residents of York South–Weston, who remember a fire tragedy that took the life of a 15-year-old girl. In December 2006, a fire broke out in a townhouse complex on Humber Boulevard in York South–Weston, and a 15-year-old was trapped on the third floor of her home. Although her mother jumped out a window to escape the flames, the teen had to be retrieved by fire crews. Tragically, she later died in hospital.

As a mother, when I hear about these incidents I can't help but feel hurt for the family and the mother who had to cope with this tragic loss. I know that residents were shaken up by the blaze, but I also think it's very important to think about the firefighters who must work to extinguish fires in such dangerous situations. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the firefighters who are here in the chamber today.

In the case of the Humber Boulevard fire, the Toronto fire platoon chief, B.J. Hansen, said at the time that the visors on the helmets were completely melted off of his crew, and the firefighters suffered steam burns. So in battling fires, we think of the safety of the residents of the buildings and the families who endure the trauma, but

we also think about the front-line staff who must protect and contain the danger while potentially putting themselves in harm's way.

Residential sprinkler systems are another tool that residents and firefighters can draw on to prevent these kinds of tragedies. In 2006, the cause of the blaze was unknown, but the fire officials noted that the smoke detectors in the complex were in good working order. Despite that fact, there was still the tragic loss of a young life.

Building codes, the materials used in construction, and fire warning and prevention systems within complexes are all-important when it comes to fire safety. Home-owners should certainly think about installing residential sprinkler systems, but the proposed Bill 72 keeps in mind the particular nature of multi-unit dwelling residences that are very high or are attached. The member from Brampton–Springdale is correct in bringing particular emphasis in Bill 72 to the multi-level nature of new construction.

Although I started my debate speaking about a tragic fire that took a life about a year and a half ago in York South–Weston, there was actually a more recent fire that illustrates the importance of integrating fire prevention into new buildings. Just this past Monday night, May 26, in the area of Jane and Weston in York South–Weston, there was a four-alarm fire on a top-floor unit of a townhouse complex that spread to at least two other homes. Nineteen fire trucks and 80 firefighters were called to the scene, and it is estimated that about 40 residents were affected by the blaze and had to be evacuated from their homes. The firefighters did a terrific job—no reports of injuries. Residents were able to return to their homes quickly.

1400

What I find relevant to our discussion on Bill 72 is that firefighters were on the scene for over three hours, because while the fire started in one unit of the complex, it spread quickly to adjacent buildings. The fire captain estimated that the townhouses were less than two years old.

So Bill 72 really speaks to the fact that it does take a variety of participants to work together to prevent incidents like the fire in York South–Weston on Monday. Therefore, on behalf of the residents of York South–Weston, I would just like to conclude by once again congratulating the member from Brampton–Springdale for bringing forward this bill, which highlights a variety of partners who can work together to bring changes in Ontario to save lives.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Ms. Jeffrey, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I'd like to thank the member from Oxford. I know he supports the principle of this bill. He spoke about a contractor's opposition to this legislation. I know developers and contractors are concerned about this legislation, but I'd like to encourage them to embrace this proven technology in the same way they do environmental and energy initiatives.

To the member from Beaches–East York, I appreciate his ongoing support on this issue. He gets it and he understands that fire safety is not a partisan issue. I like the idea of a sprinkler revolution, so I'll think about that.

To the member from Niagara Falls, I thank him for his ongoing support. It's unfortunate that fires continue to take a toll on our residents, and I'm sorry they're happening in Niagara Falls.

To the member from York South–Weston, I thank her for speaking and sharing that tragic fire in her community and how she lost such a young life at such an early age.

It's unfortunate that fires continue to take a toll in Ontario. That's why I'm here again today. This is my one chance to talk about something that I'm passionate about. We are the voice of all Ontarians across this province. The most vulnerable, the elderly, the disabled and children are most at risk when their home is on fire. They rely on us, when we find out about good technologies or good ideas, to put those ideas forward and not wait until a building code review or some other opportunity happens. We're here to react and be nimble when things are obvious to us. This is an obvious piece of legislation, and I am committed to seeing the legislation passed so we can protect all Ontarians across all our ridings in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I'll just remind our attendees today and people watching at home that, under the new rules, this item will be voted on in 100 minutes' time.

JAY LAWRENCE AND BART MACKEY
MEMORIAL ACT (HIGHWAY TRAFFIC
AMENDMENT), 2008

LOI DE 2008 COMMÉMORANT
JAY LAWRENCE ET BART MACKEY
(MODIFICATION DU CODE
DE LA ROUTE)

Mr. Rinaldi moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 74, An Act in memory of Jay Lawrence and Bart Mackey to amend the Highway Traffic Act / Projet de loi 74, Loi modifiant le Code de la route à la mémoire de Jay Lawrence et Bart Mackey.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 97, Mr. Rinaldi, you have up to 12 minutes for your comments.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I rise today in this House to pursue—like the previous private member—something that I passionately believe in, that we as legislators need to act on to prevent further tragedies.

Just a little chronology on this particular bill I've introduced: Back on July 30, 2000, two young men, Jay Lawrence and Bart Mackey from the community of Baltimore, which is just north of Cobourg in the municipality of Hamilton township, along with some friends were riding in the back of a pickup truck. The truck was involved in an accident and both of those young gentle-

men died. In May 2001, the former member from Northumberland, a member of the then government, introduced a private member's bill to try to deal with this issue. Unfortunately, the bill never made it through the process. In November 2004, after being elected and just over a year in government, I reintroduced a bill to eliminate riding in the back of pickup trucks. In February 2005, it was ordered for second reading. In November 2005, it was ordered for third reading. We went as far as January 2007. Then, through the Ministry of Transportation, we had some consultations and really good feedback. In September—as you know, in October we embarked on the election—the bill died on the order paper.

What I am trying to say here today is that there are six jurisdictions in Canada—British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick—that have some regulatory regime to prevent folks from riding in the back of pickup trucks. Having said that, there are 31 jurisdictions, specifically 31 US states, that currently, as we speak here today, out of the 50—which is about 75%—have regulatory regimes to prevent riding in the back of pickup trucks. To put it mildly, Ontario needs to get up to the times.

My speaking comments could have been very brief: “Well, what I said back in 2004 and 2005 I'm going to say again.” But I must say that I'm going to touch on some points, because things haven't changed. I talked about the two young gentlemen who were killed. Another incident that came to my attention from feedback that I got from some folks when I first introduced this bill last time is that in August 2004 the same thing happened to a 20-year-old gentleman in Manitoba.

I just want to emphasize that back in 2000 the Canadian Public Health Association passed a resolution condemning the use of the back of pickup trucks. They took a bit of a different spin. Although there are a number of lives lost, they wanted to focus on injuries from accidents when people are riding in the back of pickup trucks. They tell us that, on average, whenever there is an injury, for the first year there is a cost to our public health care—and this is an injury—of well over \$300,000. They also tell us that if somebody is permanently injured—and it's quite common when you're not restrained and riding in a motor vehicle—it costs our health care system some \$2.5 million for each injury over the lifespan of the particular individual. So, not to diminish the anguish that a family has to go through, and the challenges, if somebody is hurt because of an accident, we tend to put dollar figures to it, but it's the pain and hardship that normally are not easy.

Some of the things that they tell us also are statistics when you talk about injuries occurring from riding unrestrained: Specifically in the back of a pickup truck, the chances of getting hurt or dying are over 10 times higher than if you were restrained. So, as you can see, the statistics tell us that there is something wrong with the way we do things. They tell us that over 200 deaths occur per year in Canada from riding in the back of pickup trucks.

Mr. Speaker, when we compare things—for example, if you or I were to take our pet for a ride in the back of a

pickup truck, it's against the law to have that pet loose in the back of the truck. You have to restrain it with a leash and so forth. Yet, as human beings, we can sit or stand in the back of a truck.

I want to make reference to the last couple of years, when we strengthened our seat belt legislation in the province of Ontario. It tends to lead us to believe, with some of the wording in the legislation—I don't have it in front of me—that this is covered. Well, it might well be covered, but I talked to some police forces that are supporting this bill—it is quite vague. Do we want to debate vagueness after somebody is hurt or has lost their life, or can we give our police the authority to sort of control it before an injury happens? So we can argue that piece. It's certainly addressed, but it is very vague.

1410

Some of the concerns that came up the last time this bill was introduced were some exceptions. I, for one, sometimes ride in the back of a pickup truck during parades. I'm sure we all do in this Legislature. But during the consultation that the Ministry of Transportation did back in 2007, the ministry spoke with a number of groups—actually quite a large number of groups, from agriculture to labour unions and construction—saying through regulations, and these came up pretty clearly during the consultation process, we could put assurances in place that we can deal with those issues.

For example, through the agricultural sector, one of the things that came up was that this might create a challenge for the agricultural industry, and I come from a rural community. But, for example, we could have exemptions that riding in the back of a pickup truck from farm to farm might be permissible as long as it's not on a highway. I think we can deal with those issues. Those two young folks I spoke of were just a bunch of folks that got together for a good time.

It's the same with tourists. For example, sometimes we sit here in front and we see some tourist buses open, double-decker buses, that might not be restrained. But those folks are very well controlled. They probably don't go over 20 kilometres an hour. We can build that through regulation.

I just want to take a minute. First of all—I should have done this upfront—I need to thank my staff, the legislative folks who helped us put this together and review it for this time, for their hard work. Obviously, as you know, our lives are pretty busy. Also, I do want to acknowledge the Port Hope Police Services Board, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, the Quinte West OPP detachment and the Cobourg Police Service board. I do have one of the many letters I got from Peter Nielsen from Cambridge, Ontario, supporting this piece of legislation to move forward.

Wrapping up my time here: We've already done a lot of work on this. I've read that the chronology of things went through. It already went to committee. We had some consultations.

I also understand that we're two years down the road now and there might be some new ideas that we need to

incorporate into this. I'll say upfront that if this bill is successful today in getting approval in second reading, I'll certainly recommend that it go to committee for further consultation. I think we need to make it as right as we possibly can with today's information. Having said that, I'm looking forward to hearing debate from all sides of the House, and comments. I hope I can get everybody's support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you very much. Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's a pleasure to rise in support of the bill and, frankly, to thank the member for his efforts on behalf of road safety in this province. Just as the member for Brampton–Springdale with a previous bill stood up, came forward with very practical, very reasonable legislation for dealing with a safety issue to protect lives, I appreciate what this member has done.

I know there will be questions that will have to be resolved in committee about how we deal with some of the circumstances that present themselves in the far north or in rural parts of Ontario, where there are situations requiring people to ride in the back of trucks for work-related purposes. I leave that to committee to sort through.

But Mr. Rinaldi is quite correct: People in the back of trucks, unrestrained, going at high speed, are in danger of losing their lives, in danger of being profoundly injured or maimed. For us to take action is entirely consistent with all that's been done in this province historically around seat belts, around redesign of cars, around standards, so that people get to live their full lives, so that people aren't forced to become charges of the state or simply in situations where their lives become insufferable and unbearable. I appreciate the circumstances that led him to introduce this legislation, and I think it's entirely reasonable for this piece of private member's legislation not only to pass here on second reading, but to go through committee and third reading and be introduced as law in this province. If we are going to look after ourselves, and if we're going to look after the next generation, we have to take these kinds of steps. Again, I thank him for coming forward.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm privileged and honoured to stand up and speak in support of the bill brought forward by my colleague and seatmate from Northumberland, Bill 74, An Act in memory of Jay Lawrence and Bart Mackey to amend the Highway Traffic Act.

I know the member is a great advocate for many different issues, and today he is bringing to this House a very important safety issue. He mentioned in his speech the importance of passing this bill in order to protect lives in our communities across Ontario. As you know, so many people think it is easy to put somebody in the back of a truck without a seat belt, without anything, and then drive on the highway at speeds of 70, 80 and sometimes 100. Sometimes they are surprised when they push the brake and the people who are in the back of the truck fly into the air and get injured or die. As he mentioned, statistics say that 10 people on a yearly basis

die across Canada, and a great number die across Ontario. He gave the example of two people from his riding who died in the year 2000.

It's important for us, as a Legislature, to bring forward bills and laws to protect the lives of the people of Ontario. We and the opposition need to make sure that all the rules and regulations in this province are being utilized in a safe way.

He mentioned that there are to be some exemptions. As you know, recreational trucks being used in the province for different reasons often don't speed; they go 10 or 20 kilometres per hour. Also, we see a lot of double-decker tourist buses in front of Queen's Park or in Toronto and many different tourist areas in Ontario. Those will be exempt. But the most important thing we're talking about is the pickup truck. It's open in the back, and people jump in and then go on the highway. This will cost a lot of lives.

This issue is also important for our health care, because, as you know, we have a lot of stress on our health care system. We cannot open more ways to keep the stress on health care and create more injured and disabled people, and more people losing their lives. It's our responsibility to make sure that all the people in this society, in this community, in this province will be protected.

Ironically, as my colleague and seatmate mentioned, if you have a dog or cat and you put it in the back of a truck, you have to put it on a leash and tie it to the truck, but if you're a person and sit in the back, there's no regulation, no rules. It's just amazing. When I spoke in support of this bill for the first time in 2005, when he first introduced it in this place, I thought this already existed in Ontario.

Sometimes when we open the books and start monitoring and examining things, there's a lot of dangerous stuff not being regulated in the province. You wonder why not. That's why colleagues from different sides of the House bring issues, like my colleague from Brampton brought earlier: sprinklers in single-family homes to protect lives in our communities. Many members before her have brought different ideas and bills to this House to enhance our ability to govern the province and protect the people of Ontario.

I think my colleague and seatmate, the member for Northumberland, brings a very important issue to this House today. It's about safety, about saving lives and about protecting the people of Ontario. Sometimes we feel young and strong; we think nothing will hurt us. But we cannot take anything for granted. Sometimes we use a lot of things, a lot of methods, a lot of ways, and we think we are able to deal with them. But we are weak creatures, and if we don't create laws and rules to protect ourselves and protect others, we'll leave ourselves vulnerable to many different dangers. That's why I'm standing up today in support of this bill and hopefully others will stand up and support the bill too.

1420

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I rise in the House with great pleasure, and I mean that with all sincerity. This after-

noon is proving to be one of those occasions when we seem to be able to reach consensus relatively easily. Of course I support Bill 74, An Act in memory of Jay Lawrence and Bart Mackey to amend the Highway Traffic Act, and I'd like to commend our colleague the member for Northumberland—Quinte West in his persistence in this regard, in bringing this private member's bill forward again, following on his predecessor in his riding, a member of a previous government, who had initiated this.

Clearly, from my the point of view, public safety—prevention of death, prevention of injury—is absolutely paramount, and I view it as a duty of this Legislature to do what we can in terms of legislation and regulation to optimize the possibility of our constituents living their lives to the full.

I was particularly pleased to see how many letters of endorsement the member for Northumberland—Quinte West received, particularly from police forces across the province. We need to understand that for first responders—and seeing the fire chiefs here today makes me think, of course, that it's not only the police that have to transmit often very tragic information to families, but so often the firefighters, as our colleague from Eglinton—Lawrence has pointed out, are in fact the first on the scene and are often very much affected, as are paramedics. Obviously, anything we can do to have our first responders less exposed to these critical incidents is certainly something that I would applaud.

I was interested in the member for Northumberland—Quinte West mentioning parades and so on. I had the great good fortune to be involved in the Nobleton parade, in the great township of King in my riding, and I was presented with a 1968 Mustang convertible—red, of course—in which to ride. I immediately hopped onto the back, but I must say, I was following Queen Victoria. Queen Victoria actually made a special visit that day; she was in an absolutely splendid black carriage with a couple of wonderful horses leading the way. But as we proceeded down Highway 27, we did stop and start on a number of occasions, and even in that regard, there is a certain risk. These are things that clearly we need consultation on, and committee will no doubt be the place to have that kind of further consideration of perhaps what should be in the regulations in this bill. It is certainly without any hesitation that I will be supporting this piece of legislation. Again, I wish to congratulate the member for Northumberland—Quinte West in bringing it forward today.

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise in support of the bill in order to send it to committee. It has been before committee before. I think that the bill does need some tinkering—I will be very blunt. I think it needs some further discussion on how it is to be effected.

I'm a city boy—I'm from Toronto. I've said this before. I've grown up in this city my entire life, save and except for one year in Ottawa, and that hardly qualifies as small-town Ontario. So I've spent my whole life in big cities: this one and Ottawa. I cannot imagine allowing

people in a built-up metropolitan area to ride in the back of a truck. I did see that quite regularly in my youth, but I have not seen anyone doing that for years and years, and justifiably and with good reason; it is because it's simply too dangerous. Having said that, we all know that every place in Ontario is not like Toronto or Ottawa or Hamilton or London or Thunder Bay. There are many, many places in this province where it may be necessary—either for survival or to make a living—for people to be transported in the back of a truck.

The one that comes immediately to mind is farm workers who are being transported from a bunkhouse or a farm compound out into the fields or out into the adjoining field, even if they do have to go down a minor roadway or two in order to earn their livelihoods, in order to be brought back at lunchtime, in order to be brought back at the end of the day. Sometimes the distance, even if it is only a kilometre or two, is simply too long for weary people who have hard work to do.

I want to start to think about the farm workers and about the ability to transport those farm workers under conditions which are not nearly so hazardous as cars ziping in and out and around in big cities. They are likely to be the only car on the road and there is a great unlikelihood of car accidents.

I also want to think about rural communities and isolated communities that do not have access to highways. This is true in large swaths of northern Ontario, particularly in our aboriginal communities and the Treaty 9 area and north of Thunder Bay and over towards the Manitoba border.

I have had the privilege and the honour of going with members of this Legislature to a number of such communities across northern Ontario. We did so, in part, with the bill to talk about sharing arrangements for our aboriginal communities and how we could help them, in the way that we do with other municipalities, in order to allow them to gain some of the taxes from development on their lands. I know that members of this House who went on that committee will remember the isolation of many of these communities, where there are no roads into them, where the only roads that exist, exist in and around the community itself. There may be five or six or 10 kilometres of roads in the area surrounding an isolated community. They are not paved, they are largely gravel, and the people who travel on those roads are people only from the community.

When you fly in, of course, there's no other way to get there, save and except if you go in in the winter. Over the frozen muskeg, you can sometimes make your way in from what we consider, in southern Ontario, to be isolated communities like Sioux Lookout and places like that, which really aren't isolated at all.

We need to understand the necessity in those places of the trucks and the vehicles that people drive. It would not make sense in many of these communities, and you will hardly ever see a person with a car like in southern Ontario. It makes absolutely no sense economically for them to have a car that seats four or five people in relative

safety, enclosed with a roof over it, because they need their vehicle for so many things. They need their vehicles for hunting, because in most of these isolated communities the only protein that they get has to be what they shoot. There may be a Northern Store, but if you go in there and you buy a chicken that you can buy in Toronto for 99 cents a pound, I will guarantee you that you will pay \$5 or \$6 or \$8 a pound for that chicken in the Northern Store. Very few people can eat that, or they can't have turkey, they don't buy beef, they can't afford pork, and the only food that they realistically have and protein that they have is what they shoot themselves, whether it be geese in the spring or moose in the fall or the fish that they catch from isolated lakes. That's where it comes from, that's what they eat, and they need the truck to gain access to some of those locations. They need the truck not just for themselves, but oftentimes for many people in the community who go out in a hunting party or a fishing party. They need that truck to go out even for such basic needs as collecting fuel for the fire by which they heat their homes. People go out with an axe or a chainsaw or a handsaw into the forest in order to cut down the wood to take it back to keep their families warm.

They don't go out individually, one or two in a truck. Sometimes they go out in great numbers, with the largest truck used to transport the fuel back. I want to think about them when we're doing this. I do not want them to be breaking the law. Even though it's highly unlikely that they will ever be stopped by a member of the OPP, they still in fact have their own aboriginal police people. I want people to understand that we need to protect their rights to the indigenous way of life that they have chosen.

1430

I also look at what is happening around the other provinces and note that in Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island there are no restrictions. In Manitoba you can sit in the back of the truck provided you are seated at all times while it is in motion. You can go in the back of a truck if you are working, and this would protect farmers and the like in Alberta, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. I do agree that British Columbia and Quebec have a ban similar to that which is being proposed here today.

I also need to talk about the past history of Bill 153, which was the bill that preceded this, that the member from Northumberland—Quinte West put in the last Parliament. It went to committee. It had the very rare thing happening that it actually passed committee and was ordered back for third reading. But the government of the day, his own, decided not to bring the bill forward for a final vote.

I am asking the Liberals who are here again today—this is a good idea that needs some tinkering. We need to pass this legislation to save lives. There need to be members of the caucus who have the unmitigated gall, the temerity, to stand up to the Premier and to the cabinet and say, “We want this bill brought forward for third and final reading,” should it get that far again.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Courage, you mean.

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes, you need courage. You cannot simply stand here today, as I told you on the last bill, and pass it and expect it to go off into oblivion. You have to stand up in your caucus. It is you and not me, and only you and not me, who can effect that change within the Liberal caucus. So go ahead; really try to do it. There are good bills emanating from all sides of this House from private members and they need to be acted upon. It should not just be the prerogative of the government House leader and the cabinet to determine. You all have a role, if you want this bill to pass, to make it so.

Having said that, again I ask you to look back when the bill comes, because there were some changes the last time. When it went to committee, the government members determined that you could not travel over 25 kilometres an hour. I ask you to stop and think: That's about the average pace of a horse. We are not going to be stopping the Amish and the Mennonites who are travelling around with horses—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: That's a full-up gallop.

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes, that's about the full-up gallop of a horse.

We're not going to be stopping them in the back of their stuff. Stop and think about this in terms of farm communities. If we're going to allow the Amish and the Mennonite communities to transport people in sleds and things behind horse-drawn carriages at a pretty good gallop, we should think that it would be at least as safe in a truck.

Secondly, I think we also have to look at the necessity of transporting such things as wood and fuel and game for our aboriginal communities and those in isolated communities in the north, where they have to travel over rough roads and where they literally have no other way.

I would look upon these as exceptions that need to be made to the law. But the law itself, for most people, the overwhelming majority of the 13 million of us who live in southern Ontario, the overwhelming majority of Ontarians, is a good law whose time has come. We should join British Columbia and Quebec. We should ensure that road safety is paramount and that we save the lives of those people who are in trucks.

Mr. Jeff Leal: It is a pleasure for me to have a few minutes this afternoon to support the bill of my colleague, Bill 74, An Act in memory of Jay Lawrence and Bart Mackey to amend the Highway Traffic Act.

The member from Northumberland–Quinte West did introduce this bill in the last Parliament. Frankly, it's unfortunate that it didn't get ultimate passage, because this is a road safety bill, a very important bill. The member from Northumberland–Quinte West has a long and standing interest in road safety, certainly in the province of Ontario. When you review his personal background, he spent some time with the Fiat motor car company and Chrysler. Indeed, his family business, Brighton Speedway, promotes the safe operation of vehicles and road safety. So he has a very long and distinguished history in this area. It's very consistent with his own personal

thinking that he brought this bill forward to protect individuals riding in the back of pickup trucks.

In the last Parliament, when he introduced this bill, I know the member from Northumberland–Quinte West did an extensive consultation in his own riding. He was in Roseneath, Cobourg, Hastings and Campbellford, and I know so well that he took the opportunity to speak with individuals on those back concessions about his vision of how to improve safety on those back concessions, that took the lives of two very young people back in 2000.

I know his staff has provided some excellent research for us to quote from. He talks about how other provinces in Canada—British Columbia, New Brunswick, Northwest Territories, Nova Scotia, Quebec and Alberta—have various forms of legislation dealing with restrictions on riding in the back of pickup trucks. He certainly makes the plea this afternoon that Ontario, as the largest province in the Canadian Confederation, a province that's always prided itself on leading highway and public safety, should move forward with this particular bill.

He notes in his research: “Going back to the year 2000, the Canadian Public Health Association passed a resolution calling on all Canadian jurisdictions to take action to make it illegal for passengers to ride in the back of pickup trucks. The reason they did that is because they know that injuries happen, deaths happen...,” and we shouldn't allow, as an advanced nation, for that to happen.

It went on to talk about: “Whereas the head is the most frequently injured body region following a fall or ejection from the back of a pickup truck, and the direct average cost of care during the first year following severe brain injury can be as high as \$300,000, with lifetime cost of care ranging from \$2.5 million to \$5.5 million—that's just from an injury.” That's not a death, that's just from a severe injury and trauma to the head that results when you are ejected from the back of a pickup truck.

Also in his research, he said: “A Washington state study found the fatality risk is 10.4 times higher for persons riding in the cargo area than the risk to the general population involved in collisions. So it increases tenfold.” One of the ways we could certainly reduce very serious injury and deaths in the province of Ontario is to move forward with Bill 74, and make it an act of this Parliament to protect people who are riding in the back of pickup trucks.

The member deserves full credit, based on the work of a previous member of this House, Mr. Galt, but certainly introducing it in the previous Parliament and bringing it forward now. This is a bill that needs to be passed in the province of Ontario. I commend my colleague for bringing it forward at this particular time.

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to rise to speak in support of this bill and commend the member from Northumberland–Quinte West for bringing it forward. There is considerable history to this bill, as you will know, Speaker. You were here as a member of this House when our former colleague, Doug Galt, who was the member then from Northumberland, first introduced

this bill in 2001, some seven years ago. At that time, it was a very moving debate, as we will remember.

I don't believe that there will be any member of this House who will vote against this bill. I don't want to presume that, but I can't imagine, because of common sense. What is so concerning to me, and I'm sure to other members of the Legislature, is why we now have the third reincarnation of this bill before us. It still is not law, and yet, to the person here, we speak about the importance of implementing some form of legislation with amendments. As former speakers have mentioned, there obviously are some areas that need to be refined. But why we are still here trying to move forward a piece of legislation that is just good common sense and is in the public interest is so frustrating for me as a member of this place. But we are going to remain eternally hopeful that this time the government of the day will hear the call of this private members' hour, will respond to the appeal of the member for Northumberland–Quinte West and all of his colleagues here and will in fact move forward with this bill.

1440

For the record, I want to put into context the real initiative for Mr. Doug Galt's bill originally. I was in the House at the time of the debate. I recall very well the parents of Jay Lawrence and Bart Mackey: John and Judy Lawrence were present at the time of that debate and Laurie and Linda Mackey were here as well.

In reviewing the file, I came across the committee hearings that took place at that time. I want to read into the record Mrs. Mackey's comments to the standing committee on June 11, 2001. It's so very close to this very debate that's taking place now, and unfortunately the parents of these two young men have watched the dithering of this place on an issue that I'm sure is beyond their comprehension as to why, when we've passed so many pieces of legislation that, in my humble opinion, are not nearly as worthy as this simple piece of legislation, and yet we've devoted hours and hours of debate and committee, and the government has wielded its power to implement that legislation. But here we are, still debating this.

I want to read into the record Mrs. Mackey's comment on June 11. It goes as follows:

"Honourable committee members: almost one year ago we both lost our sons Bart and Jay while riding in the back of a pickup truck. Our lives have changed forever ...

"We will never forget the devastation of police and OPP showing up at our door early in the morning of July 30, 2000 to inform us of their deaths. No one should have to bear that kind of grief. We miss them with all our hearts.

"We are astounded at how many people did not realize that it was not illegal to ride in the back of a pickup truck. Our stringent laws today seem to make everyone more safety conscious, but there's nothing safe about the back of a pickup. It offers no protection for the rider. One quick foot on the brake, and you're thrown around. No one is allowed, by law, to ride in their own vehicle

without a seat belt, so for drivers to allow riders in the back of a pickup just doesn't make sense.

"We are here today to try to have this very tragic loss of ours rectified by having a bill passed to make it illegal to ride in the back of a pickup. We only want to see that no other family or families have to go through the loss of any loved ones. Many provinces in Canada—I believe it's five—have passed this bill, and we feel Ontario is behind the times on a very big safety issue. Referring to the name of this bill as the Jay and Bart clause, we feel, is a terrific honour in their memory and would perhaps bring this very important issue closer to the minds of people and prevent further deaths or accidents.

"Before we close, we would like to bring your attention to the ribbons we are wearing. We are not overly religious families, but we do have a belief system and we chose these colours for a reason, white signifying the light and the love of God, which we know surrounds us, and green signifying a healing process which we all agree would be a great beginning with the passing of the outside riders act, accompanied by the Bart and Jay clause.

"I thank you for your time and support."

It's been a long time—seven years—since we heard those words in the standing committee in this place. We've heard members speak to this issue. I'm sure the parents of these two young men would be extremely overjoyed to see the legislation passed, as they appealed to us some seven years ago.

I and my colleagues will certainly be supporting this bill. We will be encouraging that it does go to committee. There are some specific areas that must be addressed. We had some significant amendments proposed in 2001 by the Ministry of Transportation. The last time this bill went to the committee, there were also some amendments that were recommended at that time. They deal with a number of matters in terms of the scope and authorities of the police, in terms of the age limits that would be involved in being able to charge an individual, the level of responsibility and so on.

In the final analysis, it is the right thing to do. We will be supporting it.

Again, I commend the member from Northumberland–Quinte West for bringing this legislation forward and we look forward to the Premier and the Minister of Transportation embracing this legislation. Whether they choose, as often is done, to incorporate this into a government bill or whether they choose to pass it as a stand-alone bill is going to be up to the government, but in whatever form it's brought forward, we will certainly be supportive. In fact, I am hearing that there may well be a Ministry of Transportation government bill being tabled in the House at some point soon. This is a fairly straightforward piece of legislation, and what we could do perhaps is ensure that we have the committee hearings in time to incorporate this legislation into that government bill, if the government so chooses.

To my colleague the member from Northumberland–Quinte West, I say thank you again for not allowing this issue to remain on the sidelines. I want to again thank the

former member from Northumberland, Mr. Doug Galt, our former colleague, for his initiative. Above all, I want to encourage the parents of Jay Lawrence and Bart Mackey and assure them that by the actions of this government in passing this legislation—and implementing it, which is the real issue—they can take solace that other lives will be saved and that it will be to the honour of Jay Lawrence and Bart Mackey.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? Seeing none, Mr. Rinaldi, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I certainly want to thank the members from London–Fanshawe, Oak Ridges–Markham, Beaches–East York, Peterborough and Newmarket–Aurora. I’m overwhelmed with the amount of support, and I thank you for that. Everything they said mirrors the intent of the bill. Do we have to address some of those fine details? Absolutely.

I didn’t have time to include this as part of my opening remarks, but I must tell you just a quick, short story. Just last summer, at home—we have quite a sizable piece of property—I’m ashamed to admit I was riding in the back of my pickup truck. I was sitting on the tailgate with somebody who was driving in front, probably not more than five kilometres an hour. It’s embarrassing, but I do have to admit it.

1450

When we got to the point of destination in front of my house, I thought he was stopped. But he wanted to go a little bit further to get me closer to my door. As he almost came to a stop, I tried to step off the back gate, and at the same time, he accelerated. I don’t need to tell you where I landed. For about three weeks I limped, but I was embarrassed to tell people why I was limping because of the type of legislation that I was trying to bring forward. I guess my point is that even at those minute speeds, when you don’t have control of your own destiny, things could happen.

I’m encouraged by what I hear today, and I certainly hope that we can make some real headway. I want to thank everybody for their support. Hopefully I can get your support during the time of the vote.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We’ll vote on this ballot item in 50 minutes’ time.

PROPERTY TAX DEFERRAL ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LE REPORT DES IMPÔTS FONCIERS

Mr. Shurman moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 78, An Act to provide property tax deferrals to low-income seniors and low-income persons with disabilities / Projet de loi 78, Loi visant à accorder des reports d’impôts fonciers aux personnes âgées à faible revenu et aux personnes à faible revenu atteintes d’une invalidité.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Shurman, pursuant to standing order 97, you have up to 12 minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Peter Shurman: It gives me great pleasure to rise in the Legislature today to speak on Bill 78, An Act to provide property tax deferrals to low-income seniors and low-income persons with disabilities—my first private member’s bill.

This bill will allow low-income seniors and disabled persons to remain independent in their homes longer. It will stimulate the economy by providing additional disposable income to low-income seniors and disabled persons, and it will provide a common property tax deferral program across Ontario and get rid of the current patchwork system.

Seniors’ issues are near and dear to my heart. As many of the people in this House know, my mother passed away not too long ago. In caring for her, my family and I were exposed to a very wide range of issues faced by our seniors, the builders of our province, as they age. We’re all aging. Indeed, our province is greying. The implications are vast, covering long-term care, health and the economy, notably for those on fixed incomes.

The fact is, most seniors and disabled persons want to be independent. Independence is probably the strongest of the human instincts. They want to stay in their homes—so do all of us in this chamber, ultimately. They want financial freedom. Is this too much to ask? Not if we can make that happen, basically at no cost to the taxpayers of Ontario.

One’s home provides a source of pride and familiarity and offers a genuine sense of dignity, which is of importance to an aging population. For many of us, the most significant investment we will ever make is the purchase of our family home. However, every year across this province, ever-increasing property assessment and property tax rates threaten that investment. All too often, such increases force low-income seniors and disabled persons to leave their homes, homes that they raised their children in, because they can no longer afford to pay the taxes on their properties.

I believe that our seniors and disabled persons across Ontario deserve better, and I know that we in this chamber can do it. It is time that we as legislators, with Bill 78, provide the assistance that our seniors and disabled people deserve.

Bill 78 has received support from organizations representing seniors across this province. I had the opportunity to meet with Ms. Susan Eng, vice-president of advocacy for CARP, Canada’s Association for the Fifty Plus. I also had the opportunity to meet with Mr. Warren Carroll, president of the Thornhill Seniors Club, a very vibrant club in my riding. He provided the initial impetus for this effort today. Both of these organizations recognize the need for real and meaningful property tax relief for seniors and disabled persons on fixed incomes. Both organizations support Bill 78.

Ms. Eng has stated, “CARP represents an important demographic, including those on fixed income who risk

being driven out of their homes by rampant property tax increases. Until the government fixes the property assessment process, Bill 78 offers real relief to beleaguered seniors.”

Mr. Caroll has stated, “As president of the Thornhill Seniors Club, with some 830 members, I have heard of some owners experiencing serious difficulty in keeping their own homes because of rising taxes. I hope that all MPPs, regardless of party affiliation, endorse this bill to its fullest extent.”

My parents owned three homes during their period as parents in their lifetimes. They never completed paying any single one of them off. They never even got enough equity out of those homes to make a difference in their lives. How lucky I am, along with my own brother and sister. As a family, we all own our homes, have all paid our mortgages, we’re free and clear, and we worked hard to do that. I believe that speaks to hundreds of thousands of Ontarians who have done exactly the same thing, and yet here are so many of them on fixed incomes in the senior years, who are incapable or worried about being incapable of retaining those homes because of the burden of rising municipal property taxes.

The Liberals have attempted to address this serious issue in their most recent budget, and I commend them for a good start. They, like we in the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, recognize the realities faced by both our elderly and our disabled citizens. They propose to provide eligible seniors with \$250 for property tax relief in 2009, \$500 in 2010 and \$500 again in 2011. If you total the amounts, that’s \$120 million in spending for 2009, \$240 million in 2010 and \$260 million in 2011.

That money could be saved and put to better use, because Bill 78 is win-win legislation that does not cost extra money to the province of Ontario—I repeat, does not cost extra money, indeed any money, to the province. It provides a significant degree of support for low-income seniors and disabled persons, and it parallels legislation in other provinces. I’ll elaborate on that. This type of plan has had huge take-up in the province of British Columbia, for example. The only cost to the province is the administration of the program itself, which in turn is offset by the administration fee that would be charged for the deferral.

It’s brilliant in its simplicity. I wish I had thought of all of it myself. The province invests our money to generate interest and protect our precious tax dollars. Often that investment strategy addresses money markets and is backed by mortgages; mortgages equate to houses, houses that people live in. So let’s invest it in the same way, collect the interest, but in so doing, protect Ontarians and inject new millions into the consumer economy.

To date in this country, property tax deferral programs are offered at the provincial level in British Columbia, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia. Similar programs exist at the state level across the US. However, here in Ontario, property tax deferral programs are only offered at the municipal level as prescribed by the Municipal

Act, 2001 and City of Toronto Act, 2006. This has created a patchwork of municipal programs that puts strain on municipal revenue streams. These programs are not particularly user-friendly, and they have limited participation rates and very limited effectiveness.

For example, in 2006 the city of Toronto had 70 applicants for its deferral program, Peel had 64, and 40 was the total in London. Many municipalities, such as Muskoka, Niagara, Sudbury and Thunder Bay, have zero participants, despite high senior citizen populations. In fact, I might note that Sudbury media contacted me yesterday, having already heard about the debate of this bill, saying there was great interest there because of the senior population. By comparison, British Columbia has a take-up of 65,000, with a population well less than a third of the population of Ontario. It is time for Ontario to join British Columbia, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island by introducing a harmonized property tax deferral system province-wide.

Ontario’s current property tax deferral system burdens municipalities and makes any real assistance to low-income seniors and disabled persons difficult to provide. Some \$250 coming next year and nothing this year doesn’t go very far if your property tax bill is—and I’ll take an example from the city of Toronto—on a fairly modest house, \$5,000, \$6,000, \$7,000 or \$8,000. Bill 78 seeks to remedy this problem by alleviating municipalities of the responsibility for property tax deferrals through the creation of a common program province-wide—equal treatment city to city, area to area. Bill 78’s deferral program will provide meaningful relief for eligible property owners regardless of the municipality in which they live.

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This is not a money bill. By registering a lien on affected properties, funding the municipalities for what is not forthcoming, charging a competitive rate of interest no different than what Ontario receives on provincial investments and relying on revolving participation, the program becomes self-sustaining, ending with the death of the participant or sale of the property—very simple and very direct.

Under Bill 78, eligible owners will be able to defer up to a maximum of \$10,000 per year on taxes owed on a principal residence. In terms of the cost to taxpayers, when seniors or disabled persons move into provincially subsidized residences, we all pay. Bill 78 is about avoiding that for extended time periods and helping people preserve a lifestyle in what we all recognize as an average longer, more productive lifetime.

By passing this bill, we as MPPs have an opportunity to make a lasting and positive impact on the lives of these people and their families. As we all know, property tax is paid from after-tax dollars, further restricting what can be done with supposedly disposable income, which is especially problematic for seniors and disabled persons on fixed incomes. By passing Bill 78, we will be freeing up a sizable portion of disposable income for these two beleaguered populations, who can then spend that money

on much-needed consumer items, thus providing a modest, or better than modest, injection into our troubled economy.

In deliberating the merits of this bill, I encourage my fellow MPPs to think about the people it will help; for example, an elderly couple who outright purchased their home after the war and who now cannot afford to keep that home. We've all seen the distress that high assessments and property tax rates have caused some of our seniors, who are worried about losing their homes. This is not something that our seniors, who have given so much, should have to endure. We must act.

We must also think of the disabled person for whom homeownership provides real freedom. Are we to allow them to become homeless or dependent on an already overburdened system? I think not. The Ontario that I know is compassionate; it helps those in need of a hand. That's what Bill 78 is all about and I urge all MPPs to lend their support to this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): I thank the member from Thornhill. Eloquent as always, perhaps more so today because his wife is in the gallery. Welcome, Mrs. Shurman.

Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I just want a few moments to address this bill because I know that my colleague the member from Beaches–East York, Mr. Prue, who is our critic in this area, wants to speak to it with a broader perspective, perhaps, than that with which I will address it. Our member from Parkdale–High Park, Cheri DiNovo, is also going to be speaking to it. To the folks who are watching and listening, over the course of the next 40 minutes you're going to be hearing from Michael Prue and Cheri DiNovo on this important issue.

I, for one, am pleased and proud to say that Mr. Shurman has delivered to this chamber, in a short period of time after his election for the first time to this assembly, a very enlightened, timely and relevant bit of legislation. From time to time—and it's unfortunately far too rare a time—opposition members' private members' bills go to committee and indeed, after fine-tuning in committee, they get passed. Of course, once a bill gets second reading, it is no longer a private member's bill; it then, in fact, becomes a government bill, such that the government has absolute control over whether or not to advance it through the legislative process.

I believe strongly that this bill should go to committee and I also believe strongly that the government should cooperate and actively participate in committee, with the view to addressing any perceived shortcomings or flaws in the bill. But I submit as well that the thrust of the bill, one which is designed to protect aging and otherwise lower- and fixed-income people from distress by ever-increasing property taxes—to make this particular method, which is available only in those municipalities that have elected to introduce it, a province-wide program would indeed be an enlightened, progressive step. I look forward to seeing our critic, Michael Prue, participate in committee hearings around this bill as it

advances through the legislative process, hopefully with success.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I'm delighted to rise and speak on Bill 78, by the member from Thornhill, "to provide property tax deferrals to low-income seniors and low-income persons with disabilities." The intent of this bill is very good. The intent is to ensure that seniors who are mostly on fixed incomes are able to stay in their houses. But Mr. Shurman is actually saying congratulations to the Liberals for having a plan in their budget to help seniors on fixed incomes and to ensure that seniors can stay in their houses.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Did you hear him say that? I didn't hear him say that.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Yes, he did congratulate us.

The intent is great, but there is a difference between the plan by the Progressive Conservatives and the plan by the Liberals. There is a big difference—

Interruption.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: There's a call right now.

We wanted to make sure to support our proposal in our budget, which indicates a better plan than that being proposed by the member from Thornhill. There is a vast difference.

What is this difference? As we know already—I did bring a tax bill from the city of Toronto—the interesting part, and the member already indicated that, is that at present the city of Toronto and many other municipalities across Ontario already have tax deferral programs. In other words, anybody who makes less than \$40,000 a year, and most seniors of course are in that category, is able to apply to defer their taxes. It's already on the books. Secondly, the city of Toronto and many other municipalities also have on their books a cancellation program, already in place, which I might argue is much better. A cancellation program is much better for seniors, who need the money on a daily basis, than a program that speaks of deferrals.

The member's bill talks about deferrals, of pushing it off to another year, to maybe another five or 10 years. But seniors are proud of their homes. In my riding, I want to tell the member from Thornhill, when people pay off their mortgage there is a party. They invite their neighbours. There are balloons on the front door. That's terrific: They've paid off their mortgage. I want to tell the member from Thornhill that the intent of what he is proposing today is great, but what is the fact of it? The fact of it is that all you're doing is putting a lien against a property, against the city of Toronto, against the seniors, against all those who are on fixed incomes. That's the fact.

Therefore, I ask you, what's the better plan; the Liberal plan, which talks about a tax grant and a tax credit? We made sure there is \$1,100 in the pockets of seniors. According to the member from Thornhill, how much are they going to put in their pockets? Nothing. It's a lien and has to be paid back. I ask you, I ask the members and I ask the people of Ontario, which is the better plan: a deferral plan—a lien plan—or a grant plan?

It is clear, because we have the evidence. Which of these two plans is indeed much better? I know you're going to speak about this. I know that. But the whole matter can simply be done in a nutshell. I want the people of Ontario to simply remember this: Liberal means credit and grants; Conservative means deferrals and liens.

1510

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm just trying to recover from the last speaker's comments.

I'm pleased to rise in support of Bill 78, An Act to provide property tax deferrals to low-income seniors and low-income persons with disabilities, which has been thoughtfully brought forward by my colleague from Thornhill, despite what the previous member's comments were. I was also in the media studio yesterday to support my colleague from Thornhill; so was the member from Welland, as he said, and so was Ms. Susan Eng from Canada's Association for the Fifty Plus—all supportive of this piece of legislation moving forward.

Recent statistics show that seniors account for roughly 13% of Ontario's population. In my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, that number is significantly higher. Almost 20% of the population is in the seniors category, and we're growing. Many seniors are choosing to get out of the urban areas and come up to the less hectic pace of life and retire up in the riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. There are a significant number of them that have had cottages up there for many generations and have chosen to fix up their cottages and lakefront properties to make them suitable for living year-round, and thus become permanent residents, but having been connected with that community for generations and decades. That's a huge investment that senior citizens have, based on hard work all of their lives.

A recent report from WRAFT, Waterfront Ratepayers After Fair Taxation, shows some stunning changes in property values over the past years. In Haliburton and also in Muskoka, the median waterfront property values increased substantially, a higher rate compared to residential values—a 47% increase in median price for cottages versus an 18% increase for the residential properties for the years 2003-07—so assessment values have increased. Of course, there is a threat this year. We are already hearing the news reports of this triple whammy, after assessments had been frozen for the three previous years. That's certainly going to be reflected in my communities, and seniors and other vulnerable people on fixed incomes simply are not going to have the means or the resources to accommodate these huge increases in their property assessments.

No person can reasonably predict their property value going up to 47%, or even 18%, in a span of three years' time, and we certainly, in the campaign, had put a property assessment cap of 5% so that people knew that it wouldn't increase by any more than 5% while they owned that property, which would help seniors and

people on fixed incomes be able to stay in their houses for a longer period of time.

My colleague from Thornhill pointed out in his news release yesterday that this bill will help those people stay in their homes longer but will also help our economy, because they're going to have some more money in their pockets, so additional disposable income. Taking into account that I have such a large number of senior citizens residing in my riding, the deferral is going to be a big boost to the people living there and to the economy, with their able to stay in their homes longer. I know that June is now Seniors' Month, and we have 1.5 million seniors in the province of Ontario. I, along with the local member of Parliament from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, do seniors' seminars in three areas of our riding to try and assist seniors to be informed of what services are available for them. Every year I get property assessment questions—not being able to stay in their homes for various reasons, but certainly that's one of them.

This bill will certainly help low-income seniors and disabled persons to stay in their homes longer. I encourage all members of the Legislature to look at this. We just heard one of the government members speak, but I hope that others are going to speak positively of this and I encourage everyone here today to support this bill.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an honour to speak to the bill of my colleague from Thornhill, and I commend him for it. It's an exciting moment when you bring forth your first private member's bill. The excitement, the thrill, the challenge of bringing forth your first private member's bill is only met by the depression, the sadness and the reality of what happens to that private member's bill once it gets into the hands of the government, which is that if you're really, really lucky it goes to a committee and it dies there. But thank you anyway. Thank you for the valiant effort on behalf of seniors, whom we celebrate in the month of June, and a special congratulatory note to the West Toronto Support Service, who helped me craft a motion for seniors, which is on the order paper, saying that seniors should get into galleries and museums that are financed by the provincial government for free. They used to. We should do at least that much for our seniors, and we certainly should do something to help them with their property taxes.

Unlike the comments by the member for Davenport—\$250 and \$500 is not going to do very much, particularly when on a modest house you're looking at taxes, certainly in the city of Toronto and, I'm sure, in Thornhill as well, of at least \$4,000 to \$5,000 and more per year. I know that in my riding I have seniors who are going to lose their houses if something isn't done when these new assessments come out. We all wait with bated breath for the new assessments to come out. Very cynically, the McGuinty government put a freeze on till after the election. The bad news will hit every mailbox in the fall, and we'll see our property taxes go up.

I want to say that our policy, in the New Democratic Party, is a freeze till resale. This is something we campaigned on. It's something that's done in jurisdictions

around the world—in California and others. Our critic, the member from Beaches–East York, will probably speak about our own response to what should be done about property taxes. We believe there should be a freeze till resale unless you put more than \$40,000 of renovations into your house, which will trigger a new assessment. This would affect everybody, not just seniors. It would also affect all those other low-income folk: single mothers who are having a real struggle and a time of it now, those who have houses and are disabled—the member for Thornhill has captured that in his bill—and many others. Even young couples are going to be caught when the new assessments come out in the fall, not to mention small business owners who are also just gearing up to come back at this government as soon as they get their bills. As the small business critic for the New Democratic Party, I'm particularly sensitive to their concerns, and they are very concerned about the possibility of huge increases that are going to happen in the fall.

I want to leave time for my colleague from Beaches–East York, who is the critic on this particular subject. I want to commend, again, the member for Thornhill for his hard work and also offer my condolences for what is going to happen to all that hard work. I want to congratulate all the seniors across the province who, without much help from this government, still manage to stay in their homes and manage to have some degree of quality of life. Let's hope we can improve it for them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me a chance to speak on Bill 78, An Act to provide property tax deferrals to low-income seniors and low-income persons with disabilities.

Unlike my colleague, I'm very positive, especially when members in this House bring different issues to us, especially private members' bills, because we get a chance to debate them, we get the chance to talk about many different issues and I believe it enhances our ability to understand many different issues.

Before us today is a bill talking about seniors. This is very important for all of us. Seniors in Ontario worked very hard for many years to build this beautiful province. I think it is our duty and responsibility, as elected officials, to give them some support when they get old and cannot support themselves. That's why our government made a good announcement last year to support seniors with a \$250 grant and a credit of more than \$600. In 2010, it will be a \$500 grant and a \$600 credit, almost \$1,100 for every senior on a yearly basis. I think that's a good initiative. The member for Thornhill mentioned that this will cost us almost \$125 million. You prefer it to go to some different areas. I believe it's a very honourable area in which to spend money, on seniors, because they deserve it. They've worked very hard, and I think they need our support when they get old.

1520

I looked at the bill and at different legislation across Canada, many different municipalities that brought for-

ward this issue. Actually, they already have it in the city of Toronto; they have a deferral system. They can defer their taxes, but they're charged interest on them. I think we shouldn't interfere with municipalities. Municipalities know what to do. They know their constituents very well. They have a right to bring this bill forward. I don't think it's our job in this province to micromanage every issue in the province of Ontario. I think municipalities across Ontario know their constituents well. They can bring it in if they want, and they have permission to do it.

I think it's our job, as elected officials in this place, as a government, to support seniors. It's our duty and obligation to support them by providing health care to them, by providing long-term-care facilities for them, by sending people to support them if they decide to stay at home while they are old, because many people like and prefer to stay in their home. That's why our aging strategy, which was announced by our government, is to send nurses and health care workers to their homes to support them. I think it's the right thing to do.

This is our obligation—not just deferring some of the taxes for one or two or five or six years or putting liens on their homes—because so many seniors are proud of their homes. They are proud when they pay off their mortgage. As a matter of fact, in my community of London–Fanshawe, when they pay off the mortgage, you know what they do? They gather their families and friends and neighbours and throw a party. They celebrate paying off the mortgage. I think our obligation, as I mentioned many different times, is to support seniors, not to defer the taxes for many years. In the end, they leave nothing for their kids and families.

I was thrilled and honoured when our government came up with a proposal and a project to support seniors by a grant and also by giving them some kind of tax relief. Also, our municipalities have a right to do so. If they want to, they can do it.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I am privileged to stand up this afternoon and support my colleague the member from Thornhill on his Bill 78, which adds yet another layer of relief for seniors on fixed incomes and for those who are suffering disabilities. I congratulate him on taking this action to protect our senior citizens and those with disabilities who have worked hard. They've paid their taxes. They've helped build this wonderful province that we can all be proud of. Anything we can do to relieve them in their golden years is something we should consider very seriously.

I only hope the members on the government side understand that regardless of what legislation they think is in place that protects and gives the appropriate level of protection to our seniors, in this instance, it is not enough. That is why we're proposing to add yet more protection to them. Our seniors are struggling to keep pace with all kinds of issues: the rising cost of shelter, gas, energy, food. Every day they're trying to make decisions about what they give up, whether they buy medication or whether they buy the food they need or whether they are able to have a little bit of entertainment.

I think these are decisions that should not have to be made at that stage of life.

They take pride in their homes. They want to stay in their homes. Their homes are filled with memories of their children growing up, their grandchildren coming for Christmas dinners and so forth. Bill 78 will offer our seniors and the low-income people with disabilities an opportunity to defer their taxes and give them much-needed relief from that stressful burden.

My riding, like many other ridings in this province, has folks who are growing in numbers, seniors who are facing these unique challenges, and I think we have a responsibility, an obligation, but most of all, we have an opportunity right now to help make a difference with that. Several provinces already offer this kind of property tax deferral, and I think Ontario should follow.

These folks aren't in a position to ask for more money. They're no longer working. They can't just do overtime to try to make up for what they don't have, so they truly are at the mercy of the economy. I think that's what gives us this ability to move in and help them.

Fortunately, our motivation here is to ensure the highest quality of life for our citizens in Ontario. But more and more, I'm watching with interest that this government looks at this side of the House as a think tank, picks up good ideas and then moves forward with them as a government bill. If you want to take ownership of it, fine, but do the right thing. I prefer to see politics parked at the door and for all of us to work together in order to make the right things happen.

So the comments today about what the Conservatives did, what the NDP did or what the Liberals did mean nothing to the person sitting at home, thinking about how to make their next pension cheque stretch. It is my great hope that Bill 78 receives unanimous approval today, and that I can go home to Burlington and tell my seniors and my folks with disabilities that this government is a caring government, it is a competent government, and it can move on. I look forward to that today.

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise in support of Bill 78. I do so understanding that it has a few warts. I want to deal with that, but in the end, I intend to vote for this bill.

What is happening here is this member's attempt to mitigate the circumstances after the three-year freeze comes off. We all know what's going to happen this September and October. It's going to be one of the worst Halloween scares. It's not going to be the kid in his mask coming around to your house, it's going to be the Halloween scare of you opening up the new MPAC assessment on your house, seeing the value they now put on it vis-à-vis your neighbours, and having that sinking feeling in your stomach that the taxes are going to skyrocket. It's not going to happen to just a few people. It is literally going to happen to millions of people out there in the province of Ontario.

So this member is attempting to do something to mitigate that three-year freeze when it comes to an end. I think people need to understand where the assessment increases are going to take place. They're going to take

place in urban Ontario versus suburban Ontario, so a place like downtown Toronto is more likely to get whacked than Scarborough or North York or the areas beyond.

People are going to find in rural Ontario that who is going to get whacked are those who own lakefront or riverfront properties, those who have recreational properties versus those who live in the adjacent or nearby small towns. We know that that is going to happen as well. What his bill is attempting to do is to mitigate against that.

Having said that—and that's why I'm going to support it, in order to help those who are disabled, in order to help those on fixed incomes, those who are retired. But in so doing, I have to question and I have to ask, if it is passed today, when it goes to committee—the bill will limit this to people who are receiving the GIS. It will limit it as well to those who are disabled, to be defined in the regulations, and who are also below the threshold, to be defined in the regulations.

I want to first talk about the pensioners. There are literally hundreds of thousands of people in this country and in this province who do not receive a pension. We are a land of immigrants. If people have come here and lived in this province and in this country for less than 10 years, they are not eligible for old age security or for the GIS. You have to think about them. Some of them own homes. Some of them have brought money with them to own that home. Some of them have been given the money by their children; some of them have found other ways in which to buy the house. They are every bit as much at risk as someone who is limited to the income from pension and GIS. So I think we need to look at this. I think that they are Canadian citizens and landed immigrants too, and we need to look at that responsibility, which has not been done in this bill.

The second thing is about the disability. In order to be poor in this province, if you use the low-income cut-off figures—the LICO, which they're called—you have to earn under \$19,000 a year if you are a single person. That's what the low income is. This does not define what disability is. Is disability somebody who is in receipt of Ontarians with disability? If so, the maximum payment you can get is some \$12,000 a year. That's the maximum you can get. That person would live in abject poverty, even if they were allowed to keep some of the money. What is the limitation? I feel very uncomfortable leaving this to a minister or a future minister; I think the bill should spell it out.

1530

I also believe that there are problems with the deferral in terms of the amount of money, which allows for up to \$10,000 a year. I cannot speak for all of Ontario, but the taxes of \$10,000 a year in Toronto equates to a home approximately valued \$1.3 million. That's what it equates to. I don't know how many people out there would think that that is a limit we should be supporting. I have some real problems with \$1.3-million homes receiving a deferral. If the person is that well off, I want them to stay

in their home but not necessarily that one. I want them to be able to pay their taxes, and I'm sure they would want to as well. If they have to downsize—people at a certain age do that as a matter of course in any event.

I am also disturbed a little about the “repaid with interest” portion because the interest can be quite large. Municipalities charge about 15%. I know that as a mayor I charged 15% on deferrals, and I believe it's still 15% or 18% today. I don't know of many seniors who would want to pay that kind of money. In fact, the member quite rightly pointed out that only 70 people took advantage in the city of Toronto. When I was mayor, there were only two or three who took advantage of it in East York, and it was for exactly that reason.

I am also troubled because I find that most of the municipal bylaws, including those from Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton and other places, are superior to the contents of this bill because it gives the municipality and the council the authority to waive the fees.

With all of that, I'm still going to vote for it. There are some flaws here. We need to help, but please, it has to be done in committee.

Mr. Bob Delaney: It seems like I'm picking up a little bit where the member for Beaches–East York left off.

It's a very interesting proposal, and let me pick up on the remarks about the impact of compounding. If an interest rate is 15%, then the principal will double every five years. If it's 12%, it will double every six years.

This is a proposal that disproportionately rewards people who live in very expensive, high-end homes. A \$10,000-a-year property tax exemption in the city of Mississauga will mean that you live in a home that's valued at somewhere between \$1.5 million and \$2 million. This is money that comes off the property tax base of the city, and the member's bill is deficient in that it doesn't say what the city will do to recapture that lost property tax base.

The government's existing property tax relief across the province will subsidize seniors to the tune of some \$740 million. What impact will this proposal have? How many billions of dollars will it remove not so much from the provincial tax base but from the municipal tax base? This, in effect, will say to municipalities that in order to subsidize people who may be living in high-end homes and are deferring upwards of \$10,000 a year in property tax at interest rates that aren't specified and could be very high and could result in the very serious erosion of the person's equity in their very home—this will also transfer that missing property tax base to young starter families, the people who are buying townhomes and semis. The very people who, at the moment, are struggling to be able to afford to buy a home are not only going to have to carry the freight for themselves but increasingly the freight for people who are living in homes that could be valued at \$800,000, \$900,000, \$1 million, \$1.5 million, in which, with relatively few restrictions, these individuals under this proposal will be able to defer upwards of \$10,000 a year.

This hasn't been costed out, and this is a serious deficiency in this particular bill. This is not, of course, the member's intent. The member is a thoughtful person. The member is in his first term here. But this is surely the outcome of this particular proposal.

One of the other things the member has forgotten is that municipalities are required to provide relief from reassessment-related property tax increases and to provide it to low-income seniors or low-income disabled persons. So the essence of the member's proposal not only already exists, but it exists at the municipal level where it properly belongs.

When the member and his party had a chance to vote on the government's proposal in the last budget to increase the property tax credit from \$500 to \$625, they voted against it.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm very pleased to add a few comments with respect to Bill 78, An Act to provide property tax deferrals to low-income seniors and low-income persons with disabilities.

I'd like to start off again by commending my colleague the member from Thornhill, who proposes what is, in my view anyway, an eminently sensible solution to a problem that continually presents itself in our community offices; that is, with seniors coming into our offices who are telling us that they're finding it increasingly difficult to cope with tax increases in the order of 4%, 5% or 6% per year without a corresponding increase in their incomes.

As has been indicated, most of them are on fixed incomes of either old age pension or disability pensions. The member from Beaches–East York also rightly pointed out that those are extremely low incomes that would be very detrimentally affected by increases in the tax rates on an annual basis.

I think it's a really great solution that has been proposed, and when you look at the seniors we're dealing with here—for most people, not just seniors—their largest asset is their principal residence, which, in most cases, has been entirely paid off, the mortgage has been paid off many years before. The problem is, it's not a liquid asset but it is an asset nonetheless.

What is being proposed here will allow the seniors to remain in their homes, when they otherwise might lose them—homes that they've lived in for many years, raised their families in—because they want to. But also, I should point out, in many communities there might not otherwise be adequate housing options available, particularly if you're speaking about someone with a disability who may already have had their home retrofitted to allow them to stay in the home. It doesn't make sense for them to have to move to another location because they can't afford the property taxes.

There are limitations on this, of course. It provides that people can either defer the property taxes until either they pass away or their spouse maintains the residence as their principal residence, until the person no longer is eligible for the tax relief or the home is sold, unless it's a

transfer between spouses, and, again, protects that spousal right to remain in the home.

The \$10,000 that has been mentioned as a limitation—I believe it was my colleague's intention that that would simply be an upper limit, that that would not be an amount claimed on an average basis. I would anticipate that the amount that would be requested for deferral on an annual basis would be a much smaller amount than that. So it just has to have a reasonable amount mentioned as an upper limit cap, and I think that is a reasonable amount.

How can that deferral be recognized that it is going to be protected? For anybody listening to this debate who is concerned about how that would be protected, it would simply be protected by registering a lien against the property. Certainly, we have a precedent for that in the province of Ontario with respect to the legal aid situation. That's been outstanding for many years. That's a situation where somebody who can't afford to hire a lawyer to act on their behalf in a family law or perhaps in a criminal law situation can have a lawyer to act on their behalf. Legal Aid Ontario registers the lien against the property and that's collected at such time as the property is sold or otherwise transferred.

I don't believe that there has been any suggestion that that has been an erosion on the existing tax base. I don't anticipate that if this legislation were enacted it would result in a further tax-base erosion either. As the member has indicated, the uptake on situations where the municipalities have offered this deferral hasn't been huge, but it is there for the benefit of the people who really need it.

I would certainly urge all members to consider supporting this bill. I think it's a great solution to a practical problem. It provides that level of support to people who truly need it in our communities.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Shurman, you have up to two minutes to summarize your comments.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I thank all members who participated in this afternoon's debate on Bill 78, particularly the members for Beaches–East York, Burlington, Parkdale–High Park, Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, Welland and Whitby–Oshawa for their support. I'd like somebody to explain to the member for Davenport that a lien beats the hell out of a loss. As for the members for London–Fanshawe and Mississauga–Streetsville, they seem to want to support this bill, but somehow or other, maybe they're a little bit constrained.

By no means is Bill 78 a be-all and end-all answer to the issue of property taxation and its impact on low-income seniors and low-income disabled persons. As Ontario's population continues to age, we as legislators will need to find new and innovative means to meet the needs of this important demographic. The government has moved, and we now have the power to go further. Bill 78 represents such a step, and I ask all of my fellow MPPs, regardless of party affiliation, to lend their support to this important piece of legislation. Certainly there are flaws; certainly they can be discussed. That's what committees are for.

We have seen it far too often, seniors and disabled persons forced to sell their homes because they can no longer afford to pay the property tax. This is Ontario, and we can do better. For many seniors and disabled persons in this province, there's precious little to keep them from joining the ranks of the poverty-stricken. Municipalities are not the right entities to provide the sort of relief required. However, we are able to do so here.

Can more be done to help our seniors and disabled persons keep their homes? You bet. The province could move forward with its promise to address the unfairness and unaccountability of the MPAC assessment system. However, this is a start, and it offers real hope to those who need it most.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): the time provided for private members' public business has expired.

MUNICIPAL RESIDENTIAL
SPRINKLER ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LES EXTINCTEURS
AUTOMATIQUES RÉSIDENTIELS
DANS LES MUNICIPALITÉS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will deal first with ballot item 25.

Mrs. Jeffrey has moved second reading of Bill 72, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992, the City of Toronto Act, 2006 and the Municipal Act, 2001 with respect to fire sprinkler systems in new residential buildings. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I respectfully request that this bill be sent to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills, please.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the bill will be sent to the committee? Agreed.

JAY LAWRENCE AND BART MACKAY
MEMORIAL ACT (HIGHWAY TRAFFIC
AMENDMENT), 2008

LOI DE 2008 COMMÉMORANT
JAY LAWRENCE ET BART MACKAY
(MODIFICATION DU CODE
DE LA ROUTE)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The second item is ballot item 26.

Mr. Rinaldi has moved second reading of Bill 74, An Act in memory of Jay Lawrence and Bart Mackey to amend the Highway Traffic Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I request that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the bill go to general government? Agreed.

PROPERTY TAX DEFERRAL ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LE REPORT
DES IMPÔTS FONCIERS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The next ballot item is ballot item 27.

Mr. Shurman has moved second reading of Bill 78, An Act to provide property tax deferrals to low-income seniors and low-income persons with disabilities. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? In my opinion, the nays have it.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. Speaker, you didn't call the vote, "All those in favour, say 'aye.'"

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Oh, sorry. Good point.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1544 to 1549.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Shurman has moved second reading of Bill 78. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Chudleigh, Ted
DiNovo, Cheri
Elliott, Christine
Hardeman, Ernie

Klees, Frank
Kormos, Peter
Prue, Michael
Savoline, Joyce

Scott, Laurie
Shurman, Peter

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Best, Margaret
Cansfield, Donna H.
Colle, Mike
Delaney, Bob
Dickson, Joe
Fonseca, Peter

Gravelle, Michael
Jaczek, Helena
Kular, Kuldip
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Mangat, Amrit
McNeely, Phil
Moridi, Reza

Pendergast, Leeanna
Phillips, Gerry
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Rinaldi, Lou
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Takhar, Harinder S.
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 10; the nays are 30.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, I do now call orders of the day.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried. This House stands adjourned until Monday, June 2, at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1552.

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Brown, Michael A. (L)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (L)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
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Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique
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Hardeman, Ernie (PC) Hillier, Randy (PC) Horwath, Andrea (ND)	Oxford Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Third Deputy Chair of the committee of the whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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