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**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Tuesday 10 June 2008**

**Mardi 10 juin 2008**

Speaker  
Honourable Steve Peters

Président  
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk  
Deborah Deller

Greffière  
Deborah Deller

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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

PHOTO CARD ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LES CARTES-PHOTO

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 5, 2008, on the motion for second reading of Bill 85, An Act to permit the issuance of photo cards to residents of Ontario and to make complementary amendments to the Highway Traffic Act/ Projet de loi 85, Loi permettant la délivrance de cartes-photo aux résidents de l'Ontario et apportant des modifications complémentaires au Code de la route.

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

**Mr. Frank Klees:** We are debating Bill 85 this morning, the Photo Card Act, 2008, and I'm pleased to add my comments as the critic for the Ministry of Transportation for the official opposition. I'd like to first of all set the context for the bill, the reason that the government is bringing this bill forward, what precipitated it, and I'd like to speak, in principle, to the fact that as the official opposition we will be supporting the bill and its intent. I will also be outlining some concerns that we have that we anticipate the government will address in the course of committee, and also as it prepares for the implementation, phasing in, of the bill. I will be referring to some concerns that our privacy commissioner in the province of Ontario has expressed, along with privacy commissioners from across the country, with regards to some of the technology. We want to ensure that the appropriate safeguards are in place to protect the very important personal information that will be contained in these identification cards. I will also be taking some time to speak about the importance of ensuring that we have a smooth process of border-crossing between us and the United States, for many reasons. They are our major trading partner.

One industry that we are particularly concerned about is the tourism industry. We are concerned that as we go into this summer there are already signs of a reduction in the number of reservations, for example, that various tourist operators are receiving. There's no question that the price of gasoline has a great deal to do with that. And we are concerned that there seems to be very little, if any, response on the part of the McGuinty government to

what could be another very serious impending economic downturn.

We already see the effects that the loss of manufacturing jobs has had in our communities. The McGuinty government appears—although there are and have been many announcements with regard to infusions of money in various aspects of the auto industry, it seems that the basis on which those investments were made was perhaps haphazard, that there were not sufficient safeguards put in place when those very substantial commitments to the auto sector were made. General Motors is an excellent example of that: more than \$130 million of commitment of taxpayers' dollars, with good intentions no doubt, being invested in that industry, all with the underlying purpose of ensuring stability within that industry and ensuring a guarantee of jobs, and then, on the heels of that announcement, we find major closings announced—the truck plant in Oshawa. It has left not only the employees of that factory with great concern as to their future, but I know that even members of this government were caught by surprise, not the least of whom was the Minister of Economic Development, who was instrumental in ensuring and in delivering that investment into General Motors. We observed that she did not have the answers in terms of how this could happen, when in fact there was an expectation that jobs would be guaranteed. So I'll have something to say about the tourism industry and what the government should be doing.

First of all, the context for this: It was brought on, really, by the 9/11 disaster, a wake-up call for all of North America in terms of the threat to our security. Immediately, of course, the focus was on our borders and what is it that we must do and can do to ensure secure borders. All of us, on either side of that border, came to the realization that not enough was being done to ensure that those borders are secure. So under the western hemisphere travel initiative, now all travellers entering and leaving the United States by land or sea will be required to show a passport or an accepted alternative to a passport as of June 1, 2009. That presents, then, the concern of how we ensure that travel across that border, legitimate travel across that border, is not hampered and that we do so in a way that is both secure as well as convenient. Because in the same way that many of the border states rely on Canadians to travel there, whether it is for shopping, whether it is for entertainment, whether it is for holidays, we as well rely very heavily on US travellers coming to Ontario to enjoy what we have here in terms of our tourist attractions. What we are concerned about is to

ensure that those American travellers are not discouraged from making that trip to Ontario because of the inconvenience at the border. So I think there's a mutual commitment on the part of our border state colleagues and the various state legislatures, along with us, to ensure that we have a mechanism that is at once secure as well as convenient.

**0910**

Nearly four million people in Ontario do not have a driver's licence and therefore don't have access to even the basic identification. We've raised this a number of times as well. This is in addition to what we're going to be addressing today. But I think a by-product of this bill before us will, perhaps for the first time, actually address that issue of an identification card for people who don't have a driver's licence, that as we roll this program out, that will then be available to those Ontarians and give them an opportunity to access that kind of identification document.

In December 2007, you will recall that the Ontario government introduced what they referred to at that time as a "more secure" Ontario driver's licence that would help against fraud, misuse and identity theft. I recall well the Minister of Transportation assuring us that the advanced licence that was being introduced at that time would not contain citizenship information, not contain any more information than drivers' licences contain now. I find it somewhat odd that less than a year after that major announcement on the part of the government for a new driver's licence, an enhanced driver's licence, now we're back here with yet another revamped announcement that goes the full distance to photo technology. In fact, it will contain, in addition to the information that we now have on our drivers' licences, citizenship information and will be required to have some very advanced technology.

I guess what I have to question is this one-off type of announcement that this government continues to deliver to the Legislature here. It begs the question, are we not doing some longer-term thinking? Why was there one announcement a year ago and it's taken this long to then bring forward this technology? Will the information that we trust will be on these new proposed identification cards, these enhanced drivers' licences, be secure?

What I want to do is to address an issue of concern as expressed by the privacy commissioners of Canada. I want to just refer to discussions that we have had with our privacy commissioner here in the province of Ontario. They are specifically concerned with the RFID chip technology, how information on that chip will be read at the border and what the specific issues on citizenship verification will be. These are issues that we have assurance from the privacy commissioner, that they have in turn received from the minister, that they will be addressed.

The other concern is that there be a separate database. There are concerns regarding where the information that now will come into this database would actually go. As per the resolution of the privacy commissioners that there be a requirement that the personal information that is

then gathered into this database not go stateside, that it is kept here in Ontario, the preliminary assurance that we have from the minister is that the government information will not go beyond our borders, and we look for assurance of that. There isn't a great deal of information regarding the RFID chip to which I referred earlier, other than that it is an advanced technology, that it is something that will allow a transmission of information as individuals approach a border, and that it will actually be recognized. A crossing guard at the border will either be able to then swipe the card using a magnetic strip similar to those on current drivers' licences, or to use that RFID technology. Information, we're assured, that would be available to border guards should not be any greater than what is currently available on a driver's licence or a passport.

Then again, it comes to the point that the technology is unknown technology as it relates to this kind of identification card. I commend the BC government for the fact that they have actually launched a pilot project under which they're going to limit the number of these cards to 500 while they go through their pilot project to test out how it works, to test out the security and efficiency of that technology. That trial run of that program should be of interest to us, and I would encourage our government to do the same, that once this legislation is passed, we have a very specific implementation program under which it would be phased in, under which we can be assured that all of the technical issues are dealt with and that we don't end up with problems that will cause us more issues in the long term.

The reason that I dwell on the privacy concerns is that I've raised issues in the past here in the Legislature concerning the Ministry of Transportation's dealing with personal information. You may recall that about a month ago, I raised in question period with the minister the issue of Anna Medeiros, who had been issued a driver's licence by the Ministry of Transportation, not ever having applied for a driver's licence. Observers of this debate who aren't familiar with the file will question how an agency of the government could issue identification such as a driver's licence to a citizen of this province who never applied for that document. The way that happened is that there is in legislation a mandatory requirement for physicians to report to the Ministry of Transportation if they are treating someone who has a condition that may—and I repeat, that may—be of concern to someone who drives a car. In other words, it may be an issue of sight or it may be potential for seizures, but if there is a concern that the individual may not safely drive a vehicle, then there is a requirement for that attending physician to make that report to the Ministry of Transportation.

**0920**

In this particular case, in Anna Medeiros's case, her doctor made a report to the Ministry of Transportation about a potential concern. Ms. Medeiros not having a driver's licence, I'm advised that the Ministry of Transportation processed a driver's licence in her name, and then,

once it was issued, immediately cancelled and suspended that licence. Now we have a situation where Ms. Medeiros has a record of a suspended driver's licence and is in the databank of the Ministry of Transportation as someone who may have an issue. When and if Ms. Medeiros ever applies for a driver's licence, whether that be five years or 10 years or 20 years down the road, her application will immediately be flagged theoretically, and whether her medical condition has improved or not, she now has the challenge of dealing with this record of a suspended driver's licence on her file.

I raised this matter with our privacy commissioner, Ann Cavoukian. My reason for raising it with her was to point out that when mandatory reporting was implemented in this province, it was never the intention that people be tracked this way. I personally and we as the official opposition believe that that is an inappropriate use of personal information. We asked that the privacy commissioner investigate this matter with a view to alerting the Ministry of Transportation that this is inappropriate. The privacy commissioner responded and confirmed that an investigation has in fact been commenced by the privacy commissioner into this practice. We look forward to hearing back from the privacy commissioner with regard to that.

I want to bring another matter to your attention as an example of how the Ministry of Transportation deals with matters of personal information. This is a letter that was sent to the leader of our party, John Tory, by Mr. Eddy Consenheim. I'm going to read it into the record because I think it's important that members understand and that the Ministry of Transportation gets the message clearly from us here that we will not simply stand by as the Ministry of Transportation deals with personal information of private citizens in such a cavalier way. There is enough encroachment into our lives by government, let alone this kind of presumptive intrusion into our personal lives.

Mr. Consenheim writes to Mr. Tory as follows:

"Dear Sir,

"Herewith enclosed is my letter to the Minister of Transportation about my complaint for the invasion of my privacy by a private corporation, the 407 ETR.

"I find it unacceptable that outsiders can obtain my personal information without my consent, see the copy with the description. I do not have a transponder and have never filed an application for this."

Signed, "Eddy Consenheim."

He refers to the letter addressed to the minister. I'm going to read that into the record. It's my understanding that the minister has yet to respond—this was written on May 1, 2008—and I will look forward to seeing the minister's response. The letter reads:

"Dear Sir,

"Recently, I discovered on the backside of the account statement from 407 ETR a statement that was never brought to my attention, and I don't know how long this statement has been included.

"The statement in question is the fact that 407 ETR 'may request a consumer report and a credit investigation of my personal information.' I find this very disturbing and I don't see the reason for this unless this is done for the government to gather more personal information that should be protected under the privacy act.

"As far as I know, and I have never been informed different, anyone wanting to get my credit information can do so when this is on the application and accepted by the applicant and signed for.

"It is beside the fact that the costing is getting absolutely outrageous and instead of the government's promises to change this, they are now giving more power to outside interests. This is totally unacceptable. I will also inform the other parties of this. It could well become a point of discussion in the next election." It is signed "Eddy Consenheim."

Attached to this is a copy of a 407 ETR bill. This is a bill that is sent to anyone who travels the 407 ETR. We're familiar with the technology, whether you have or you don't have a transponder which you sign for, apply for and, of course, agree to all of the terms and conditions of. As Mr. Consenheim rightfully states, if you make an application and you sign an agreement that a credit check will be done, we all understand that. But in this particular case with the 407, people get a bill without signing anything. You simply have to drive the highway, the cameras pick up your licence plate, it's tracked, and then you are automatically sent a bill. And here's what it states on this bill:

"407 ETR may request a consumer report containing personal information about you and may request a credit investigation and exchange information with credit reporting agencies."

On the back of the bill, there is no signature—no agreement by an individual to allow either the 407 or the government of Ontario to gather any personal information. It refers to other agencies. Is it referring to the Ministry of Transportation? Is it referring to other companies, other third parties, perhaps private companies? We don't know. It's a blanket release that is presumed, and Mr. Consenheim's point about this is that the 407, of course, cannot issue this without the sign-off by the Ministry of Transportation. So this is yet one more example of the Ministry of Transportation agreeing to the encroachment on personal information of private citizens in the province of Ontario. So when I raise the issue in the context of the debate of Bill 85 and the government's intent to bring forward an identification system that will contain not just the name and age and colour of hair and other information that we have on our driver's licence, but will also contain important citizenship information, we want to be very clear that whoever is administering that technology at the Ministry of Transportation has the resources to do so effectively.

We continue to hear about the misuse of information. We had an example again raised in this Legislature of an individual who had lost his licence for life as a result of drinking and driving. That same individual was issued a

driver's licence. He made the application—the same name—and the Ministry of Transportation was incapable of doing the necessary cross-checking of that individual's identification to ensure that someone who should not have a driver's licence was denied that. We are not comfortable at this point in time until we hear from the minister. We will look for the minister to provide us information during committee of the steps that he has taken to ensure that there is competence and that there is ability at the Ministry of Transportation to in fact deal with these issues.

**0930**

I want to turn to the issue of our tourism industry. We have heard from the Minister of Transportation that one of the reasons that they're moving forward with this technology is because we want to ensure a smooth flowing of travellers across our borders—and tourism is a big part of that. I want to question the government: Where is Mr. Greg Sorbara? Where is the tourism czar who was appointed by Dalton McGuinty for the express purpose of researching the tourism industry to ensure that the industry is healthy and vibrant? Tourism is one of the fastest-growing industries on the planet, and yet Ontario lags behind most other jurisdictions in terms of its growth rate of that industry. That is a shame given the extent of our natural resources in this province that should have our attention.

We're losing manufacturing jobs in a sector that is experiencing significant difficulties. Whether we're in southwestern Ontario, eastern Ontario or northern Ontario, we have the resources available here in this province to develop a dynamic industry that would be second to none anywhere in the world. People travel now from all parts of the world to experience our great north. Whether it's fishing, hunting, sightseeing or ecotourism, we have natural resources in this province that are second to none anywhere. Whether it's the wine country of Niagara that people come to visit, the farmlands in southwestern Ontario, eastern Ontario and all of the lakes and streams and all of the wonderful tourism resorts that we have there, we have available here an industry that is just waiting for a government to support the private sector, provide the encouragement and provide some of the destination marketing support that the industry so desperately needs. By the way, that is available to tourism industries in other jurisdictions, and yet it continues to be ignored.

As we go into this summer of discontent, compliments of Dalton McGuinty, where people should be looking forward to enjoying all that we have to offer throughout this province, we have skyrocketing gas prices, about which the government refuses to do anything. In the past we've seen travellers, we've seen boat trailers being towed, we've seen camping trailers heading north. I can tell you that our highways are half empty. When you talk to our gas station attendants, they'll tell you that while the revenue they're collecting is way up, the volumes that they're pumping are way down. When you talk to our tourism operators and you ask them, "What are the pros-

pects for this summer?" they'll tell you, depending on where in the province, that reservations are down anywhere from 25% to 50%.

These are small business people, individuals who have invested their own resources in building their businesses. There is silence on the part of this government, the McGuinty government, in responding in any way, to provide any assistance, as we go into this summer.

We have made a proposal that is being ignored by the McGuinty government. We've called on the government to provide at least tax relief for individuals in this province over the course of the summer. We have called on the government to reduce the sales tax during the course of the summer. That would ensure that people have the opportunity to enjoy some of the benefits that we have available to us in this province.

My colleague Ted Arnott put out a press release just recently, calling on this government to ensure that tourism in Ontario will not be negatively affected. He was disappointed at the government's response to our proposal to eliminate the retail sales tax on all accommodations and attractions for the summer months.

Why would the Premier ignore a practical proposal over which he has absolute control? It's true he can't control the price of gasoline, but what he can control is what he charges consumers by way of taxation over the coming summer months on accommodations and attractions. To eliminate the sales tax is not a huge impact on the overall budget of this province. However, I can tell you that it would at least be an incentive for people to go to those gates, buy their tickets and to spend their money in those attractions.

"The Premier's plan isn't working. He's spending \$8 million on a long-term, so-called tourism competitiveness study, but offers nothing for the many thousands of Ontarians whose jobs are already at risk." You may recognize who said that. It was Mr. Arnott in his capacity as critic for tourism in this province.

Interestingly enough, the announcement that the Premier made to spend \$8 million in support of our colleague, who I think since this announcement has made a few mystery appearances in this place—obviously he's travelling, although it's hard to spend \$8 million all by yourself. So he must be working overtime to do that.

What I would like to know is, what happened to the tourism strategy that was developed in 2002? The reason I remember that very well is that, as Minister of Tourism at that time, I travelled the province. It certainly didn't cost \$8 million. I think the total extent of the entire study, under which we travelled from northern Ontario to eastern Ontario to southwestern Ontario, conducted consultations throughout the GTA and prepared a fulsome report—that entire exercise could not have cost more than \$150,000.

Now, Mr. Sorbara, with an \$8-million budget, in all of the time that he's been absent from this place and out there, out and about, no doubt consulting once again—I have no doubt as well that Mr. Sorbara, in his capacity as tourism czar of the McGuinty government, will not come

up with another new idea that isn't already contained in that 2002 report. I would ask the current Minister of Tourism to go to his staff and ask them to dust off that report, bring it forward and begin to implement some of those recommendations that were proposed to this government by tourism operators and by individuals who have invested their good funds in creating a business in Ontario that is now slowly eroding because of the lack of action on the part of the McGuinty government.

**0940**

Now we want to restudy it. Take the \$8 million and give it to some of those people who need that money to upgrade their facilities so that they can bring people in. That's the best use Mr. Sorbara could make of that money. Take that \$8 million, instead of using it once again to restudy something for which we already have the answers, and begin to implement a tourism strategy in this province.

The beginning of that should be our proposal, John Tory's proposal, the proposal that Ted Arnott, the critic for tourism in this province, authored, and that is to eliminate the retail sales tax on all accommodations and attractions for the summer months. That is a practical proposal. It would simply take five minutes to implement and it would have a substantial effect on the tourism industry right across this province.

We will be watching the Ministry of Transportation—having the lead on the implementation of this new security photo card—very carefully as to how they proceed. We look forward to working with them. We want this to be successful. We want to ensure that our borders are secure and that there is ease of crossing, both for passengers as well as for those doing business in Ontario and in the border states.

We look forward to this going to committee. We are certain that we will have experts coming forward, testifying before the committee, providing the assurances we're looking for. Most important, as I stated previously in the course of debate, I will be looking for the Minister of Transportation to provide us with the assurance here that the various departments within his ministry are adequately resourced to protect this information and to administer it efficiently and effectively, so that this proposal we have before us will in fact have the intended effect as it's described.

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

**Mr. John O'Toole:** It's always a pleasure to listen to the member from Newmarket–Aurora. Having been a former Minister of Transportation, it's evident that he knows of what he speaks, especially when it comes to having served as a Minister of Tourism as well. So he brings a lot to the topic. It's an important topic. He's described a couple of issues that aren't totally related, but the issue of privacy and the security of information is critical.

I think it's most important to listen, because he talked to some extent about the plight of tourism in Ontario. He did mention the travel czar or the tourism czar, Mr.

Sorbara. Over here, we're all worried about the \$8-million trip that he took—one, two or however many trips it may have been. We're looking forward to some kind of report or accountability on that. Hopefully, the next time he travels he will have a travel card so that we can actually bar code all of his activity and where he went.

On a serious note, the real issue here is that it doesn't solve the problems the minister brings forward. What we're really interested in is having more tourists and visitors coming to Canada, coming to Ontario. This does nothing to improve that. Don't be misguided by what the minister said in his initial comments. I'm going to take a few minutes after the round has gone through to put on the record the sequences and some of the information that has been put out that perhaps could not give a true impression of the consequence of this card to the people of Ontario. It's important and we support it, but we always have to say that, for instance, if you're travelling by air, this card will not serve; you'll have to have a passport. There are significant gaps in this rush to get it done, and yet we've got the \$8-million czar travelling around wondering where he's going.

**Mr. Michael A. Brown:** I appreciate the comments of the member opposite during his speech. I think we share—well, I know we share—his concern over privacy and the security of the information that will be encoded in these cards. There are actually four different cards that we're talking about. We're talking about a photo card. We are talking about an enhanced photo card, which would be a photo card for someone who's not a driver but would like to have a card that identifies them and would have their citizenship included on it. We are talking about the normal driver's licence, and an enhanced driver's licence which would have citizenship identification on it.

It is an issue that we take very seriously in terms of the administration. We understand that the data bank has to be secure, that it has to be reliable and that we have to make sure that the individual's privacy is protected. That is what this is all about. I myself have talked to the people at homeland security in Washington. I've been there; I've talked to them. They are very concerned about the same issues. They've actually come to Ontario, looked at the way we issue drivers' licences, and my understanding is that they are comfortable with that. We have to do those sorts of things. I've also been to the state department, where I've had the same kind of assurances. We have to ensure that our partners in this particular project, the Americans, understand that we are capable of doing it, and we have to understand that the flip side of this is that the American states are also doing it. Michigan is doing it. Washington is doing it. New York is working at it. They want to do it, too. We want free passage or as close to free passage across the borders as we can get.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** I too would like to rise—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** I know all about the border. I'd like to commend the member from Newmarket–Aurora

for his remarks and description of the bill and our concerns with it. We support it under the proviso that our concerns will be addressed. In Sarnia–Lambton it's certainly important that we have timely border access. It's one of the major border crossings, probably rivalling the Windsor crossing. It's important. I hope a number of people will take the opportunity to cross the Sarnia–Lambton border this summer to come down to the 150th anniversary of the discovery of the oil industry in Oil Springs, Ontario. That's going to be all summer. I hope the members from Peterborough and Algoma will take that opportunity to come down there.

**Mr. Michael A. Brown:** I want to be there, Bob.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Maybe you'll have to car-pool.

Anyway, it's vital to our local economy and it's vital to the economy of Ontario that we keep this traffic moving and keep the border open. I think the issues about security of information are very important in this day and age, that people have those guarantees that their information that they do share with government departments be held in security. I'm sure the government will listen to the comments from the opposition, take those under advisement and improve the bill anywhere it does need improvement. We look forward to further debate on the bill and working with the government to make it a better bill.

**0950**

**Mr. Wayne Arthurs:** Just very briefly, I appreciated the third reading opening address by the member from Newmarket–Aurora, both the first half of the speech in which he was dealing primarily with Bill 85 and the second half in which he was dealing primarily with the issue of tourism in Ontario. It was nice that he could blend the two together so successfully.

We share concerns around issues of privacy and working closely with the privacy commissioner. I know the minister will be taking into account, both from his speech and during committee, the concerns being expressed by the opposition. We all have equal concerns about ensuring that we protect the privacy of individuals while at the same time providing windows of opportunity for exactly the kinds of things the member from Sarnia–Lambton spoke to, and that's ease of access across the border for Ontario residents.

We were pleased to hear as well in his opening comments that it's the intention of the official opposition to support this legislation. It's always encouraging that when they see good legislation come forward, they want to work, as opposition, to enhance it where they can. They recognize the good work being done by the government in bringing forward good legislation and it's their intention to support it at the time of second reading.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** That concludes the time for questions and comments. The member for Newmarket–Aurora has the floor.

**Mr. Frank Klees:** I want to thank the members from Durham, Algoma–Manitoulin, Sarnia–Lambton and Pickering–Scarborough East for their comments in response to my comments during debate.

The member from Pickering–Scarborough East referred to his gratitude that the opposition would support legislation coming forward from the government. It's a rare occasion that we have. It's now been about five years that the McGuinty government has occupied government benches and I think in the course of that, truthfully, there have really only been about two occasions when I could stand in my place and say, "That is good legislation. I'm willing to support it." But even here today, there are reservations. We're going to be watching very carefully. We do look forward to working with you in that regard.

We have common ground in terms of our concern for security of our borders and we share common ground in terms of ensuring that we have convenient access both for our American friends and Ontarians travelling to the United States. At the end of the day, the important element of this will be that we have in place a technology and a document that are both effective in terms of ensuring cross-border travel as well as protecting the important personal information of our citizens.

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

**Mr. Wayne Arthurs:** I appreciate the opportunity to spend just a few minutes on Bill 85, following the leadoff third reading by the member from Newmarket–Aurora and having commented briefly on what he had to say. I understand from those Qs and As that were ongoing that the member from Durham also has the intention of taking just a few minutes to put a few things on the record in that regard.

I think it's important—it remains important; it's not that it will be new, but it remains important—that as we talk about Bill 85, the enhancement of identification, both driver identification and non-driver identification, it's a particularly good opportunity for us, as we talk about cross-border activity, to also talk about the opportunity to provide sources of identification for those who wouldn't necessarily be drivers in Ontario. There are four million people in the province who don't hold a valid driver's licence but who want the opportunity to have the type of ID that they might get asked for on a fairly regular basis.

When one opens up a bank account, as an example, the banks want to see ID. They want to see photo ID, and they'll often ask for a driver's licence. Those who haven't had the opportunity to drive don't have that, and they don't have the easy access to photo identification that can be used for that purpose.

Proving age for seniors' discounts: Obviously discount opportunities for seniors are provided extensively, not only in this province but in other provinces and internationally, and when someone is asked whether they are eligible for a discount as a senior for some modest savings, it's nice to have a form of identification that works effectively. Many of our seniors don't drive or are no longer driving, so as a current strategy whereby identification is easy for them to take advantage of these



savings, the photo ID card is an ideal means by which they can do that.

Certainly work on enhanced photo identification of a variety of sorts is ongoing. As we know, it's not a new issue. We know what sparked this type of activity, but I certainly want to acknowledge the leadership shown by the current and past Minister of Transportation and the Premier in regard to identifying this as an issue and working so closely with our partners across the border in the US, the northern US states close to us, and pressuring the federal government in the United States of America to acknowledge and recognize that there are mechanisms by which one can be identified for the purpose of crossing the border in addition to passports.

As we know, a large percentage of people in this country, and an even greater percentage within the USA, don't have passports. But many of those people want to travel cross-border for the purpose of visiting with family, for the very tourism that the member from Newmarket–Aurora spoke about, for the purpose of short cross-border visits—whether it's the casino opportunities or entertainment or shopping opportunities, and those are activities in both directions—or whether it's something like Marineland in Niagara Falls that American families want to come and visit. Having a passport is not the one and only means by which one should have the opportunity to cross over the border.

Enhanced driver's licence strategies will be an excellent means by which we can expedite border crossings and work very co-operatively with our neighbours cross-border. We know that in Washington state and British Columbia, they've been experimenting and working with this for a limited time now, but the uptake is increasing. It's a good measure for us to see the level of success and also measure where there may be shortcomings so that we can enhance our process, and as it rolls out, it will be an even more effective process for us to use.

There are a couple of matters I just want to comment on extremely briefly: the matters of citizenship and privacy. There will be no citizenship information held on the card. It's certainly not the intent of government to risk any privacy matters by containing that. There will be a requirement, though, that citizenship be identified at the time of application for the card, because for security reasons, if we're going to use these for cross-border activity, it's obvious that we want to ensure that citizenship is confirmed. We can do that in Ontario by virtue of birth records. For those who are not native-born to Ontario, we will have to depend upon our work with the federal government to identify citizenship for the purposes of the application and the issuance of the card but not for the purposes of carrying that information on the card.

We'll take extreme care—and I know this will be part of the committee discussion—to ensure the privacy of individuals even as they use this card. Our privacy commissioner has spoken to this matter. We obviously take her comments seriously, and we look forward to her

continuing input as this process unfolds and look forward to comments from all sides of the House on how we can ensure that people's privacy is protected in this matter. I have a great degree of confidence that we will actually be able to ensure that occurs. We continue to work very closely with the privacy commissioner on this matter as this process moves forward, even during the course of the debate, in anticipation or hopefulness that, having heard from opposition parties their intention to support the legislation, it will actually see its approval throughout this process. So we continue that work with the privacy commissioner and the federal government as it relates to privacy and citizenship-related information.

This will not be a citizenship database. We're not looking to use this mechanism to create yet another database of information, but we certainly will verify citizenship at the time the application process is unfolding.

#### 1000

This is exciting legislation we're moving forward on. I think it's a responsive piece of legislation; it's an indication to the public at large that the government and this Legislature understand the needs of this province and its citizens from the standpoint of having cross-border access and from the standpoint of having identification that they can use effectively for their day-to-day business here in Ontario, throughout this country or elsewhere. Having photo identification is so terribly convenient for those of us who normally will be able to walk with our driver's licence as it currently exists within the province when we're asked for photo ID. It's easy to pull it out; it's easy to use as a second piece of identification.

I was out of the country recently, and I had my passport with me, but where I was, they were actually looking for two pieces of ID, because I was Canadian and travelling abroad. It was nice to have my driver's licence provide that level of assurance that they were looking for. They could actually compare the pictures, and even though they're a little bit dated at this point because they all have different time spans for when they expire, they could at least compare and ensure themselves that they were actually dealing with the person they thought they were dealing with. This will provide an opportunity—particularly the photo ID cards—for those who don't have a licence of any sort to have that extra identification available to them; the secondary opportunity to identify themselves, whether it's a birth certificate and then a photo ID card that has the photo on it, or even a passport and a photo card as a supplementary form of identification that one would want to have available.

As a matter of fact, I'm dealing with a matter as an estate trustee currently and dealing with a bank. Before we can actually deal with the matters at the bank, they ask that we bring two forms of photo identification to the bank for the purposes of allowing us to work as trustees to an estate. Certainly my driver's licence allows me to do that, but there will be those who wouldn't be in that situation, who wouldn't readily have photo ID available. The photo ID card would be a wonderful opportunity for them to do that.

I think, as well, the enhanced driver's licence strategy is really only a small step. This legislation and its debate, if it's adopted, will be a significant step but not the only one. The technologies that are readily available to us now and could be used will be a way in which we can enhance this process even more. We first need to get the enhanced driver's licence strategy in place and provide people with opportunities to look at the secure fashion of the driver's licence opportunity for identification, but we need to use this as a jumping-off point to look at other opportunities.

We need to expedite travel cross-border. This is not just a matter of being able to travel between here and the US; it's a method of being available to travel expeditiously cross-border. We know the constraints at the border crossings, we know the issues around that, and we know the expenditures that are proposed for capital investment to allow people to move back and forth efficiently and quickly. This will be one more opportunity for us to build on that so that people will be able to, with this type of identification, travel quickly, efficiently and effectively in both directions across the border—enhance those opportunities, allow people to spend more time at their desired destination, whether it's for hours or days or even weeks.

If they're on a short-term turnaround, as the member from Sarnia-Lambton was commenting earlier, I'm sure he would love to see the opportunity for people to get across that border as quickly and as efficiently as conceivably possible to allow visitors to his community to take advantage of the wonderful things in that community and allow those in his community who need to travel cross-border for their purposes to get there quickly and efficiently as well. That's not just his riding; there are those in this Legislature who are close to border crossings. I'm not one of those per se who is directly on a border crossing, but those who are certainly would like to see the opportunity for their constituents and visitors to their community to have a high level of access.

This is one significant step in that process, but I'm personally optimistic that we will find other opportunities to do things even more effectively, taking advantage of technology in an even more substantive way.

I just wanted to add those few comments to the ongoing debate at second reading and look forward to this matter going to committee. I think I misstepped earlier when I referenced the member opposite, the official opposition critic, when I probably referenced the third reading leadoff speech; I would have erred in doing that, because we have yet to complete the second reading debate and allow this matter to go to committee.

I appreciate the time allocated to me and look forward to this process as it unfolds.

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

**Mr. Norm Miller:** I'm pleased to add some comments to the speech from the member for Pickering-Scarborough East to do with Bill 85, the Photo Card Act, 2008. I would certainly have questions for the government: When last year they'd just announced the big, new,

enhanced driver's licence, where is the long-term planning, when now we have another photo card? Why are there three photo cards, including a basic photo card? Why wouldn't all of them have the enhanced information? And of course we've had some privacy concerns that have been raised by previous speakers.

Having enhanced information on the photo card is very closely related to tourism. I certainly have some substantial concerns to do with the upcoming summer season of tourism, particularly as a representative of the riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka. I note that at least one member of this Legislature sent out a press release entitled "Summer of Discontent," referring to the upcoming tourism season this year, where we have high gas prices, the high value of the Canadian dollar, and the US economy that has slowed down a lot. So it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that this is going to be a challenging year, particularly the summer season, for tourism. What has the McGuinty government been doing? What are they doing? The answer is, "Nothing." Other than the appointment of the \$8-million member from Vaughan as the tourism czar to go out and do a study, which may be beneficial long-term, certainly it's not going to do anything for this summer.

We have seen a very concrete proposal from the leader of the Conservative Party, John Tory, to take off the retail sales tax for this year, which would be a boost for this upcoming season. It would be something that would make a positive difference. Once the season is over, it's too late; you can't get that business back. So I think that the government should act on the proposal put forward by the PC Party.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Just in response to the comments made by the honourable member, I think the issue for us is that, first of all, as New Democrats we support the intent of the legislation. I had a chance earlier to do my leadoff speech and talk about why we're here, and the somewhat overreaction in the United States to what has happened, as far as how they've adjusted themselves after 9/11. But that's another debate.

This is one of those pieces of legislation where we need to make sure we get it right, right off the bat. I note that the parliamentary assistant agreed with my leadoff speech in that this bill is going to need some time in committee. It may not be a lot, or it may be a lot; I don't know. It depends on how much interest there is, but we need to talk to experts to make sure we get this right. There's a whole issue around technologies. These chips that are going to be inside these particular photo IDs can be accesses. Is it going to be an open system or a closed system, in the sense of how the technology is going to work? Either way that information, that little chip that transmits a signal, which has the personal information of the individual on the card, could be picked up by somebody and hacked if they're able to figure out the encryption, if it is an encrypted system.

If it's not an encrypted system, that's even worse, and God only knows what people are going to do with that kind of information. So I think it's important that we

speak to the technical people at committee to make sure we get that right. Also, the whole issue of privacy needs to be really taken seriously, because we're going to be putting a lot of information on these cards that people probably would love to get their hands on for all kinds of marketing reasons and whatever else it might be.

We support the bill; we think, however, that it needs to go to committee. It has to get some proper time in committee in order to look at some of the concerns around technologies, making sure that it's secure and also the issue of privacy. We need to get our privacy commissioner, obviously, at committee in order to take a look at this as well. I look forward to time in committee.

**1010**

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** The member from Pickering–Scarborough East certainly highlighted some of the very positive aspects of Bill 85 and the card.

In my riding of Peterborough I have two very active seniors' groups: Marion Batten is president of the Maple-ridge seniors' group, located on Erskine Avenue, and Shirley Shaw is the executive director of Activity Haven on Barnardo Avenue in Peterborough. Both of those groups, when you're talking to them, have talked about the need to have a comprehensive photo ID card in Ontario that they can use. One of those two organizations runs bus tours from time to time, not only throughout other parts of Ontario, but there are some tours to upper New York state and Michigan. Anything we can do to assist those seniors when they go on their travels, to facilitate access across the border, to make it as easy as possible, is a very positive thing to do.

Minister Bradley has been a real champion on this issue. I know he spent considerable time in Washington, DC, as tourism minister, and now as Minister of Transportation, working with Louise Slaughter, who is a Congressperson from upper New York state. Minister Bradley has had those discussions as to how we can facilitate cross-border travel.

The member for Sarnia talks about people getting through Sarnia. We welcome that, because eventually they make their way to Peterborough to fish in the Kawartha Lakes. We see that as a very positive thing.

**Mr. Mike Colle:** Chemong Lake.

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** Chemong Lake and Rice Lake. I know in Rice Lake, American fishermen come, particularly in May and June, to take advantage of the bluegill, which is in abundance in Rice Lake. We welcome them to come in because they do a lot for the economy locally.

We see that Bill 85 is a very positive step. We look forward to it moving through the Legislature.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** The member Pickering–Scarborough East is right on. I followed some of his comments and I look forward to adding some comments in a few minutes on that. I think it's an issue that we all endorse. It's a matter of taking time to get the perspective on this.

There was an earlier opportunity, which I'll explain in some detail. I worked with three or four ministries on that side of the House in 2003 and 2004. I just want to thank

one of my constituents, Joseph Beshara, who wrote to me in early 2004. I met with him. I have the correspondence that I sent to the various ministries, some of whom did not respond. I think the idea is sound. I'd like to give Joseph Beshara most of the credit for bringing this up.

This is already in place in New Brunswick. So we're not inventing it, and this is not rocket science. This is just making it convenient for the people of Ontario, whether they're seniors or persons who simply don't have a driver's licence, to be more mobile in our economy and to have secure identification. So it's the right thing to do.

It's a timely thing to do as we're entering the tourist season. To make it easier for people to cross the borders, for their own convenience and their own mobility in Canada, is something a government should be doing, while at the same time securing their identification. I'll be speaking in a few minutes in more detail.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** The member for Pickering–Scarborough East has two minutes to reply.

**Mr. Wayne Arthurs:** I just want to extend my thanks to the members for Parry Sound–Muskoka, Timmins–James Bay, Peterborough and Durham, who responded. I think the theme of the discussion this morning, as we've gone through this, has been focused on two or three principle areas, which will get reflected during the committee debate. I think comments around the need to ensure matters of privacy, and the co-operation and input that we'll continue to receive from the privacy commissioner, are going to be exceedingly helpful. I think issues around protection, the type of technology, the need to have that technical expertise made available to members of the committee—to ensure, in my view, that there's a comfort level with the technology and at the same time garner a higher level of understanding of other opportunities of technology that may not be a part of this particular legislation but may find their way into the processes that we use—are going to be exceedingly helpful.

I would just comment if I could, because a number of people have talked about tourism and the driver's licences related to that and gas prices. It was interesting—this is a sidebar. I was listening to the radio on my way in this morning, and the newscast was commenting on comments made by Cam Woolley, the OPP officer who we all know for his work on traffic and traffic safety. He was commenting about the high prices of gas and what that appears to be influencing on the roads. What it appears to be influencing are speeds on our 400-series highways and other related highways. They are actually seeing a reduction in average speeds on those highways, something closer to what the speed limits are—probably more in tune with what we're going to talk about on another bill, and that's speed limits with speed limiters on trucks—closer to those kinds of speed ranges, even on our 400-series highways now. They're actually seeing a very substantive reduction in—

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

**Mr. John O'Toole:** In the very few minutes that I have to make a couple of comments, I just want to review for those listening. Bill 85 was brought in on June 3, 2008, by Minister Bradley. I think it's important to be clear here:

"There are three kinds of photo cards: basic, enhanced and combined. A basic ... card contains the holder's name and photograph and other prescribed information about the holder. An enhanced ... card contains the holder's name and photograph, a notation to indicate that the holder is a Canadian citizen and other prescribed information about the holder; it also has security and other features that may allow it to be used for travel. A combined photo card is one card that constitutes the holder's enhanced photo and driver's licence." In fact there are three separate cards here, and I think that's very notable and very convenient.

The key here is, in today's world of technology and privacy issues, ease of accessibility for the user, but it's also for others to perhaps access. It's important to get the security part correct here. I have a bit of a systems or computer-type of background at one point in my career, some years ago, I might say. The idea today, though, is a smart card, similar to a card when travelling on the 407. In fact, some countries already have them. It's not just a passport; it's all of the information that is pertinent to your needs.

We all complain today of having so many cards in our wallet, and different identification things that come up with that. We have now the health card. We also have another card that the province just issued, which is this card here; it's the prescription drug benefit card. I'm concerned that they're hurrying to get these things solved one piece at a time. True smart technology would be much more efficient and much more uniform, whether for reading or processing, if they could just slow it down here and get the right card. The right card could be your health card. It could be your driver's licence. It could be your hunting card or gaming card. It could be any kind of card at all—one card. That would be a smart card. So I think it's going to be neat to have another card in our wallet. You'll have a stack of them like this.

If you want to make sure it's secure, and you put your resources into having the right information available to the right people at the right time at the right price, I think we'd be on to something that was quite innovative here. I don't see any innovation in this at all. It's quick and easy. I can tell you, without getting too emotional, let's not get on the bandwagon here and sing the national anthem and give out some kind of an award, because this is anything but that. Okay?

Why am I a bit perplexed about this? Why did I want to speak? Well, I have a list here. I wrote to Minister Bradley, I wrote to Minister Watson, I wrote to Minister Takhar, and I wrote to other civil servants as well. This was back in 2004. It was brought to me, and I have the correspondence with me. My staff Sheryl, Peter and Fern have done a great job hustling out this information this morning. This is a letter from Mr. Joseph Beshara, who

came to visit me. He moved from New Brunswick. He had a travel card, and the card was also an ID card, an official, provincially issued identification card. He said that his issue was, he didn't drive. Without a driver's licence he was scuppered. I wrote to the government in good faith on his behalf with his words from Mr. Beshara—it's nothing that I innovated. I could give you the log. We track pretty well all the correspondence; we write a lot of stuff to ministers, I will say that—maybe more than any member in the House. But I have very involved and engaged constituents. I'm still waiting, in 2008, for some of the responses to those letters which I have in front of me.

#### 1020

Here's a little bridge to the past: I'm going to presume that Mr. Beshara's letter from four years ago resulted in this bill today. I would like to move a small amendment to call it the Joseph Beshara legislation. He thought of it. And all these high-paid bureaucrats, or whatever you call them—we've talked about smart cards for 100 years. A smart health card would actually tell my blood type and you could put it in a machine and see who my doctor was and some of the disclosed information that I wanted on my record in case I had allergies or some other thing. I won't go too far down the road. Let's not go too far here.

Another statement: I'm looking at the remarks made by the minister. It's a speech that was written by civil servants that he read. I'm not trying to be smart; that's how it works. In it, he said—I'm reading right from Hansard, page 2250 on June 3, when he introduced it. It says:

"We are proposing to introduce an enhanced driver's licence card that would include citizenship information. This would become an acceptable travel document, a passport alternative, for US land and sea cross-border travel."

What he doesn't say is that it doesn't include air travel. If I'm travelling by air through any part of that route to Vancouver over the States, I'd have to have ID, and this doesn't pass. It's by the omission that it's not fully informing the consumer.

#### *Interjection.*

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Another thing that's important if I go on to read here—let's not become emotional. We're trying to understand the bill, which I'd encourage you to read. One of them here is that it implies that it would help tourism. In fact, it's in the speech. It will do nothing of the sort to help tourism. Nothing of the sort. This is not being issued to US citizens. This is being issued to Ontario citizens for their ease of access to leave Ontario.

So what we're saying is we have a catastrophe in Ontario in the economy because of the price of gas and some other tinkering. People now aren't going to be able to go to the States. That's actually good. They can stay in Ontario and spend their money closer to home for tourism. If they wanted to go to Buffalo, it's now going to be easier for them to go to some American destination. But if an American comes over here, they're still going to need their own passport, their own identification issued.

Do you understand? So it's not going to make it easier for visitors to Canada at all.

**Mr. Michael A. Brown:** Wrong.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** The member from Algoma-Manitoulin, I believe it is, is taking issue. I'd ask you to get up in your two minutes and show me the part of the speech that shows how it actually helps American tourists. This has nothing to do with American tourists.

**Mr. Mike Colle:** They're doing the same card as we are.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** That's not this bill. If they do or do not do it, I've not seen it. But that's all I'm saying: A bit of clarity here actually goes a long way in that respect.

We could switch the topic because I think it's timely, but it doesn't come into effect until 2009. That's when this American border issue will be responded to. And that issue, I believe, is important. Border security and the whole security issue with respect to these enhanced cards is very, very important. I would not want to underplay that, but this combined photo card will meet the applicable rules set out by the United States western hemisphere travel initiative, which is good.

Initially, there was some idea that this was an Americanization issue, but I congratulate the minister on the fact that he did push the issue with the border state governors and those people he met, those officials. This is all good.

What it does for the Ontario citizen and the Ontario business person is to make it easier. Some people go across the border weekly, or daily, even. This is all good. It's actually going to be good for people who don't have a driver's licence. They will now have a convenient card. I'd like to see it be a real smart card as opposed to just another card outside of the new visual health card, the new prescription card and all the other cards we have. I think it is a step forward. In that respect, I would be happy.

Now, tourism, and where would you go this summer? I'm switching the tone here a bit, in the last few minutes I have, to say that Durham is a great destination for anyone, whether it's an American or people from other parts of Ontario, indeed Canada. It's going to have a couple of events that I think are important, and I want to give a few people a bit of credit.

We have an excellent destination in the township of Uxbridge; in fact, it's in the community of Leaskdale, which is sort of the northeast part of Uxbridge. That was the home of a very famous Canadian, Lucy Maud Montgomery, and this year is the 100th anniversary of Anne of Green Gables. I thank Councillor Pat Mikuse, who is, I believe, the council appointee to the archives, museums and the cultural part of the community of Uxbridge. I would recommend that. It's a wonderful destination. I believe the ministry has given them money to celebrate this very significant anniversary. I believe it's this Saturday on my schedule, a big celebration. Let me just check on my schedule here. It's the Anne of Green Gables street festival and festival garden tour in

Uxbridge, and it's on Saturday, June 14. There you go. There's an invitation to an easy destination. Even though the price of gas is nearing \$1.50 a litre, it's still convenient to go there. It's just a short drive just out of York region, and you're right there in Uxbridge.

Another anniversary that's being celebrated this summer—in fact, the celebrations will be starting very soon—is the 150th anniversary of the town of Bowmanville. It's actually my hometown, the centre part of my riding. I'd like to thank members from that committee for the work they've done. It's a wonderful historic downtown. I believe it was built in 1858. Unfortunately, they had a tragic fire a few weeks ago, as you may have heard, and one of the historic buildings was completely demolished. It's quite tragic, actually.

Kevin Anyan has worked tirelessly to promote this, and it will be a great celebration. Ron Hooper, the councillor there, is a chairperson of that committee. Willie Woo is also very involved, along with Rowlie Coombes.

Sher and Roger Leetooze—now, there's an interesting couple. She's a writer and has published several books, and she's recording significant events and the record of 150 years of Bowmanville. I would recommend that to people as well.

Martha Rutherford is the historian and archivist for the museums in our area, Clark Museum and the Bowmanville Museum and couple of other museums around as well.

Dan Brock is going to organize the parade. Cheri Smith is doing marketing. Steve Coles is doing the opening, and John Fowler is look after advertising. There's a broad citizens' committee trying to make tourism and the destination of Bowmanville on their 150th anniversary a real success.

There is good news among the many critical things I may have said, but don't forget that I was the transportation critic for a period of time. I'm happy that this is here; I'm disappointed by how long it's taken, all the way back to my comment in 2004 when I wrote several ministers. I think I was ignored, or maybe I didn't get an answer because they were so overwhelmed by what a neat idea this was from Mr. Beshara that they sent it on to Minister Bradley. Minister Bradley has been the Minister of Tourism and Minister of Transportation, so maybe he has moved on an issue thanks to my constituent's writing the letter.

But it's always interesting when you have the opportunity—all of us, Mr. Speaker, you included, because I know the gentleman in the chair right now, the member from Wellington-Halton Hills, is the tourism critic, and made some very excellent remarks. I have those copies of his remarks from Hansard. He made the comparison with the idea of this card and what's missing here—I'm not really sure; I think the critic or the parliamentary assistant may have said in his remarks how much it was going to cost. The first thing I want to do is this hand-in-your-pocket business—that ad. Is this another opportunity for the government to get their hand in your pocket?

1030

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** The banks are in your pocket.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Premier McGuinty is doing a fairly good job at it as well with the health tax, and they still have no doctor. What's going on here?

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** He's in with the banks.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I only have to stick to the topic at hand: What is it going to cost? Is everybody going to have the new special reader to read this secure card? Are there going to have to be millions of dollars of these readers at the borders so they can read this card, or is it integrated technology where it's readable anywhere? Is it secure technology? There are a lot of unanswered questions. I trust that the minister and the privacy commissioner, Ann Cavoukian, will certainly make sure it meets the very strongest and stringent tests.

Our member for Wellington-Halton Hills, Mr. Arnott, said, "I'm pleased to have this opportunity to respond... When I got my Canadian passport a couple of years ago, my recollection is that I paid \$75 for it, if I'm not mistaken, and it was for five years. I don't think the minister or the parliamentary assistant has indicated ... how much this ... is going to cost."

He's wondering if the cost of—for instance, I just renewed my driver's licence and I think for two years it was \$150; that's about \$75 a year. There's more and more of this nickelly-pickelly, nickel and dime, into your pocket, another card, you can't go anywhere, don't leave home without it.

I think we need to sit down and rationalize all of these cards. A special committee—we're not doing anything here, really. We're mostly filibustering this bill. There are several bills that I think are kind of being rushed through. Yet look at this; the attendance here is almost scary.

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** It's the new rule changes that have really brought the people in here.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I think the new rule changes mean nobody has to come any more. The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound probably has a few things to say on this bill because he has a great north part of Bruce riding; it's wonderful. His favourite area, I think, is the Niagara Escarpment. He just loves that tourist area, the scenic value. He's been a big supporter in many ways—not in all ways; I would not like to impugn motive here. I know he's always had a lot to say about the Niagara Escarpment; we'll put it that way. At the same time, he lives there and he loves it. It's the vistas in Ontario; it's a great place to visit.

In the very few minutes I have left I just want to leave on a reasonably light-hearted note. I've watched with interest the discussions here—question period and that, which will be here in a few moments. The main issue I see is the economy. It isn't all Dalton's fault, but he's not helping very much. One of the main factors within that file is fuel and energy costs; they're going through the roof. For people on fixed incomes, young families, a holiday this summer will be a drive to Canada's Wonderland; they're not going anywhere else. They can't

afford it with the price of gas and the taxes we're paying at our homes, the price of electricity, the air conditioning. It's starting to trouble me.

When I look at the young pages here, we need to leave them with a stronger province, not a weaker province. In that climate, I'm concerned about the tourism implications of Bill 85. But I am somewhat relieved, because there's—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I might go to Peterborough this summer a few times; probably every weekend, really.

I'm reassured because the travel czar of Ontario, Mr. Sorbara, has been given \$8 million—I wish I could travel with him in the limo—to kind of bring up a strategy for tourism. He was a fairly respectful Minister of Finance. I think he's being underutilized over there and I think this is just a free, go-anywhere card. Eight million dollars—I want to see the report. In fact, he should get that report on the table now because the economy is in trouble now. I'd be one who would be right here in this forum. I'm willing to work in a non-partisan, co-operative way to get it right with Mr. Sorbara because I think he's a decent fellow and really does want to find it, but he needs to work with our critic, Mr. Arnott, and he needs to work with all parties—the NDP as well—and find the right answers at the right time for the people of Ontario now. We don't need to wait for 2009 or some flashy announcement in the election in 2011. So let's get down to serious—I'm looking for responses to some of the comments I made. Maybe the parliamentary assistant will clarify the issue of how this card actually helps American citizens who visit Canada. It doesn't, okay? Unless he can refute that, that's what this debate's about. It's not a personal criticism of any sort, but I'm pointing out a few things that could have been done in 2004. It could be smart cards. How much does it cost and how does it help the people whom we want to come into Ontario, not leave Ontario? Thank you for the opportunity.

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

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** The member from Durham raised what I thought was an interesting point, one that I'd not thought of, and that is, why don't we utilize or at least look at the possibility of utilizing this process in order to consolidate a number of pieces of ID on one card? It's not a bad suggestion, and it speaks to what we often, I think, do a disservice to when we do legislation in this House: that you would think that what's really supposed to happen is that we're listening to each other's points of view on a piece of legislation. We send it off to committee, and if somebody's got a decent idea that's doable and manageable, we move forward.

This particular suggestion's not a bad one, because we all have it. You have the health cards, your driver's licence, your Outdoors card and various pieces of ID and cards from the provincial government, and if we're really going to move by the way of smart card technology, that's not a bad idea, quite frankly. All of us, I think, would be very happy to have that much less stuff to carry

around in our very heavy wallets, because we know we're not weighted down by the amount of money in the wallet; we're weighted down by the amount of plastic that we carry in it. Sometimes, the limit on that plastic is a little bit more than we should have.

I think the member makes a good point. I don't know if it's doable. It's one of those things where you'd have to talk to the experts who do this kind of thing. But I think that it's not a bad suggestion.

The other point that he makes in regard to what this really means as far as tourism—yes, I can understand part of the comments that he's making there. But we're in a box, right? At the end of the day, the Americans are going to ban Canadians from going into the United States without proper identification, being a passport, and this legislation, although I don't like the idea, at least gives Ontarians a chance to do something that's a little bit less onerous and a little less expensive than having to purchase a passport every five years. That's the context by which we go into committee, and I look forward to that suggestion being taken seriously.

**Mr. Michael A. Brown:** I just wanted to thank the member for Durham for his speech, and I look forward to having these discussions in the committee that will happen shortly.

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** I'm glad to be able to comment on the honourable member from Durham, Mr. O'Toole. You turn the television on in the morning and there he is. You turn it off at night and he's the man up there speaking. He's the man of the hour; there's no doubt about it. He does his research so well that almost no one else has to speak here.

I must congratulate the government on their new rule changes. It has enhanced the attendance in this place so greatly. I'm so impressed. There are so many people in here to listen to it. It's just amazing that when they changed these rules, we got so many people in here to listen to anyone who dare speak.

Talking about the card that they're going to come up with that allows us to go to the States—it's something, I guess, coming from this government, but the unfortunate part is that they have no plans over there. We have an economy that's going into the toilet. We have the tourist trade going to go into the toilet next time, and they've done nothing. This little bit of having a new card—now, my wallet will be heavier again because we already have a whole lot of cards in our wallet. Sure, there's some way that they can combine a new card with our health card or our driver's licence card, something like that. But here will be another card, and this is all that they can come up with. I guess, if you own a plastic factory, you may make some money now because they're going to make a bunch of new cards. But that's about all they're doing. It's unfortunate that they have no idea of what is happening in the economy, what is happening in tourism. At least over here we come up with an idea to help out the tourist industry. But no, they couldn't do it. They just have no idea. They're on a cloud, and they're floating along.

After their four years of inability, now they're floating along, hoping they can float through four more years.

**1040**

**Mr. Wayne Arthurs:** I won't take too long. I appreciated the comments from the member for Durham. I know he has two minutes to wrap up. I hope he'll take that little bit of time to tell us a little more about the Anne of Green Gables festival. I presume it's going to include the homestead of Lucy Maud Montgomery as part of that tour. I particularly appreciated his comments, about half-way through his speech, on a bill that he's supporting at second reading that he was using the opportunity to filibuster.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** The member for Durham has two minutes to reply.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I want to thank, in sort of reverse order here, the member for Pickering–Scarborough East. Yes, the Lucy Maud Montgomery homestead in Leaskdale will be available this weekend. In fact, it will be featured this summer at the Toronto CNE. So it is a significant event for all Canadians. We should be very proud and share the heritage. We each have those stories. This is one story in my area.

The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound is always entertaining and direct. But I think he was true when he talked about the number of cards. It's like, pick a card. Those are all Ontario cards, right here. I don't want to show them because of the privacy issues. But if you had a smart, secured card, I think we'd be on the right track.

The member for Algoma–Manitoulin: I look forward to committee hearings on this bill; again, another bill that has unanimous consent. We could go to committee of the whole and solve this right here, right now, today, and have everybody involved in that debate. That's the way we should be doing things here. It's just a process, but we all agree with the objective. There's no question about it.

The member for Timmins–James Bay made the most non-partisan comment with respect to listening to each other's ideas. It's an extremely positive and productive thing to do, not just for the young people here but for those viewing. That's how they want Ontario to serve them: They want their elected members to work cooperatively to do the right thing.

There are several bills—the Pesticides Act, as well as the cruelty to animals bill and the speed limiters. Most of these bills are kind of neutral bills. We want to get them right. We don't want to have them tested in the courts, as we are now. The street racing bill was hastily drafted, and it's being challenged in the courts.

We need to work together in this forum. We don't have to slip off to some committee. Half the days, the House is not utilizing the full time correctly.

**Mr. Frank Klees:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I feel that I must point out that when the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound referred to the large number of people here, it was really his attempt at sarcasm. It shouldn't be misunderstood.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** I don't believe that was a point of order, but I appreciate the information.

Further debate.

**Mr. Paul Miller:** We are hoping to continue debate on this matter. It's obviously of great importance, and we do not want to end debate on it. We're looking forward, after question period, to continuing this at the next convenient time. I'm sure we're now close to the moment for question period.

**Mr. Michael A. Brown:** I appreciate the intervention and look forward to taking this bill to committee at the earliest possible time.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** It being almost 10:45, this debate stands adjourned.

### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

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

On behalf of the member for Hamilton Centre, in the west members' gallery, I'd like to welcome members of Canadians for Properly Built Homes: Mary McAllister-Diks; Karen Somerville; Brigitte and Terry Mark, and daughter Amanda; Alan and Cindy Griese; Bruno Pisani and his son, Sam Pisani; Joe West; Avi Dan; Christine Ballard; and Nora Herridge.

On behalf of the member for Kingston and The Islands, a group of grades 7 to 12 students who recently participated in the Canada-Wide Science Fair in Ottawa are here for the Sci-Tech Ontario celebratory event to recognize their achievement and promote science among youth. Members can visit them today in committee room 228-229, starting at 4 p.m.

On behalf of the member for Toronto-Danforth, in the west members' gallery: Chantal Sundaram, Saima Mohammad, Beenish Gaya and Mariya Asrar.

On behalf of the member for Sarnia-Lambton, in the west members' gallery: Christopher Chopcian and his dad, Michael Chopcian, are here as well with the Sci-Tech group today.

On behalf of the member for Richmond Hill, in recognition of Brain Injury Awareness Month, in the east members' gallery: Kent Basset-Spiers, Corinne Kagan, John Kumpf, Hedy Chandler, Teri Czajka, Judy Moir, Angela Colantonio, April Ferguson, Jan Fisher, Maria Hundek, David Hundek, Robert Stephens, Rachel Sa, Mariana Perez, Cindy Bailey and Travis Bailey.

On behalf of page Chris Rayment, I'd like to welcome in the west public gallery his father, Ian Rayment.

On behalf of the member for Newmarket-Aurora, I'd like to welcome, in the west members' gallery, Robin and Diana McComb.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** To the Minister of Economic Development, who is gradually getting to her seat: It's about your government's flawed auto investment strategy. Despite the spin the government tried to put on last week's announcement of the Oshawa truck plant closure, it's quite clear that they failed to get a firm jobs guarantee when they handed out two hundred thirty-five million tax dollars to General Motors. A month ago, when GM first announced job cuts at the truck plant, they also said they were looking for another \$140 million in government funding for Oshawa and St. Catharines.

In the wake of GM's cuts of 2,600 jobs in Ontario, what decision have you made with respect to their latest request for more money?

**Hon. Sandra Pupatello:** I think it's important to note that the Next Generation of Jobs Fund was announced this year in an effort for us to reach out not just to the automotive sector but to many sectors, to look at the next generation of products that can be made right here in Ontario, for sale around the world. It is a program that incorporates our climate change agenda, looking at green, clean energy efficiency, higher levels of productivity, innovation, higher levels of innovative technologies; that's the Next Generation of Jobs Fund.

We do have companies that are applying to this program. We know that General Motors has made it public that they too have been interested in this program for the future of product and activity at General Motors. The Premier made it very clear again yesterday in this House that we are very much in favour of working with our automotive sector partners to see that future investment comes to Ontario.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** I'm not sure from that answer if there has been an application from GM in a formal way or not. The minister said about a month ago that there was a 45-day window on GM's request—so, 15 days and counting.

I hope the minister appreciates that Ontario taxpayers, and GM workers in particular, are going to be paying close attention to what you do when another automaker comes looking for a partner. In fact, a Nanos poll released today shows that almost half of Ontarians oppose the government's financial support of the auto sector. I think that's understandable. They want to know they're getting value for their tax dollars.

Minister, will you commit today to making a clear-cut and firm jobs guarantee one of the conditions to GM if indeed they do formalize that request for one hundred and forty million tax dollars?

1050

**Hon. Sandra Pupatello:** I think it's important to note that we expect that all members of this House will be supportive of companies coming forward to invest with us as partners in Ontario. We hope that the Next Generation of Jobs Fund will be a huge success.



Let me just quote someone who is quite well known right here in the House: "I think in the auto sector, especially with the rapidly advancing technology in the auto sector and what we see with energy prices, getting involved in the investment side of new technology and innovation I think is an appropriate role for government." That was Bob Runciman, June 5 of this year.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** I don't see anything contradictory in that quote.

Minister, Ontarians want and—I think you would agree, or should agree—deserve transparency, particularly when it comes to handing out half of a billion tax dollars to auto makers. If you're not going to be straight with taxpayers about what this money is going to achieve for them, why not? In the past, you've said you won't release the details in these contracts. I want to ask you: Will you make a clear and unequivocal commitment here today to getting a jobs guarantee from General Motors and any other auto maker on a funding request that comes forward in the future?

**Hon. Sandra Pupatello:** I think it has been very clear—over the last several weeks, which have been difficult weeks, the workers at General Motors have worried very much about their future, and we too on this side of the House are worried and want the very best for the workers who work at General Motors and their families.

General Motors itself, as a company, made it very clear that their latest announcement regarding the truck plant may affect the contract and may put them in a position to have to repay the loan that included job commitments. They made that clear themselves. It's very apparent to the people of Ontario that there were commitments that General Motors made to the government of Ontario and that they will live up to that agreement, as will the government of Ontario.

#### INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** My question is for the Minister of Health. Despite our repeated calls over several weeks now for an inquiry and also an immediate review investigation into what we know to be at least 260 deaths related to *C. difficile*—and that's just in seven hospitals—you have rejected those calls.

You have said that you've conducted three separate reviews into this very lethal killer. This is a new strain, as you know. Minister, can you explain why, after three separate reviews, you did not make *C. difficile* a reportable infection during the last four years?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** I want to thank the honourable member for acknowledging that there is a broad array of information available that allows us the benefit of taking action. The Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee has been one of those parties involved in offering advice to the ministry with respect to reporting or not reporting *C. difficile*.

On this matter of inquiry, our point would be that the coroner has said that the matter has been investigated at

the Soo hospital, which gave us good advice about steps forward, alongside the work that Dr. Gardam has done, and that it's more appropriate that we ask Dr. Baker to focus on instituting this broad array of patient safety reporting, which will be initiated on September 30 of this year and will provide a variety of substantial new information to the public about patient safety indicators in all of our hospital environments.

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** It's very interesting that the minister references Dr. Baker, because Dr. Baker has twice now advised the minister to start public reporting. He did so in June 2007 and again in February 2008.

This minister has said on many occasions that it's up to the hospitals. The reality is that it isn't the hospitals that have the authority to mandate public reporting; it is the minister—not the hospitals, not the health care workers, not the experts. But you have refused, despite the mounting evidence since 2004, to mandate this.

I ask you today: Why did you not demonstrate leadership and ask for this to happen during the past four years? Why have you waited—

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

**Hon. George Smitherman:** The honourable member should be able to see right in the action itself that we are following the advice of Dr. Baker. To mention that the first letter that Dr. Baker sent was at the point contradicted by the Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee—there was no consensus from the clinicians about what was most appropriate with respect to reporting. But it's somewhat of a separate matter.

The honourable member wants to make people believe that public reporting is the thing that's responsible for people working in the environment to take the appropriate precautions and to wash their hands or to take the appropriate steps as administrators in hospitals to ensure that steps are being taken to clean them as appropriate. The point is, that's an element of the arsenal that we add to all of those steps that have been taken prior. It's not a one-off; it's not singular. It's about further progress on the issue of controlling the spread of superbugs in the hospital environment, around which much is known and much responsibility borne and much action taken already.

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** Certainly, the actions of this minister stand in very stark contrast to the actions of the minister in Northern Ireland, who, earlier this year, when he discovered that 51 people had died from *C. difficile*, immediately got on the job and set up an expert panel to do a comprehensive three-month review. I say to you today: Reporting is important, because at least it would have made us aware of the extent of the problem, which we don't know about today. And do you know what? If you take a look at the 260 people who have died from *C. difficile*, if you take a look at what happened at Joe Brant, where the CEO said that the only information he ever received about the *C. difficile* outbreaks was through the media, you ask yourself the question: How many lives could have been saved if you had taken

control and asked for mandatory reporting? So I ask you today: Why did you not do your job, as the minister in Northern Ireland—

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

**Hon. George Smitherman:** It seems that it's the honourable member herself who only now has awakened to the reality of *C. difficile*. It seems that it's only in the last month or so that the honourable member has been aware of this issue, but that's not the circumstance for hospitals. If a CEO of a hospital has said that, he stands in contradiction to a wide variety of initiatives that have been undertaken by the ministry, by the Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee and indeed by the Ontario Hospital Association.

This situation is a well-known challenge in health care. It's not something that has arisen only of late, and that's why: because of the investigations that have been done, as an example, by the coroner, who themselves have concluded that further investigation is not what's necessary, but rather taking our actions to the next level, which is instituting, on behalf of the public, this wide variety of new patient safety indicators, which will be initiated on September 30 by Dr. Baker, acknowledged by the honourable member to be a leader in this field.

#### AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** My question is for the Deputy Premier. Over the last week or so, we have learned that the McGuinty government gave General Motors \$235 million of the people's money. General Motors was supposed to sustain jobs in Oshawa with that money. Instead, 2,600 workers at the truck plant are losing their jobs. But today we learn that there are more layoffs, that in fact close to 100 workers in General Motors's regional engineering centre in Oshawa have been given their layoff notices and were immediately escorted off the property yesterday. These are highly skilled engineers and technicians; the so-called \$235-million Beacon funding was supposed to sustain their jobs and sustain their projects.

Can the Deputy Premier tell us why the very engineers and technicians who were supposed to be at the core of the \$235-million cheque are now also being laid off?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Hon. Sandra Pupatello:** I think it was said very clearly by General Motors on day one of this announcement several days ago: They recognized their relationship with the Ontario government through this contract meant that with this announcement, they may be putting themselves in a position to prepay loans that were made payable to them under our OAIS program. We understand that. We are working with General Motors to determine, if in fact that will happen, when that will happen. There were markers laid out in that contract, as General Motors has acknowledged. We're hoping that as these world changes happen to the automotive sector, and

as these challenges are being addressed by the many companies that have made investments in Ontario, the likes of which we have not seen in any other jurisdiction in North America—we want our companies to be strong. This side of the House is planning to work with our automotive companies so they will be strong again.

**1100**

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** The McGuinty government talks about corporations and their close friendship. I want to know about jobs. I want to know about all the workers who are losing their jobs.

I happen to have the photo op from the Premier's announcement on March 2, 2005—you know, the photo op that the Premier often holds, promises this and that, and then it turns out to be false. This was what was said at that photo op: The Beacon project, as it's called, aims to strengthen automotive engineering and manufacturing capabilities as well as research and development and commercialization in order to build the auto sector of tomorrow.

Well, the very engineers who were talked about in your photo op are now being ushered out the door—the very engineers who have done so much of the research work, who designed this hybrid-powered half-ton which is now going to be manufactured in Mexico.

I ask again, how could you let this happen?

**Hon. Sandra Pupatello:** I think if there has ever been a government in Ontario that has been supportive of the automotive sector, this frankly is the government. This is the government that's prepared to stand behind the automotive sector, which for many decades has fed the nation, because we know how vital it is to our manufacturing sector. We are prepared to work with that sector to see that it stays strong well into the future.

We know right now they are facing challenges, and General Motors in particular is facing challenges that we want them to get through. That means that in this day and age, when we have to compete with other jurisdictions, the Ontario government has to be at the table, as do our federal counterparts. We think that perhaps some of them may have seen the light lately. We hope that may be true.

We know that our automotive sector will be strong again, and it will be because of the significant investments that have been made in Ontario over these last three years as a result of the OAIS—

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

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** I think I heard what the minister had to say. I don't think she mentioned workers once in her response. I want to tell you about these workers. Not only do these workers do the engineering, design and development—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Stop the clock. Sergeant-at-Arms, would you please collect the prop that the member from Renfrew has? Can I see the back of that, please?

Leader of the third party.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** Not only did these workers do the engineering, the design and the development of

the hybrid-powered Sierra half-ton, which is now going to be built in Mexico, but they also did the engineering and design of the Chevy Equinox and the GM Torrent. They were involved in the design and initial construction of the innovative wind tunnel at the Ontario Institute of Technology. These are the very kinds of high-level engineering and design jobs that were supposed to be sustained and added to by your \$235-million cheque to General Motors. I see how General Motors has got the \$235 million, but I ask again, why are so many of these talented, experienced, knowledgeable workers going out the door under the McGuinty government?

**Hon. Sandra Papatello:** The member opposite purports to be supporting workers. I ask the member, have you checked with the leader of the CAW about his opinion of the provincial government and our participation in landing investment in Ontario? The member opposite doesn't seem to be on the same page with the one leader who is acknowledged by most—CEOs of the auto sector included—as one of the most modern union leaders in the western world.

In contrast to the federal government's inaction, the Ontario government has been doing its best to support auto investment and employment. That's real jobs. "Without provincial support, including its participation in GM's Beacon project, the situation facing the industry today would be far, far worse." Who said that? Buzz Hargrove, the leader of the CAW.

#### SKILLS TRAINING

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** To the Deputy Premier again: I take it that the McGuinty government is okay with these engineering jobs going to Warren, Michigan, and not staying in Oshawa.

But my question is to the Deputy Premier: Yesterday we learned that almost 10,000 laid-off forestry workers in northern Ontario will not be eligible for this government's much-boasted-about Second Career retraining program. That's on top of the 175,000 laid-off manufacturing workers who lost their jobs before June 1, 2007. We see how the government has bungled its \$235 million to General Motors with all the workers being laid off, but I ask again: How can the government promote a so-called retraining strategy that leaves 10,000 workers out in northern Ontario and 175,000 manufacturing workers out elsewhere?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

**Hon. John Milloy:** Once again the question from the leader of the third party is mischievous. The workers of northern Ontario have not been left out of this province's employment supports program. Under Employment Ontario, we invest over \$1 billion a year to help 900,000 laid-off workers, including those in northern Ontario. Supports range from everything from resumé writing to job counselling, all the way to short-term training. Several days ago, we announced through the second-career strategy, in addition to that, longer-term training for

workers who have been recently laid off—laid off in the last year or those who will be laid off, if that happens, in coming weeks. It's wrong for him to stand up today and to suggest that supports are not available to workers across the province. The second-career strategy is available to recently laid-off workers in any part of this province, and for him to stand up and be so mischievous is a misfortune for those workers who are looking for supports from the province.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** Apparently it's creating mischief when you ask questions about government programs that don't help laid-off workers. At least the minister now admits that the much-boasted-about second-career program isn't going to help workers laid off before June 1, 2007. But what he also needs to know is that this other program that he refers to, the Ontario skills development program, is also only available to workers who are receiving employment insurance. Most workers who were laid off before June 1, 2007, have exhausted their employment insurance, so they can't get second careers and they can't get the Ontario skills development program.

I ask again: How could the McGuinty government design and promote and boast about a job retraining program that isn't available to most of the hard-pressed laid-off workers in Ontario?

**Hon. John Milloy:** This is quite frankly outrageous. In Ontario, we invest \$1 billion a year in terms of support for laid-off workers. As of January 1, 2007, federal programs were transferred to the province, and we began an integrated service known as Employment Ontario.

When we have word of a layoff, within one hour we are in contact with the factory or workplace that is affected. We work with the employer and we work with the union, we work with the workers and the community to make sure that we have an action plan to get those workers back to work. In northern Ontario, in many instances, we have established job action centres which work with the workers in the workplace to make sure that they get the supports they need. Right now, we have centres in White River, Dubreuilville, Wawa, Red Rock, Thunder Bay, Atikokan, Nipigon, Mattawa, Greenstone, Dryden and Kenora, all part of the investments that this government is—

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

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** The minister is right about one thing: This is certainly outrageous. The so-called retraining program that you promote, second career, isn't available to those workers laid off before June 1, 2007. I'll tell you: The longer you've been laid off, the longer you've been unemployed, the harder it is to get back into the workforce. So they're not eligible for that.

1110

Yesterday you stood here and said that they were eligible for another program, but they're not. In order to be eligible for the other program, they have to be receiving employment insurance benefits. They're not re-

ceiving employment insurance benefits; most of them have exhausted their employment insurance benefits.

The McGuinty government is so good at photo ops. You're so good at doing announcements. I ask again, what is supposed to happen to those 185,000 laid-off workers who aren't eligible for your much-boasted-about job retraining programs? What are they supposed to do?

**Hon. John Milloy:** Every year the government of Ontario invests \$1 billion in support for laid-off workers across this province. We support workers who are eligible for employment insurance; we support workers who are not eligible for employment insurance. We have a range of services which are offered through the Employment Ontario network and we have set up action centres in factories and communities where there have been layoffs to work with workers and get them back into the workforce as quickly as possible.

I think the results speak for themselves. Since coming to office, 450,000 jobs have been created in this community, and most recently we've added to our suite of services through the second-career strategy, which will be a service available to recently laid-off workers whether they are eligible for employment insurance or not.

Once again, we are working to support workers in the province of Ontario, and it is mischievous for the honourable member to stand up and claim that these programs and services are not available.

#### HOG INDUSTRY

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. As you know, in February the federal government launched a program to shrink the nation's hog herd. To qualify, the pigs sent for slaughter must be perfectly healthy. When questioned, a spokesman in your office said that the Ontario Independent Meat Processors, Ontario Pork and the Ontario Association of Food Banks approached you about processing these pigs to feed those in need as soon as the program was announced. Minister, that would have been in February. Why did you wait until the Toronto Star started asking questions before you did anything?

**Hon. Leona Dombrowsky:** I would say that it's very important that I have this opportunity today to correct the honourable member. When the article appeared in the Toronto Star, when I was interviewed by the reporter, I was able to say that indeed we have been working with industry partners. We said that we would very much want to participate in the effort to direct what meat is appropriately directed to food banks for food consumption. We asked them to assist us to put a plan together and to come to us with what they believed the cost would be, and when they did that we provided \$110,000 to achieve that end. We believe that we have acted responsibly. We have—

*Interjection.*

**Hon. Leona Dombrowsky:** The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke says we've done nothing. If he's suggesting that providing \$110,000—

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

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** The province of Alberta put in \$330,000, the province of Saskatchewan put in \$440,000, and that was when the program started. In the time it took you to organize, to get this plan in place, to announce \$100,000, some 2,500 surplus pigs were slaughtered that could have gone to the people in need, to the food banks and food kitchens. Instead of pork being fed to pets, people in need could have been eating great Ontario pork. Greg Haskett, a pork farmer in my riding, said, "Putting animals into the pet food chain or fertilizer or meat and bone meal goes against all the principles of a farmer."

Minister, if other provinces could respond quickly enough to process all the pigs for the food banks, why couldn't you?

**Hon. Leona Dombrowsky:** I believe our response has been the responsible response. We didn't just simply identify an amount of money. We asked the partners who would be involved in the cull, as well as the partners at the food bank, what they would need. They were very happy to take that task and they came back to this government and said, "We need \$110,000."

I would like to offer the honourable member this remark that has come to us through the Ontario Independent Meat Processors. The processors indicate that they appreciate the efforts of myself in securing financial support to allow as much as 40,000 metric tonnes of culled sow meat to be processed and sent to food banks. What we do know is that the dollars that have been provided will ensure that some—

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

#### CONSUMER PROTECTION

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My question is for the Minister of Government and Consumer Services, and it's a pretty basic one. Who does the minister actually have in place to cut through the bureaucratic runaround at Tarion to ensure quicker compensation and better satisfaction to new homeowners who have been victimized by shoddy home builders?

**Hon. Ted McMeekin:** I'm pleased to respond to the question opposite and to just share quickly some of the things that Tarion and our ministry have done over the last couple of years to enhance the relationship. We've doubled the total compensation payable for warranty claims from \$150,000 to \$300,000. A homeowners' survey, an independent survey, was done, and 87% of the homeowners surveyed thought that the results of Tarion's service were very good. I know that there are some political leaders in this House who would take 85% in a minute for their satisfaction. But I'm pleased to announce today that in consultation with Tarion over several months, we can announce today that we will assist Tarion in setting up an independent in-house consumer advocate to handle—

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** The minister weaves a really good tale, but the Canadians for Properly Built Homes are here today and they have the real story. When a family dream home becomes a nightmare because of shoddy building practices, Tarion has failed to deliver, and it's accountable to no one, not even this minister.

Will the minister today commit to Ombudsman oversight of Tarion to bring real accountability—not in-house accountability, real accountability—and real solutions regarding the systemic problems experienced by Ontario's new-home-buying public?

**Hon. Ted McMeekin:** As you know, Tarion is a private, not-for-profit corporation that administers the act.

*Interjection.*

**Hon. Ted McMeekin:** Well, that's another question. But I just want to go back to our conversations with Tarion. I made, back in early March, some seven requests of the Tarion corporation. We've been in some serious discussions with them about how to enhance the service to get the 87% satisfaction rating even higher, and we will be working with them to set up the independent in-house consumer advocate. This is a huge step forward towards greater accountability and will give new home buyers the satisfaction of knowing that their concerns will be listened to even more intently.

I would just add that the Consumers Council of Canada report recently said that the Tarion program was the best home warranty program in the country.

## RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

**Ms. Leeanna Pendergast:** My question is for the Minister of Research and Innovation. Preston Manning has suggested that “any and all MPs, especially newly elected ones”—and I would think MPPs—“should acquaint themselves with the impressive work being done to engage youth through Let's Talk Science and the Canada-Wide Science Fair, organized by the Youth Science Foundation Canada.”

I'm proud of students from my riding, Devin Howard, with his project You Are Not a Beautiful and Unique Snowflake, and Mackenzie Carter, with her project, the Coanda Conundrum, who, as a result of winning awards at the Kitchener-Waterloo Science Fair, were able to go and compete at this year's Canada-Wide Science Fair.

Also with us in the House today is Daniel Burd, a Kitchener-Waterloo Science Fair award winner and platinum award winner for his project Plastic Not Fantastic, isolating micro-organisms that can break down plastic.

The government has a role to play in engaging youth in science—

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

**Hon. John Wilkinson:** I want to thank the member for the question. I want to assure her that we too are proud of Devin, Mackenzie and Daniel, who are visiting

today. Our economic future depends on our ability to engage our youth in the wonders of science and technology. I want to encourage all members to visit the Sci-Tech Ontario awards presentation, which will be in rooms 228 and 230 later on this afternoon. I want to thank the Minister of the Environment, our colleague, for sponsoring that today.

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Our government and our partners are working together to increase the level of awareness of our young people in the key role played by science. In recognition of that, my ministry is sporting Youth Science Foundation Canada and the work of Sci-Tech Ontario with an investment of some \$3.5 million, and an additional investment of some \$1.5 million to Let's Talk Science.

I want to quote our friend Mike Lazaridis, chairman of RIM: “We need to change our culture so that science and technology are seen to be the ‘in’ thing.”

**Ms. Leeanna Pendergast:** Canadian astronaut Roberta Bondar has said that as a result of her encounter with the Ontario science fair—she participated in the science fair and it was an experience that ultimately defined her life.

Last week I had the pleasure of joining Mike Lazaridis, where it was announced that he donated an additional \$50 million to the Perimeter Institute in Waterloo, on top of the \$100 million he donated in 2000, for a total of \$150 million. The Perimeter Institute began in the summer of 1999 when Mike Lazaridis, founder and co-CEO of Research in Motion, maker of the successful BlackBerry, found himself in a position to foster research and innovation in Ontario. Yesterday afternoon, I attended a dedication to the Mike and Ophelia Lazaridis Institute for Quantum Computing where the Premier announced nearly \$18 million in funding.

Would the minister please explain what his ministry is doing to foster research and innovation so that the next generation of youth can, as Roberta Bondar did, reach—

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

**Hon. John Wilkinson:** Our ministry has committed some \$3 billion over an eight-year period for research and innovation. Mike Lazaridis believes, and I agree with him, that to invest in fundamental research is to invest in the development of knowledge that can have staggering long-term societal and economic benefits.

Ontario has invested some \$151 million in world-leading experimental and theoretical physics research, both at the Institute for Quantum Computing and the Perimeter Institute in Waterloo. Scientists believe that this technology will aid many discoveries, such as unbreakable cryptography, unparalleled high-precision measurement devices, computers with mind-boggling power, and a better understanding of the microscopic world. These will be the jobs of the future for our children and grandchildren.

I would hope that all members would join me in expressing our personal appreciation of the amazing gen-

erosity of Mike and Ophelia Lazaridis and the \$150 million—

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

### SCHOOL TRUSTEES

**Mrs. Joyce Savoline:** To the Deputy Premier: The minister yesterday stated that checks and balances are in place and, “Public dollars are spent in the public interest and for the benefit of our students.” She also stated that the Toronto Catholic District School Board trustee situation is “a cautionary tale.”

TCDSB spending has increased by 167.5% since we were in office. The \$67,000-a-year increase per trustee is not a cautionary tale, it is more than the average Ontarian makes. Clearly, your government has lost sight of the average Ontarian. Why did the Minister of Education allow increase after increase to proceed unchecked under your watch?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** It seems the honourable member has herself confirmed that our government has been dedicating ourselves to enhancing the capacity of our education system in the province of Ontario. That’s why test scores are up. That’s why more students are graduating. That’s why there are more books in our libraries. That’s why there are 9,640 more teachers.

When information arises about circumstances that are unsettling to people, when trustees are saying perhaps this is the way to get to the bottom of it, when the heads of parent groups are saying it’s necessary to take these steps, that’s when we conclude that this is an appropriate measure to protect every dollar, to ensure that it’s allocated and making a difference for the children, and that’s what this initiative is all about. The honourable member knows that very well.

**Mrs. Joyce Savoline:** Let me make it clear to the Deputy Premier that the 167.5% was an increase in expenses for trustees, not for school programs. The minister’s failure to establish priorities and take action in advance of this public outcry has made it acceptable for trustees to demand increases in gas funding under the threat of classroom cuts. Seven boards are now suddenly under the microscope, and despite her former colleague’s attempts to switch the focus from her inaction, we are not going to take that bait. So the minister should put her house in order so we can focus on the real needs of students and ensuring that people like school bus operators are able to keep pace were the rising cost of fuel. Deputy Premier, why has your government allowed these increases in trustee expenses to increase unchecked for four—

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

**Hon. George Smitherman:** We sure did see the dedication to the real needs of students embedded into the policy platform of that party and that member in the last provincial election. The people of the province of Ontario know that this is a government that dedicates itself to the

purposes of enhancing the performance of our schools. We put serious money out there to back it up.

But on the matter of expenses, before 2006 there were no guidelines at all for school trustees with respect to expenses. So we brought in the guidelines. Through the actions that we have taken, that we do not apologize for—with respect to the Toronto Catholic District School Board, we will take action on behalf of these students to ensure that the dollars allocated get to the place where they are most desired and most purposeful. We’ve made progress on behalf of these students, something that stands in sharp contrast to all the actions of that honourable member and her party.

### CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** To the minister of corrections: Last week, I asked the minister twice about the cruel treatment of Fahim Ahmad, Zakaria Amara and Mohammed Dirie, who have languished in solitary confinement for over two years. You told me, you told this House that they have “the right to daily ... exercise.” Their family says they have not been out for exercise for over two months. You told this House that they had the right to reading materials from the library. The family says they have not had access since last September. I’m told that Zakaria Amara has had an untreated toothache for over two months.

Will you act as a minister, will you protect prisoners, will you make sure that minimum standards are met and that they are moved out of segregation?

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci:** Inmates who are placed in segregation are entitled under law to just and humane treatment and receive specific services and activities. That includes, and let me repeat: the right to daily outdoor exercise; access to legal counsel, services and materials; access to clergy and spiritual advisers; visitation with family members, relatives and friends; access to correspondence and telephone services; access to library materials, institutional programs and the opportunity to buy items from the institutional canteen with personal funds.

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** So, if you are the minister, why are you not enforcing those rights? Why are you abandoning those men? Why are you not meeting the standards set by Corrections Canada and the United Nations? Why are you not representing those rights? Have you abandoned your responsibilities as minister?

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci:** Listen, the member opposite knows full well we’re not going to comment on specific cases that are before the courts, because we’re not allowed to do that. He knows that full well. But we have very high standards to ensure the safe care, custody and control of all inmates. They have those rights. Those rights are theirs to use. I am very, very confident that the correctional services people are very much aware of the rights of inmates and grant them those rights.

## CONSUMER PROTECTION

**Mr. David Zimmer:** My question is for the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. Purchasing a house or a condo is one of the most important financial decisions Ontarians make. My riding in Willowdale attracts many new condo owners and home buyers, especially along the Yonge-Sheppard corridor in the Bayview Village area. Purchasing a house or a condo is a complex process. Ontarians rely on real estate agents, real estate brokers, lawyers, friends and family for advice and guidance.

Nevertheless, real estate fraud is a huge issue. I'm especially concerned about the act of so-called phantom offers, which cheat hard-working and honest Ontarians out of a fair chance at home ownership. I'm also concerned about grow ops. I'm concerned that home buyers aren't getting the information they need about whether their purchase might have serious risks associated with it. What are you doing about this situation?

1130

**Hon. Ted McMeekin:** I want to thank the member from Willowdale for his question. The practice of phantom offers is a breach of the code of ethics under the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act. Any broker or salesperson caught can be fined up to \$50,000. Any person with knowledge of a phantom offer should contact our ministry's consumer protection branch.

On the issue of grow-ops specifically, a real estate agent failing to disclose that a property was a grow house is also in breach of the code of ethics and is subject to administrative fees and possible licence revocation. In addition, the Law Enforcement and Forfeited Property Management Statute Law Amendment Act addresses the proliferation of indoor marijuana grow-ops and mandates additional requirements by municipal officials.

**Mr. David Zimmer:** Recently there have been several high-profile stories about families almost losing their homes because of real estate fraud. It's tragic to hear about families threatened with losing their home because of title fraud, falsified mortgages or other types of real estate fraud. This is a serious matter. It's incomprehensible that a family could lose its home even if they've lived there for years and years, and even if the mortgage has been paid, if title fraud occurs, and even if the mortgage was obtained with false ID. I also have great concerns about what we're doing to protect homeowners from losing their homes from fraud associated with these kinds of activities. What are we doing specifically to protect Ontario families from real estate fraud?

**Hon. Ted McMeekin:** The member opposite is right. It is a serious matter, and I want to be clear: Our government will not tolerate real estate fraud in Ontario. Our Consumer Protection and Service Modernization Act ensures that ownership of a property cannot—I repeat, cannot—be lost as a result of the registration of a falsified mortgage, fraudulent sale or a counterfeit power of attorney. It also implements a streamlined and expedited land titles assurance fund and provides additional

safeguards through fines and suspensions—fines which, by the way, have been increased from \$1,000 to \$50,000. We have new rules, we have stronger standards and, most importantly, we have a ministry that is committed to working with our stakeholders to consider additional measures to fight real estate fraud.

## ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

**Mr. Frank Klees:** My question is to the Minister of Energy and it relates to the Ontario Power Authority's proposal for a new gas-fired power plant in northern York region. I've expressed my concern regarding the process to the minister. I wrote him a letter not too long ago. Specifically, my concern is that it all started off well. There was a working group that was constituted; there were some 25 members involved in that working group. The result was a consensus conclusion regarding the size of that plant of between 60 and 100 megawatts.

Last Thursday, the Ontario Power Authority released an RFP for 350 megawatts of power. There's a serious disconnect between the conclusions of the working group and the RFP. I would ask if the minister could explain the reason for that rather large discrepancy between the working group's conclusion and the RFP issued by the Ontario Power Authority.

**Hon. Gerry Phillips:** I appreciate the letter from the member, and I might say that I've had advice from three different members in the area there. I do appreciate it. I did meet with the organization called the Ontario Power Authority, which has the responsibility for this, and I indicated the concern of three of our members about communication and the need for a better public awareness of the plans. I had suggestions from all three.

What the OPA is suggesting—and I agree with it—is that they, along with an organization called the IESO, the Independent Electricity System Operator, are going to hold public meetings in each of the communities there to provide a more fulsome explanation of the need for the power that I hope will be helpful to your community.

I think that is the next step, I say to the member. I'm satisfied that the need exists there and I'm satisfied that they're going to take the appropriate steps to give the community an opportunity to—

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

**Mr. Frank Klees:** We welcome that additional initiative on the part of the minister to direct those information sessions to take place. I would ask the minister to consider, however, to direct the Ontario Power Authority to invite specifically the members of that original working group, which had representatives from municipalities—they represented citizens—as well as representatives from the industry. These are individuals who have memory of the process that was in place and would also be able to ask specific questions relating to that process and the rationale. Will the minister then ensure that the members of that original working group are invited to these

information sessions so that the knowledge they have can in fact be brought to bear in those information sessions?

**Hon. Gerry Phillips:** It seems like a reasonable suggestion, and I will make the suggestion to the OPA.

I'd just say to all of us that the most effective way of dealing with these challenges is conservation, and that's where we started up there. I would say to the member for Newmarket–Aurora that the Newmarket utility is one of our leaders in Ontario in conservation efforts, so I just wanted to salute them for the work they're doing there. I appreciate the advice from all three of our members from the area. I'm satisfied that we have a significant demand there. I think the demand is growing at four times the average for the province up there; it's a very dynamic community. The Ontario Power Authority's job is to ensure that people understand the rationale and they feel comfortable with the background for that. I'm satisfied that that process will take place.

#### SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Ma question est pour la ministre des Services à l'enfance à la jeunesse—children and youth. In March of this year, the Manitoulin-Sudbury District Social Services Administration Board, better known as DSSAB, wrote to the Premier asking that the government not eliminate the back-to-school and winter clothing allowances for Ontario children. To the Manitoulin-Sudbury DSSAB's credit, they've promised to provide this much-needed assistance, since the government won't.

Can the minister tell us why the government refuses to fund the back-to-school and winter clothing allowances for Ontario's poorest children?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** This, of course, gives us an opportunity to talk about the Ontario child benefit. The Ontario child benefit takes a number of programs and wraps them into one cheque per month for low-income families regardless of the source of the income of the parents. What that means is that a child who has a parent who is working will, for the first time ever, receive benefits that will go to low-income families, not just those on social assistance. It's a very exciting initiative, it is historic, and the cheques will start to roll this July.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** We are very much in favour of the child benefit, but why take away the clothing allowances and the other benefits? The winter allowance and the back-to-school allowance need to stay. A few weeks ago, the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities called for the province to cover the back-to-school and winter clothing allowances. Recently in Sudbury, at the poverty consultation, the minister appeared surprised to hear that the northern municipalities were stepping in to cover what should be a provincial responsibility.

Why is the government punishing Ontario's poorest children by cutting the allowances and forcing the struggling municipalities to fund them?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** Let's be really clear: I'm very happy that you're supporting the Ontario child benefit. You did vote against it; I'm happy you're now supportive of it.

A single mom with two kids on social assistance is today 27% better off—a 27% higher income now—than when we were elected.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** What a load of BS.

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** We are committed to better outcomes for kids.

*Interjection.*

1140

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The leader of the third party will withdraw, not the second comment, but his first comment, please.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** I withdraw, but it's still horse feathers.

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** As I was saying, a single mom with two kids on social assistance has 27% more income now than when we were elected. That is before the full implication of the Ontario child benefit. That will take it up to 34%. That's a significant improvement in the income of all children in this province. The Ontario child benefit will extend support—

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

#### WINE INDUSTRY

**Mr. Bruce Crozier:** To the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship: The Ontario wine industry is a vital economic driver that contributes to job creation, preserves valuable agricultural land and has made my riding of Essex a vibrant tourism destination.

In 2005, I had a private member's bill passed that created Ontario Wine Week, which will be celebrated for its third consecutive year next week. Ontario Wine Week recognizes and celebrates the importance of our wine industry and the people who work so hard to make it successful. Wine is big business in Ontario, and many of my constituents are small and medium-sized wineries. While the industry has made great strides, many Ontario wines are given scant attention in the global wine world. It's imperative that we help Ontario's wine industry continue to take steps to build what is truly a made-in-Ontario success story.

What is the Ministry of Small Business—

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

**Hon. Harinder S. Takhar:** First of all, I want to thank the member from Essex for joining me on Friday to make the announcement for the VQA wine support program. We have about 125 wineries in this province, and they make a large economic contribution to our province—about one million visitors come every year; 6,000 people employed in this industry—and they deliver about \$500-million worth of retail sales. We introduced the VQA wine support program three years ago, and I was very pleased to make the announcement for the third



year, for \$3.1 million to about 38 wineries. The idea here is to increase the sales of the VQA wines through the LCBO, and I'm pleased to report that in the last two years the sales have actually gone up by—

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

**Mr. Bruce Crozier:** Wine has been associated with its point of origin for hundreds of years and is often referred to as an expression of place. VQA Ontario regulates claims of origin on wine labels as part of its role in maintaining the integrity of Ontario wines of origin and ensuring the claims of origin are truthful and meaningful to consumers. Ontario is a much younger wine-growing area than other parts of the world and has so far identified four primary viticultural areas, including the Niagara Peninsula, Lake Erie North Shore, Pelee Island and Prince Edward county. The combination of experience, modern innovation and palatable passion drives the wine industry in my community and other communities across this great province.

Given the growing demand for Ontario wines, in addition to this funding, what else has our government done to support this industry and ensure it becomes even stronger in years to come?

**Hon. Harinder S. Takhar:** I will refer to question to my colleague the Minister of Agriculture.

**Hon. Leona Dombrowsky:** I think it's important that we take a little bit of time and talk about how we partner with the wine industry. The first thing I will say is that our government is committed to promoting a Pick Ontario Freshness strategy. We are committed to that, and we're hearing many, many positive comments about the impact that is having on communities and for producers right across Ontario. In January 2004, our government also announced \$6 million for the Ontario wine strategy, and an additional \$2 million over five years was added to that strategy. I would also remind folks that we provided \$1 million to the grape growers of Ontario for the advancement of grape production in Ontario. Finally, and most recently, we have invested \$25 million at the Vineland Research Station and Innovation—

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

#### FOREST INDUSTRY

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. The forest industry is in a real crisis in this province, yet the McGuinty Liberals are content to whistle past the graveyard. At a time when fuel and electricity costs, as well as market conditions, are dealing it a crippling blow, the Liberals decide that it's a good time, after months of discussions, to go back on their word, on the promise they made to the industry, committing that the Endangered Species Act would not supersede what is already the platinum standard, Ontario's Crown Forest Sustainability Act.

Minister, why would you turn your back on this industry when the sector can least absorb the body blow that you're dealing? Why would you break your word to them?

**Hon. Donna H. Cansfield:** I'm more than pleased to be able to respond to the member. If anything, this is a government that has not turned their back on the forest industry.

*Interjection.*

**Hon. Donna H. Cansfield:** Excuse me. We put in place an energy rebate for three years. We have a prosperity fund. We have a loan guarantee. We have worked consistently with the sector to remove the barriers that exist.

Yes, we now do have an Endangered Species Act; it is the first time in 30 years that it has been revamped. It even provides more flexibility than ever before to be able to work with industry, such as the forest industry, to incorporate the Endangered Species Act into the forest management plan. The Premier was very clear that it's exactly what we're going to do. The difference is that we'll do it together with the industry.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** The industry leaders would disagree with what the minister is saying with regard to consultations and working with them. Minister, people in my riding are already being laid off in the forest industry. I was speaking today to Dean Felhaber, president of Hokum's lumber. He told me it is the worst they have ever seen in their 52 years of business—the worst they've ever seen.

When the sector is being bombarded by you and forces beyond their control, why would you go back on your word, inflicting even more harm by piling on more regulatory burden? Why would you turn your back on them in the time of their greatest need? When is your government going to step up to the plate and do something to help forestry, the industry that is such a good steward of our forests, in this province? When are you going to do something to help them instead of trying to ensure that they become an endangered species?

**Hon. Donna H. Cansfield:** Again I'm more than pleased to be able to respond to the member. For the first time in many years we've had the industry at the table. The CEOs of the companies have—

*Interjection.*

**Hon. Donna H. Cansfield:** Excuse me. I thought it was my opportunity to respond to the member, but maybe he likes the sound of his own voice so much that he prefers just to continue to chat rather than listen to the answer.

The answer is that in fact the industry CEOs have been at the table. We have been working through: What are the challenges? How do we transition into a new economy for the forestry strategy? We've been doing it by working together. What are the barriers? What is the red tape? How do we deal with wood supply? How do we work through the fact that there is a dollar that is the same and a housing market that has collapsed in the United States? What are the challenges around the world, that are

actually in every industry in the forest sector, virtually in every province as well? But the difference is that we will work together with the industry as we transition into a new strategy for the forestry sector.

## PETITIONS

### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** I have petitions that have been sent to me from all over my riding: Just some of them are from the Chesley Community Church, Betty Duncan in Hanover and Fred and Lynda Helwig in Neustadt.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I have signed this.

1150

### PROTECTION FOR MINERS

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I have a petition from the people at Copper Cliff.

"Whereas current legislation contained in the Ontario health and safety act and regulations for mines and mining plants does not adequately protect the lives of miners; we request revisions to the act;

"Lyle Everett Defoe and the scoop tram he was operating fell 150 feet down an open stope (July 23, 2007). Lyle was 25 years and 15 days old when he was killed at Xstrata Kidd Creek mine site, Timmins....

"The stope where Lyle was killed was protected by a length of orange plastic snow fence and a rope with a warning sign. These barriers would not have been visible if the bucket of the scoop tram was raised. Lyle's body was recovered from behind the scoop tram...."

They ask that:

"Concrete berms must be mandatory to protect all open stopes and raises;

"All miners and contractors working underground must have working communication devices and personal locators;

"All equipment involved in injuries and fatalities must be recovered and examined unless such recovery would endanger the lives of others; and

"The entire act must be reviewed and amended to better protect underground workers."

I fully support this petition and will affix my name to it and send it with page Doaa.

### GARDE D'ENFANTS

**M. Jean-Marc Lalonde:** I have a petition from concerned parents and grandparents from the St-Albert area.

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Nous, citoyens de la province de l'Ontario, méritons et avons le droit de demander des modifications à la Loi portant réforme du droit de l'enfance, de façon à faire valoir l'importance des relations qu'ont les enfants avec leurs père et mère, ainsi qu'avec leurs grands-parents, comme le prévoit le projet de loi 33, 2008, présenté par le député provincial Kim Craitor.

« Attendu que le paragraphe 20(2.1) de la Loi exige que les père et mère et autres personnes qui ont la garde d'enfants ne doivent pas faire déraisonnablement obstacle aux relations personnelles qui existent entre les enfants et leurs grands-parents;

« Attendu que l'article 24(2) de la Loi énumère les questions dont le tribunal doit tenir compte pour établir l'intérêt véritable d'un enfant. Le projet de loi modifie ce paragraphe de façon à inclure une mention expresse de l'importance du maintien des liens affectifs qui existent entre enfants et grands-parents;

« Attendu que le paragraphe 24(2.1) de la Loi exige qu'un tribunal qui décide de la garde ou des droits de visite d'un enfant applique le principe selon lequel un enfant doit avoir le plus de contact possible avec ses père et mère et avec ses grands-parents, compte tenu de l'intérêt véritable de l'enfant; et

« Attendu que le paragraphe 24(2.2) de la Loi exige qu'un tribunal qui décide de la garde d'un enfant prenne en compte la volonté de chaque personne qui demande, par requête, la garde de l'enfant de faciliter les contacts entre celui-ci et ses père et mère ainsi que ses grands-parents, compte tenu de l'intérêt véritable de l'enfant;

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée Législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Que les députés de l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario adoptent le projet de loi 33, 2008, qui modifie la Loi portant réforme du droit de l'enfance, de façon à faire valoir l'importance des relations qu'ont les enfants avec leurs père et mère ainsi qu'avec leurs grands-parents. »

J'appuie cette pétition.

### WYE MARSH WILDLIFE CENTRE

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** I have here about 4,000 signatures from folks up at the Wye Marsh support group.

"Whereas the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre, located in the township of Tay, manages approximately 3,000 acres

of environmentally sensitive land which is owned by the province of Ontario; and

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

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

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

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

I'm pleased to sign it and give it to Aaron to present to the table.

#### CHILD PROTECTION

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My petition reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas Ontario is one of the few provinces that does not have independent oversight over child welfare administration; and

“Whereas eight provinces now have independent oversight of child welfare issues, including child protection; and

“Whereas all provincial Ombudsmen first identified child protection as a priority issue in 1986 and still Ontario does not allow the Ombudsman to investigate people's complaints about children's aid societies' decisions; and

“Whereas people wronged by CAS decisions concerning placement, access, custody or care are not allowed to appeal those decisions to the Ontario Ombudsman's office;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we support the Ombudsman having the power to probe decisions and investigate complaints concerning the province's children's aid societies (CAS).”

I agree with this petition. I've signed it and sent it to the table by way of page Megan.

#### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mrs. Laura Albanese:** I have a petition from the residents of York South–Weston that reads as follows:

“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 agree with this petition and affix my signature to it, and I will hand it over to page Radhika.

#### PESTICIDES

**Mr. Wayne Arthurs:** I have a multi-page petition today from a number of my constituents and those of my friend across the way from the Ajax–Pickering riding. It reads:

“All lawn bowling clubs in Ontario in general, and Pickering Lawn Bowling Club in particular, hereby petition for an exemption to Bill 64.

“Because of the nature of the sport, lawn bowling greens will be adversely affected, possibly to the point of making it impossible to play on the greens. Golf courses have already been granted an exemption to Bill 64. Lawn bowling greens have the same type of unique monoculture of grass that is used on golf course greens and tees. Pesticides would be applied by a professional integrated pest management certified applicator.

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to grant lawn bowling clubs an exemption under Bill 64 as long as the pesticides are applied by an integrated pest management certified applicator.”

I agree with this petition and will sign it accordingly.

#### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mrs. Julia Munro:** “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 Ontario Legislature; and

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

“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 that we may fall into; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena for 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.”

As I'm in agreement, I have affixed my signature, and will give it to page Taylor.

## LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** I have a petition here that was sent to me by Anthony Schmidt. The signatures are from all over the province, but the petition was taken in the Heritage Netherlands Reformed church in Burgessville. It is 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 Ontario Legislature; and

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

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

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

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

I thank you very much for the opportunity to present this petition, Mr. Speaker.

ONTARIO SOCIETY  
FOR THE PREVENTION  
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

**Ms. Helena Jaczek:** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act has not been updated since 1919;

"Whereas Bill 50 would require all veterinarians to report suspected abuse and neglect, protecting veterinarians from liability;

"Whereas it would allow the OSPCA to inspect and investigate places where animals are kept;

"Whereas the bill would prohibit the training of animals to fight;

"Whereas Bill 50 would allow the OSPCA to inspect roadside zoos;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 50, entitled the Provincial Animal Welfare Act, 2008, to protect our animal friends."

As I agree with that petition, I will be affixing my signature thereto.

## LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** I have some more petitions sent to me by Regina Schmidt from Mildmay, St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Warton, D. and S. Garland in Hanover, the Sauble Christian Fellowship church in Sauble Beach and Mrs. Thompson from Chesley, Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I have signed this.

## LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** "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 the daily proceedings in the Ontario Legislature; and

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

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

ONTARIO SOCIETY  
FOR THE PREVENTION  
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** I have a petition here signed by a number of my constituents.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Provincial Animal Welfare Act calls forth the Ontario SPCA, a private charity whose 'object' is to facilitate and provide for the prevention of cruelty to animals and their protection and relief therefrom; and

"Whereas section 11(1) of the Provincial Animal Welfare Act grants 'every inspector and agent of the society ... any of the powers of a police officer'; and

“Whereas there are allegations of abuses of police powers and grave charter violations by inspectors and agents of the Ontario SPCA; and

“Whereas Bill 50 seeks to grant additional independent police powers to the Ontario SPCA, among them the right to warrantless entry;

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

(1) that the Legislative Assembly direct the provincial government to recognize the seriousness and consistency of allegations against Ontario SPCA inspectors and agents;

(2) that the Legislative Assembly direct the provincial government to amend Bill 50 to include an independent external mechanism of accountability for the Ontario SPCA; and

(3) that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario direct the provincial government to ensure proposed changes to the Provincial Animal Welfare Act are not in violation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.”

#### SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** I have another petition:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

“Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

“Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

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

“That the government of Ontario address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community.”

I have signed this.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The time for petitions has ended. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

*The House recessed from 1204 to 1500.*

#### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

**Mr. Norman W. Sterling:** Yesterday, the Minister of Community and Social Services told this Legislature that

severely developmentally disabled residents of regional centres are not being moved into long-term-care centres. In February 2006, one long-term-care facility in Ottawa published a story about a former Rideau Regional Centre resident who was in that long-term-care home. I've been told that more than 20 former residents have moved to long-term care, and the parents of some of the remaining residents tell me that long-term-care facilities are in the plan for their adult children as well. That's because of their very complex health and developmental disabilities.

I have to wonder whether the minister knows what is happening to the vulnerable people for whom she is responsible. The minister also says that residents are not being forced out of regional centres. The centres are closing in March 2009, so residents aren't being given the option of staying. The families' members tell me that they feel they are being intimidated into accepting placements. If that isn't forcing people out, I don't know what else I could call it. The minister says I am fear-mongering. These families are scared for their loved ones, because they don't believe they will have the same services in the community that they have at Rideau Regional Centre. I am giving voice to their fears and I will continue to stand in this Legislature for them.

#### FIREARMS CONTROL

**Mr. Mike Colle:** Due to a gaping loophole in federal gun control laws, firearms intended to be used in films are winding up in the hands of criminals. An intelligence report from the RCMP says that due to the lack of federal controls, everything from AK-47s to assault rifles that are supposed to be used in films are now ending up on our streets.

Ottawa gives out special permits that allow film companies to purchase large quantities of firearms internationally and import them to Canada for use on movie sets. Canadian firearm legislation states that firearms must be registered as soon as practicable, but there is no exact time for registration. Because of this, frequently these firearms are sold on illicit markets in the streets.

Hopefully, the federal government will listen to the RCMP and close the cross-border loopholes that allow these weapons to come into Canada without any controls. Why in the world would they need real firearms on movie sets in the first place? That's the question I ask. The federal legislation on guns has multiple gaps and loopholes. The RCMP intelligence report states that penalties for possession of firearms, as currently applied, “do not act as a sufficient deterrent” for criminals. We join the RCMP in calling upon the Harper government to take immediate action to plug these gun loopholes before more innocent Ontarians are killed with these guns that come across our borders with no federal controls.

#### PREMIER'S FARM INNOVATION AWARD

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** Today I would like to acknowledge the farmers and agriculture businesses in my riding

that were awarded the Premier's Farm Innovation Award. Blue Water Black Calf Producers Association of Lion's Head is a group of Bruce Peninsula farmers who created an alliance among themselves to sell large herds of unified calves to specific markets. Allan and Kathy Taylor of County Meadow Meats of Owen Sound developed a process of buying only local products to sell in their retail shop, while producing their own lamb on the farm. David and Lynn Freeman of Meaford developed a freeze-dry system so that they can freeze local agriculture products to be shipped throughout Canada. New-Life Mills of Hanover installed automatic lights on their poultry farm, allowing lights to dim on bright days. These automatic lights help to reduce their energy use. Scotch Mountain Meats Inc., in Meaford, following the US border closure, developed all-natural meat products to be sold throughout Ontario. David Harper and Barbara Kay of Stoneyfield Elk Farm, of Meaford, developed a marketing and distribution strategy to provide meat for all seasons to the local area.

I was encouraged to learn that the Liberals actually had interest in my riding and the local agriculture business that they've abandoned in the past. I planned to attend the award ceremony on May 20, but the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs refused to release the names of the winners. It wasn't until after the ceremony started that the minister's office finally shared information with my office. I was further disappointed to see that the Liberal members for Huron-Bruce and Perth-Wellington had prior knowledge of the winners from my riding, even providing words of congratulation in the minister's news release.

It is sad that the Minister of Agriculture turned a good event for my riding and my constituents into a political game.

#### SCIENCE FAIR

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell:** I rise in the Legislature today to congratulate four outstanding students from my riding on a wonderful achievement: Ben Underwood from Turnberry Central Public School; Jacob McGavin from Brussels Public School; and Danielle Appavoo and Kaitlin Fisher, both from Colborne Central School. All received awards for their projects at the Canada-Wide Science Fair in Ottawa.

These four were joined by 38 of their colleagues in Ottawa who did Ontario proud by bringing home 249 awards and scholarships, including the fair's top honour, the platinum award, as well as 17 gold, 26 silver, 28 bronze, 31 honourable mentions and 146 special sponsor awards.

This year's successful projects ranged from Ben Underwood attempting to make a green chicken barn through the use of methane gas in anaerobic digesters to Jacob McGavin testing the efficiency and environmental friendliness of biomass pellets for heating. Kaitlin Fisher attempted to find out if, as some experts suggest, left-handed people are on average more creative than right-

handed people, and Danielle Appavoo sought to find a way of reducing the amount of petroleum products wasted by using non-biodegradable surgical gloves by creating biodegradable gloves.

All four of these students are also in attendance today for the annual Sci-Tech Ontario Queen's Park Science Fair. I ask this House to join me in congratulating these exceptional young people on their recent achievements.

#### AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I'm pleased to rise in the House to inform the members that General Motors workers in Oshawa, Durham region and in fact the city of Kawartha Lakes and Peterborough have not given up on protecting their jobs and our community.

Our community supports GM workers and has not given up. We want to see Oshawa's award-winning assemblers continue to build quality vehicles beyond 2009, and we want to keep the 2,600 jobs lost just recently. I urge the government to act, to show some leadership. Not giving up means this government must have a plan for GM and the auto sector, as well as all of Ontario, given the loss of over 200,000 manufacturing jobs.

When pressed in question period, this government hasn't shown that it even has a plan, nor is this government willing to hold an emergency session of this House to address the crisis in manufacturing in the province of Ontario. Premier, I would urge you to bring together the leadership of business, labour and the community to respond to the devastating consequences in our economy.

Regrettably, it seems that this government has given up on decent manufacturing jobs that support families, build communities and in fact affect the lives of our young people. I appeal to the House not to give up because the citizens of Durham and the regions around it have not given up. Who has given up here is the Premier of the province; he's given up on hard-working, decent people, and is not providing manufacturing jobs in this province.

#### JUSTICE SYSTEM

**Mr. Wayne Arthurs:** Recently, I heard a very interesting statistic regarding our justice system. With 600,000 charges entering our criminal courts every year, saving just one minute per charge could save some seven years of court time. That's quite something, especially when you realize that it now takes an average of 9.2 court appearances to complete a criminal case, compared to 1992, when it took an average of only 4.3 court appearances.

It was with these statistics in mind that the Attorney General, Chris Bentley, announced Ontario's new justice-on-target strategy. The strategy, the first of its kind in Canada, sets targets to reduce court delays and appearances by 30% over the next four years, because this government knows that lengthy court delays are unacceptable. The province is also making criminal court

statistics available to the public for the first time through the Attorney General's justice-on-target website, allowing the public to monitor the progress of the strategy in their own communities.

#### 1510

With a team led by Regional Senior Justice Bruce Durno and Senior Crown Attorney Kenneth Anthony, the first two initiatives for this strategy include putting legal aid application offices in 17 additional high-volume courthouses and the implementation of a dedicated prosecution system which allows small teams of crown attorneys to make substantive decisions earlier in the court process, reducing the time needed to complete a case.

I know that my constituents will be pleased to hear that government is moving ahead with such an important initiative that will ultimately improve Ontario's justice system.

### PUBLIC HEALTH

**Mr. France Gélinas:** I rise today to highlight the importance of supporting public health units. Public health units are so important that on May 28 the Minister of Health finally announced that hospitals "will be required to report C. difficile outbreaks to their local health units so that medical officers of health have the information they need to monitor and respond to emergent outbreaks."

However, according to the Association of Local Public Health Agencies, about one third of Ontario's medical officer of health positions are still vacant, part-time or led by acting directors. This is despite the fact that, six years ago, the very first recommendation from the Walkerton inquiry stated that "the Health Protection and Promotion Act should be amended to require boards of health and the Minister of Health, acting in concert, to expeditiously fill any vacant medical officer of health position."

Twenty-seven OPSEU members who work at the Grey-Bruce health unit in Owen Sound have been on strike since May 1. These workers keep people safe from rabies, bird flu, West Nile virus, contaminated tap and beach water, and much more. I don't know how the mosquitoes are elsewhere, but in my riding they are ferocious.

A public health unit is dysfunctional without key staff, and the Ontario Medical Association has said that a single dysfunctional health unit could incubate a national epidemic.

More must be done to support our local health units so they can continue to protect us.

### CONSUMER PROTECTION

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** I was quite pleased yesterday to see that the Payday Loans Act passed third reading here in the Legislature, thanks in no small part to the great leadership provided by the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. It is also extremely important that I point out that for the first time in the history of this

Legislature, our government has stepped into an area that heretofore was not regulated.

The outcome of this bill is very important to a number of my constituents who take out payday loans, as I'm sure it is to many of those in the ridings of my colleagues. It is clear that major improvements must be made to ensure that there is a fair and balanced approach to regulating the payday lending industry here in Ontario.

The Payday Loans Act will bring in new regulations, including the requirement of lenders and brokers to be licensed. It will prohibit back-to-back and concurrent loans and it will impose serious penalties for lenders who break the law. The legislation will also lead to the establishment of the Ontario payday lending education fund, aimed at educating the public and providing consumers with information about financial management as well as how they can protect themselves and their rights.

It has been said in this House before how important it is to provide helpful education to the public about important issues such as this, so I'm quite pleased that this is part of this legislation.

This government knows that Ontarians who are trying to improve their circumstances face many challenges along the way. This bill is a reflection of that recognition, and I look forward to seeing the bill receive royal assent in the very near future.

### RICHARD LEARY

**Mr. Dave Levac:** In Afghanistan on June 3, 2008, troops from the second battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, marched on foot patrol across the Panjwayi district just west of Kandahar. Moving towards a safer area in the Taliban-intense region, a Canadian soldier was killed, exactly four weeks to the day.

Enemy fire scorched ablaze the horizon of the volatile Kandahar flatbeds, fatally wounding a Canadian soldier, Captain Richard Steve Leary, known as "Stevo" to his fellow troop members.

The death of Captain Leary brings Canada's death toll in Afghanistan to 84 soldiers since the mission began in 2002. Another soldier has been regrettably added.

Captain Leary, born and raised in Brantford in the riding of Brant, is survived by his wife, Rachel, sister Brandi Leary, and his parents, Richard and Gail Leary.

Captain Leary's parents have tied a yellow ribbon around a tree in front of their Brantford home in memory of their brave son.

It's heartbreaking when those we love die in defending freedom for people who face tyranny. It is on the bravery and sacrifices of such men and women as Captain Leary that our very own country was founded. These brave men and women deserve our respect and support.

I confess to only imagining what the family of Captain Leary is going through. I will join them for only a brief moment when the family holds the service in Brantford tomorrow, in which I will be able to extend my heartfelt sympathy to them in their time of sorrow. My thoughts

and prayers are with them, and I'm sure that all of us here in this House share the same thoughts and prayers.

We still our minds and our hearts for a moment of silence. Let us remember all who have made the ultimate sacrifice and especially remember Captain Richard "Stevo" Leary, a brave soldier, a loving husband, a proud brother and a beautiful son. Rest in peace.

I seek unanimous consent that we stand for a moment of silence in honour of Captain Richard Leary.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The member seeks unanimous consent to a moment of silence. Agreed? Agreed.

I ask all members and our guests to please join us in a moment of silence.

*The House observed a moment's silence.*

## REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

### STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated June 3, 2008, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 107(f)(9), the report is deemed adopted by the House.

*Report deemed adopted.*

### NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Nickel Belt has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Children and Youth Services concerning clothing allowances. This matter will be debated today at a late show at 5:45 p.m.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### COLLEGES COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ACT, 2008

#### LOI DE 2008 SUR LA NÉGOCIATION COLLECTIVE DANS LES COLLÈGES

Mr. Milloy moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 90, An Act to enact the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act, 2008, to repeal the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act and to make related amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 90, Loi édictant la Loi de 2008 sur la négociation collective dans les collèges, abrogeant la Loi sur la négociation collective dans les collèges et apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.

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

*First reading agreed to.*

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

**Hon. John Milloy:** I will make a statement during ministerial statements.

### PUBLIC VEHICLES AMENDMENT ACT (IMPROVING BICYCLE MOBILITY), 2008

#### LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES VÉHICULES DE TRANSPORT EN COMMUN (AMÉLIORATION DE LA MOBILITÉ À BICYCLETTE)

Ms. Horwath moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 91, An Act to amend the Public Vehicles Act respecting bicycle racks on public vehicles / Projet de loi 91, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les véhicules de transport en commun en ce qui a trait aux porte-bicyclettes sur les véhicules de transport en commun.

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

*First reading agreed to.*

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** The bill amends the Public Vehicles Act to exempt public vehicles equipped with bicycle racks or carrying bicycles on racks from the general restriction against carrying or transporting a load that extends beyond the body limits of the vehicle. It has been a problem for inter-regional transportation particularly. I hope to correct that with this bill.

1520

## STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

### COMMUNITY COLLEGES COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

**Hon. John Milloy:** I'm pleased today to be introducing some very important legislation for Ontario's college system. The proposed Colleges Collective Bargaining Act, 2008, represents a significant revision of the collective bargaining regime in this sector. It would represent important changes for colleges and workers and bring more ownership over the collective bargaining process to the workplace parties. It would, our government believes, lead to a strengthened and more stable college system better able to focus on the needs of students, better able to deliver the high-quality education that the people of Ontario need.

This proposed legislation would mark the first significant overhaul of collective bargaining in colleges since current processes were established in 1975. I'm very happy to say that our bill, if passed by this Legislature,



would give part-time and sessional college workers the right to bargain collectively for the first time in Ontario.

This is a commitment our government made last August and one that I am proud to see included in our proposed legislation. Our government believes that this is the appropriate thing to do and we want to ensure that it is done right. We believe that this bill will establish a new era in labour relations in Ontario colleges by ensuring a more stable, effective process for negotiations covering both full-time and part-time college workers—an era where the workplace parties have greater ownership of the process. That is why our government took the time to ensure that proper consultations were held with all parties in our college system and that's why we appointed Ontario Labour Relations Board Chair Kevin Whitaker to conduct a thorough review of collective bargaining in our colleges.

Mr. Whitaker is with us here today, along with his daughter. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Whitaker for his hard work.

After receiving written and oral submissions from all parties involved in the college system, Mr. Whitaker produced a report this past February 1. He provided me with comprehensive recommendations relating to collective bargaining in our colleges.

One of those recommendations was, of course, to extend collective bargaining rights to part-time college workers. But the report went further: to describe how this should be done to ensure the interests of all parties are balanced and that changes ultimately benefit students through a stronger, more stable college system.

This would be accomplished, if this legislation passes, by allowing for the establishment of two new bargaining units for part-time college workers: one for part-time and sessional faculty and another for part-time support staff. Bargaining unit members would then be free to pursue the certification process.

But this bill would make some other important changes to how collective bargaining takes place in our college system, changes that our government believes would make collective bargaining in colleges more effective by bringing it more in line with accepted collective bargaining principles that work well in most other unionized workplaces in Ontario. By making the collective bargaining process work better, we believe that we would be strengthening the college system in general to the benefit of all parties, especially students. Changes to the bargaining process would encourage more stable, predictable labour relations, so that all parties could continue to focus on providing the best education possible for students in a productive learning environment.

That is what we must focus on when considering this legislation: our students. We must ensure the proper balance between ensuring an effective collective bargaining process for college workers and ensuring the best possible learning experience of our students.

Our government believes that our proposed legislation would offer this balance. Some of the proposed changes include:

- creating a new employer bargaining agent to represent all colleges in collective bargaining. This would replace the current government-appointed agency that acts on behalf of the employer during negotiations involving full-time workers;

- providing roles for the Ontario Labour Relations Board and the Minister of Labour consistent with their roles under the Labour Relations Act;

- streamlining the timelines for collective bargaining to encourage more proactive engagement by the bargaining parties;

- allowing for the appointment of a conciliator to work with the workplace parties at their request, eliminating the current fact-finding exercise, which is more cumbersome.

Essentially, we are proposing that collective bargaining processes in colleges for both full-time and part-time staff be made more consistent with the Ontario Labour Relations Act, while still recognizing the unique working environment in colleges. This is an approach that would give workplace parties more responsibility for the outcome of collective bargaining. It would streamline processes, bringing in the best of what works in other workplaces while still providing a separate framework that addresses the needs of the college sector. We believe that this approach is the best for colleges. We believe it would address the needs of workplace parties while still keeping the needs of students front and centre.

Our government remains committed to building Ontario into a true knowledge-based economy. Our \$6.2-billion investment by 2010 through our Reaching Higher plan is already helping people across this province work toward their dreams and build a strong future for themselves. By investing in our people, investing in our students, we are all building an Ontario strongly positioned to excel in the global economy. Ontario's strength is in our ingenuity and in our drive to succeed.

This legislation, if passed, would strengthen our college system not only by enhancing the quality of education, but by providing the framework for stronger labour relations. It would ensure a strong learning environment for our students, and it would help turn Ontario into a true knowledge economy able to compete globally.

Our government believes in the people of Ontario. We believe that by giving college workplace parties the proper tools to negotiate collective agreements, we are helping to build a better learning environment for Ontario students.

#### PORTUGUESE CANADIAN COMMUNITY

**Hon. Michael Chan:** Ontario is strong and vibrant because of our diverse communities. Today, I want to recognize the Portuguese community for its contributions to the cultural, economic and social development of the province.

June is Portuguese History and Heritage Month, a celebration first proclaimed in the Ontario Legislature in 2001. It gives us the opportunity each year to show our gratitude to the Portuguese community for enriching Ontario's history, arts, language and culture.

For example, in June, the Portuguese honour the *Lusiads*. These are epic poems about the history of Portugal, including the era of exploration in the 15th and 16th centuries. They were written by Luís de Camões, who died in 1580, one of Portugal's greatest poets. This month is also an opportunity to commemorate the anniversary of the poet's death.

The Portuguese played a pioneering role in the exploration of the new world in the 15th and 16th centuries, including arrival in Canada 500 years ago—people like Pedro da Silva, who transported and delivered mail by canoe when postal service was first established in Canada in 1693.

### 1530

But it was in the 1950s that Portuguese immigration began to gain momentum in Canada. When immigrants from Mariland, Portugal, Azores and Madeira, Angola, Mozambique, Cape Verde, Guiné-Bissau, Goa and other Portuguese-speaking countries came to Canada, they came to make a new life for themselves and contribute with their hard work. More than 350,000 people of Portuguese descent now live in Canada—a quarter million in Ontario. The majority immigrated here between 1961 and 1990, helping to make our province one of the best places in the world to live.

The skills of many Portuguese who joined the labour force in construction and manufacturing helped to build this great province, and Ontario continues to benefit from the arrival of newcomers whose native language is Portuguese. Newcomers include skilled technicians and business people, artists in many forms, and scientists.

Ontario is unique because of its diversity, with outstanding Portuguese Ontarians like Dr. Kim Vicente, founding director of the University of Toronto's cognitive engineering laboratory, recognized by *Time* magazine as one of 25 Canadians under the age of 40 who is a leader for the 21st century; Superior Court Justice Maria T. Linhares de Sousa, chair of the Family Law Information Centre and the Ottawa courthouse; and our own Peter Fonseca, Minister of Tourism and one of Canada's top marathoners, who represented our country in the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta.

There is a Portuguese proverb that says, "Everything has its time." Now is the time to recognize the important role of Portuguese Canadians here in Ontario.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Responses?

## PORTUGUESE CANADIAN COMMUNITY

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** I rise today in this Legislature, in response to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, on behalf of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario to speak on Portuguese Heritage Month and to-

day's special celebration of the Portuguese national day. Indeed, as we speak, the Portuguese flag is being raised on the flagpole outside of this building.

Today marks the death of celebrated Portuguese poet Luís de Camões on June 10, 1580. Camões wrote the *Lusiads*, Portugal's national epic celebrating Portuguese history and achievements. The poem is about 16th-century Portuguese explorations and is considered to be one of the finest and most important works in Portuguese literature. It is a symbol of Portuguese determination, strength, industriousness and courage. Indeed, they were the explorers of their day.

Those are the same attributes that can describe our Portuguese community here in Ontario today. But of course Portuguese contributions to Canadian life are no recent development. Gaspar Corte Real, a great Portuguese explorer, was one of the earliest explorers of Canada. In 1501, he reached the coast of North America and explored the northeast coast of Terra Nova, or Newfoundland, and named Conception Bay and Portugal Cove. He sailed up the coast of Labrador and named the land *Tierra del Lavrador*, in honour of John "the farmer," who was a Portuguese explorer credited with being the first explorer to land in Labrador. In fact, Newfoundland and Labrador are described in old cartography as the "Land of Corte Real."

When mail service was first established in Canada in 1693, it was a Portuguese man, Pedro da Silva, who transported and delivered mail by canoe between Montreal and Quebec City. He was the first officially commissioned courier of New France in 1705.

Of course, Portuguese Canadians continue to make vital contributions to our province, and indeed hold key positions in this Legislature; for example, the Minister of Tourism, Peter Fonseca, who was himself born in Lisbon.

On this, the 428th anniversary of the Camões's death, I wish all Portuguese Ontarians a happy Portuguese national day, and I wish them the best of luck as Portugal competes in the Euro 2008 championship.

## COMMUNITY COLLEGES COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** I'm pleased to respond today to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities on behalf of my colleague from Simcoe-Grey, Jim Wilson, who couldn't be with us today. First of all, I look forward to this debate. I understand there will be some debate in the House, probably in the next couple of days, and we'll be taking this bill to committee over the summer months. We'll get a chance to listen to all the stakeholders.

Many of us in our ridings have met with representatives of the part-time and seasonal workers who have requested this type of legislation over the last three or four years. I've heard it fairly carefully and I look forward to those debates.

However, one of the things that's interesting is that today I thought maybe the minister was coming forward with even better news. We've had a lot of money flow

from the federal government to the Ontario government, with a lot of it—over \$1 billion—in retraining money. That's retraining money that's not going to help the forestry workers who were laid off prior to June 2007. This year alone, as of April 1, you've received \$311 million additional money from the federal government under the labour market agreement. We thought some of that money might have flowed to some of our literacy councils that help some of the most vulnerable people in our communities.

This whole issue around ratios—I thought maybe you might be bringing forward some kind of bill that would establish the ratios, so that we would actually have 1-to-1 ratios instead of being the only odd person out in our whole country, that being the 3-to-1 ratios that exist today. We've brought it up over and over again in this House, because we face huge deficits of people in the construction and manufacturing trades, and this government refuses to listen to any of our comments and to the key stakeholders.

We look forward to the opportunity to debate this bill, but there are many more things we need to do. If and when this bill is passed and implemented, it's obviously going to cost the Ontario government more money, and we're already the lowest-funded per capita college system in all of our country. We're going to need a lot of additional money. I hope this government is prepared to come to the table with additional funds to implement this legislation, as well as all the other things that I've mentioned at the same time.

#### PORTUGUESE CANADIAN COMMUNITY

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** I'm happy to stand here and say that I celebrate with the Portuguese community their history and heritage month. I'm happy to say that I grew up about 10 minutes away from here in the heart of what is still the Portuguese community. While I understand a lot of Portuguese, I don't speak it, but I speak Italian, I speak French, and for those of you who are unilingual, I speak Spanish not too badly. I say to those who are unilingual, it's curable. You can work on it.

Having grown up in the area with Portuguese Canadians, I am very proud to have represented this community for a long, long time. I tell those of you who have not been part of the Portuguese parade, which happens every June, usually in the second week, it's the most successful parade in Ontario, the biggest and the most exciting to be part of.

I say we celebrate proudly Portuguese Canadian roots each and every year. And I celebrate the contributions of the pioneers who have been here for 55 years and more, they who have made tremendous sacrifices in this country. Because of the sacrifices they have made, their sons and daughters have benefited in ways that we see—socially, culturally and economically—because they are integrated in every aspect of Canadian society. I'm one

of those who say thank you for the contribution you have made to this province and to this country.

I congratulate them for the 2-0 soccer victory the other day. Just yesterday, a number of my Portuguese friends commiserated with me as an Italian Canadian. I took the criticism humbly and I agreed with them that they didn't deserve to lose 3-0, but they got beaten, and beaten badly. There's still time to make up for the loss. But I wanted to congratulate Portuguese Canadians on that victory and I know how exciting it has been for them.

1540

#### COMMUNITY COLLEGES COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** Moving on to the other matter, which is of great importance to New Democrats but particularly important to the part-time workers who have been lobbying this government for two long years, I want to congratulate OPSECAAT president Roger Couvrette, who is here, because not one word was said about OPSECAAT and the work that they have done—not one word.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Stop the clock. I remind the members on the government benches that the opposition was respectful when the minister was delivering his statement. I would just ask that that same respect be given to the speaker.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** Hang yourself a little bit; stretch it up a little bit.

You need to thank the people who have been working hard on this; they have, for two long years. What they've been saying is that the part-time workers have been denied the right to organize, denied the right for collective bargaining, for two long years. Prior to that, part-time workers, college teachers, have been working hard like many full-time staff and been denied the privilege of the work they do. It's wrong, and it has been wrong for two years. It's not just college teachers but the other support staff, seeking the same right. I wanted to mention them in my two or three minutes that I had, and to mention the OPSEU president, Warren Thomas, who is here, otherwise known as Smokey, with other OPSEU members who have been working alongside OPSECAAT, working hard to represent them. They deserve some praise, too.

I was looking forward to a simple bill that simply gave part-time workers the right to bargain collectively. Look what we got for one simple bill that I expected. Can you see this, Speaker? This is thick. What is in here? I don't know. We asked, with some courtesy, and humility as well, the minister and his staff: "Could you send us a copy so we could look at what you're doing and what you have to say?" They said no, they couldn't, and that they would give it to us at 3 o'clock. That's when we got this pile—you see, Speaker? You understand how complicated it is to comment on a bill of this size.

Tomorrow morning, we're going to get an opportunity to speak to it. We will look at it very closely, because we don't want to give a right to part-time workers while taking another right away, which is what I fear may be contained in this bill. We'll have an opportunity to read it tonight and debate it tomorrow morning.

Thank you to those workers who fought hard to get this bill.

## OPPOSITION DAY

### INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls upon the McGuinty government to restore public confidence in Ontario's health care system by immediately initiating an independent investigation into the sad and tragic deaths caused by outbreaks of *C. difficile* in Ontario hospitals and report back to the Legislature in 90 days; and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls upon the government of Ontario to hold a public inquiry to determine what steps can be taken to reduce the risks of outbreaks and prevent further deaths related to *C. difficile*.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Mrs. Witmer has moved opposition day number 5. Mrs. Witmer.

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** We have put forward this motion calling upon the government to do what they can to restore public confidence in Ontario's health system. That public confidence, I can tell you, has been seriously eroded by their handling of this crisis related to the outbreaks of *C. difficile* and the number of known deaths that have occurred. Regrettably, the McGuinty government has, during the past four years, totally ignored the threats to public health and safety from an increasing number of *C. difficile* outbreaks in our hospitals, and they have ignored the fact that there have been escalating numbers of deaths, and also those who have become infected, from this preventable infectious disease.

Of course, that's one of the keywords when it comes to *C. difficile*: It is preventable. This government, if they had taken action earlier, as, say, Quebec and Manitoba did after 2004—the outbreak in Quebec—many of these deaths, including the 62 recently that came to light at Joseph Brant in Burlington, could have been prevented.

We now have a disease, a preventable disease, that has claimed, in just the seven hospitals, six times the number of lives claimed by SARS in 2003. You would have thought that this government would have learned a lesson from SARS. In fact, it was interesting. When we had the SARS outbreak and when we had the 44 deaths, this was said by Dalton McGuinty on May 6. He stood in the House, he demanded a public inquiry, and he said: "Public inquiries give us facts on what happened in the past, and they give us valuable recommendations for the future. They give the public the answers that they desire and to which I believe they are entitled."

We believe that we can learn from the past. We believe that the information we have can help us to prevent and contain outbreaks in the future, and that's why we want a public inquiry. We also agree with Mr. McGuinty, who said at that time that it gives the public answers. We agree. The public is entitled to answers. We've heard from many of the families of the 62 people who died as a result of *C. difficile* at Joseph Brant hospital in Burlington, asking for answers. Why did the government not take action? Why was there not a concerted, coordinated effort on the part of the Minister of Health to communicate the extent of the outbreaks, the number of deaths, the number of those infected? If only we had known. It's interesting that so far, the minister and the government of Dalton McGuinty have stonewalled our attempts to put in place a public inquiry and an investigation into what happened so that we can learn for the future.

The Minister of Health as well, who has been somewhat negligent in his duty since 2004, despite the information that he had, also spoke passionately on May 6, 2003, about the value of public inquiries, public inquiries which he now says aren't necessary. And what do you think Mr. Smitherman said? He said, "We owe it to ourselves and to the society that we are part of to make sure that we do learn all of the lessons that can be learned from a review that allows all of those people to have a voice."

And then he said, "I do think it's critically important that at a time and age where we know that there will be more complex situations like this that confront us"—and don't we know that—"we take every advantage that we can, that we reach out to all those who have a voice and we hear of their problems and we take them seriously and we act to address those concerns, not in some review...." So he doesn't just want a review where nobody knows who's asking what questions, but under the commission of an inquiry that is independent, thorough and transparent. That's what we're asking for.

In 2003, he thought that that was what was absolutely necessary. He was passionate. He goes on to say, "Only then can we be certain that all of the lessons that are to be learned have been learned to ensure that our capacity to protect our citizens is enhanced to the greatest extent possible." That's what we're calling for: a public inquiry.

The good thing is that we had, in 2003, a government in the province of Ontario, under the leadership of Premier Ernie Eves, who responded—actually listened to the opposition, listened to the voices of the public, listened to the voices of those who were involved in the SARS outbreak, the SARS crisis—and who immediately did put in place an inquiry in order to get to the bottom of what had happened. There had been only 44 deaths, and I say "only" because that is a big number, and those were sad and tragic deaths, but the reality today is that we know that in seven hospitals—only seven—there were six times the number of deaths. We don't know about the other hospitals and the death rate in those hospitals. Yet this government refuses to learn from the past in order

that we can prevent mistakes in the future. How irresponsible.

1550

That's why this government has lost the public's confidence. There is concern about the fact they've known for four years that there was a threat to public health. Why did they know? Because in 2003 and 2004 there were outbreaks in Quebec that killed about 2,000 people. After those outbreaks, there was action taken. Both Quebec and Manitoba started public reporting.

In fact, after those 2,000 deaths in Quebec, the Canadian Medical Association stepped up to the plate. They released a report that said that we were going to have C. difficile outbreaks in all the other hospitals in Canada eventually. Now is the time for all the provinces—and I stress all the provinces—to develop and implement plans in order that you can recognize it, which means that you've got to report it. You've got to know about what's happening in your hospitals, you've got to take the steps in your plan to reduce the risks of the outbreaks and you've got to do mandatory reporting.

The McGuinty government in 2004 ignored those experts, the Canadian Medical Association—unbelievable. They ignored the fact that 2,000 people had just died in Quebec. Then, in 2004, the Canadian Union of Public Employees issued a news release accusing the government of underestimating the threat of C. difficile. Then we had two deaths at Cornwall Community Hospital. The Ontario Council of Hospital Unions called on the government to take steps to implement mandatory reporting. They made the same plea again in 2007, after we had about 26 deaths related to C. difficile in Sault Ste. Marie. Again, the McGuinty government and this Minister of Health ignored the advice.

It gets worse. Last summer, the minister decided that he was going to ask Dr. Michael Baker to give him a report about C. difficile. Michael Baker is physician-in-chief of the University Health Network, a most respected doctor. He did write a report for the minister, stating that “my first priority would be to have reporting to the minister and the public” on C. difficile. Dr. Baker also stated last summer that the families of the patients who died from the infection were outraged that Mr. Smitherman had not issued public warnings and failed to act on years of evidence about this lethal infection.

Believe it or not, he asked for advice, but he didn't move forward with the advice. He ignored the advice he got from his own medical expert—unbelievable. Then, in February of this year, Dr. Baker was asked for his advice again. He restated that “my first priority would be to have reporting to the minister and the public” on C. difficile. Again, this government took no action. After repeated calls from the opposition, he suddenly decided, “Maybe we'll start public reporting at the end of the year.”

In the meantime we've had deaths, deaths everywhere in this province. In fact, we learn of new deaths all the time. Most recently, we learned of some at the Alliston hospital; we learned of some at St. Michael's Hospital. This is happening all over the province.

I would say to you, the actions of this government and this minister stand in stark contrast to those of the Minister of Health in Northern Ireland. We know there are people who, when they see what's happening, take decisive and strong action. They take control. They don't ignore the warnings. The Minister of Health in Ireland earlier this year learned that 51 people had died of C. difficile. This is as a result of the same new lethal strain that, by the way, we now have in the province of Ontario.

Do you know what he did? He immediately set up an expert panel. That's what we're asking for. They were to do a three-month comprehensive review. And do you know what else he did? He invested money. He took control of the situation. He did not blame the hospitals and the front-line workers and say, “Well, it's up to them.” No, he recognized that there was a need for strong action and a coordinated approach from the ministry of health and the government. So he invested in special measures to fight and control the disease—and I would say successfully. He is also probably going to follow this with a public inquiry.

That is what we are asking the Liberal McGuinty government to do. That is what they asked us to do in SARS. We agreed. We recognized the importance. We want an interim report within 30 days. We want a final report within 90 days, followed by a public inquiry to address this urgent issue of concern to Ontarians. I can't believe that the government is stonewalling this request. I would hope that they would vote with us today. Surely they share the concerns that we have: families who have lost loved ones and cannot understand why it happened in a province like Ontario that should be a world leader when it comes to health and the prevention of infectious diseases.

We've had four years of warnings. We've seen inaction on this particular situation. We've seen this government trying to deny that there is a problem—being very dismissive—and that's why public confidence in our health system has been undermined. We need an inquiry. We need to make sure that we get answers as to why this happened in the province of Ontario. How did it happen? How widespread is it? Well, the minister gets up every day now and tells us he doesn't know. Can you believe this—doesn't know? I'm not sure that is totally accurate. It could be that he knows but doesn't want to tell us.

**Interjection:** It's a cover-up.

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** Some people have suggested that there is a bit of a cover-up, because perhaps the numbers—I once said that maybe there have been 5,000 deaths; he has never disputed them.

But if you don't know what the problem is, how can you solve it? They refuse to acknowledge that there is a problem. He has behaved totally differently than the minister in Northern Ireland. Even if you take a look at what the minister in Quebec did years ago, he behaved differently. Both of them took decisive action. They took control. They focused on making sure there was coordinated communication with the people in the province of Ontario—clear, concise, well-understood communica-

tion. We have the CEO at the Burlington hospital telling us, "Nobody ever told me about *C. difficile*. I heard about it through the media." That is not how you communicate with your hospital CEOs.

So do you know what? We see a government that has not listened to the warnings and the advice of the Canadian Medical Association, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions and their own medical expert, Dr. Baker. They've failed to take action. They have been in denial about *C. difficile* for four years. They have been in denial of the risk to public health and safety.

Ontarians deserve better. They deserve answers. I urge the Premier to support our resolution today. Appoint an independent investigator to look into the crisis. Report back with the findings. The public deserves to know the truth. This government cannot continue to shirk their responsibility. This is a matter of public confidence in our health system. The reality is that the public has lost confidence. This is a matter of life and death. It's time that this government finally recognized the gravity of the situation. I would urge all members of the government today to stand up and be counted. Listen to the voice of Ontarians, as we did with the request for a SARS inquiry, and support us. Let's get to the bottom of what happened and why, and make sure that nobody else dies as a result of *C. difficile*.

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

1600

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I am pleased to rise today to talk about the inquiry into *C. difficile* requested by the member for Kitchener–Waterloo. Hospital-acquired infections are the fourth-largest killers in all of Canada. Each year, about a quarter of a million people—that's 250,000 people—will pick up an infection while hospitalized; of those people, between 8,000 and 12,000 will die. Those are people who probably would still be here with us if they hadn't picked up those superbugs in hospital. For Ontario, we're looking at about 2,000 Ontario citizens who will die from infections acquired in hospitals this year alone.

There are different types of superbugs. We talk about MRSA, we talk about VRE, but we also have to talk about *Clostridium difficile*, better known as *C. difficile* or even *C. diff*. So far, as my colleague has mentioned, 260 Ontarians have died from *C. difficile* in just the nine out of 150 hospitals that have made their figures public. One can't help but do the math in one's head. If nine out of 150 hospitals report 260 deaths, what if all hospitals were the same? Does that make 3,700? I hope this is not the case, but as she mentioned, we don't know this because the Minister of Health has been asked numerous times to tell us the scope of the problem and no answer has been forthcoming. He does not have this information. Not knowing this information is scary for all of us.

In Quebec, the infection has killed 2,000 people since 2002. But Quebecers learned from that experience. They have put changes in place to protect their citizens. That

leaves us to believe that if our neighbours next door, in the next province over, have been able to learn a hard lesson from 2,000 deaths, why is it that we in Ontario haven't learned a whole lot? Why is it that over the last four years Minister Smitherman has not made *C. difficile* a reportable infection? It seems like a long period of time for something as drastic as 2,000 deaths in hospitals due to one single strain of bacteria, *C. difficile*. But none of this has happened. We are told that it will happen in the future, that it will happen in Ontario this fall. That's a long period of time.

*C. difficile* is a very serious disease. There are some fact sheets that are circulating for all health care settings that say that *C. difficile* is the leading cause of health-care-associated diarrhoea. Outbreaks of *C.-difficile-associated diarrhoea*—we call them CDAD—have occurred in a variety of acute-care, long-term-care and community settings. It has been known to cause associated diarrhoea for about the last 30 years. It's not that new, is it? *C. difficile* is a spore-forming, gram-positive, anaerobic bacillus that produces two endotoxins—*toxin A* and *toxin B*. Basically, it is a common cause of antibiotic-associated diarrhoea and it accounts for about 12% to 25% of those cases.

There is also a list of risk factors for people who could be considered at risk for *C. difficile*. Those too are pretty easy to come by. We've talked about exposure to antibiotics, having gastrointestinal surgery, about people who have been in the health care setting for a long period of time, people who are seriously ill, people who have immuno-compromising conditions, where your immune system is not working properly, and people of advanced age. All that tells us is that it is fairly common, that it has been there for a long time. There has been tragedy and there have been lessons learned, but Ontario is a slow learner.

In severe cases, *C. difficile* will cause critical illness and death, but it is highly preventable. People don't have to get infected with *C. difficile*. People don't have to die. The single most effective way to prevent the spread of *C. difficile*, I think everybody in this House should know by now, is to wash your hands: Wash your hands before you go in, wash your hands after you leave, wash your hands before you leave the long-term-care facility, wash your hands before you eat or drink.

The motion calls for a province-wide inquiry into how people died. We of the NDP think this is a reasonable request but we also realize that it will take time. It is not very forward-looking. An inquiry is always what it is: It's backward-looking. You look at what happened, you get some lessons learned, you get some best practices and protect yourself so that it doesn't happen again. What we're suggesting is that you not only look back through an inquiry, but you also take immediate action. There are immediate actions that Minister Smitherman and the government can take now to protect us.

Quebec has had mandatory reporting since 2004. We don't have to reinvent the wheel. We can do mandatory reporting, and we can do it now. Ontario has been far too

slow in adopting mandatory reporting and that has led to people losing confidence in their health care system. Mandatory reporting is required in five US states and there are at least another 30 states considering similar legislation.

Mandatory reporting would provide patients with the rate of hospital-acquired infection at a specific hospital or a specific health care community. It would also give us important information on how widespread the problem of infectious disease in hospitals is and where funding and human resources should be increased to help us deal with this. The government needs to implement mandatory reporting now, not in four months when God knows how many more Ontarians will have contracted the disease and how many more Ontarians will have died.

System-wide reporting also allows the province to set benchmarks and to measure the progress that is being made to curb the infection. But even more needs to be done. The government also needs to take action to hire more hospital cleaners—and we would add to this— forbid the contracting-out of hospital cleaning and force hospitals to urgently review their infection control practices. Clean hospitals are the backbone of infection control. When you don't have enough people to clean the place regularly and thoroughly, you put everybody at risk of infection.

Hospital support workers: If you're interested, there are about 50,000 hospital support workers in Ontario. They keep our hospitals clean. But over the last 30 years, every hospital that has tried to balance their budget has done it partly through cutbacks to their cleaning staff. Cleaning staff, not surprisingly for some, are the lowest-paid workers in the hospital. In general, in hospitals, they make less than the average industrial wage. Of the 50,000 people who are hospital support workers and cleaning staff, the majority are women.

#### 1610

Spending on hospital support services has fallen and declined. The Canadian Institute for Health Information—CIHI, we call it—reports that hospitals have cut the dollars spent on support services in recent years. Housekeeping spending cuts, on average, have been about 1.8% per year; material management cuts, 2.2% per year; patient food services, 3.1% per year. Rather than keeping pace with the demand, keeping pace with the increased costs, those programs have actually seen a decreased amount of resources allocated to them. Indeed, since the mid-1970s, hospital spending on support services has dropped. It used to be 27% of the hospital budget; it now stands at 17%. CUPE and the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions have, since 2004, drawn attention to inadequate funding of hospital cleaning staff, given the increased number of patients and increased acuity of illnesses.

Look at some of the lessons learned from Quebec. Quebec doctors indicated that hospital sanitation is the main culprit in spreading *C. difficile*, and it is the key to preventing the spread of the bacteria. Pretty basic stuff here; we're not talking high technology that we're not too

sure works or not. We're talking about basic sanitation: cleaning toilets, cleaning floors, cleaning all surfaces, wheelchairs, beds etc. We have the technology to do this. Now, do we put our money where our mouth is? This is a different question.

In Quebec, the lack of proper hygienic cleaning that resulted from the budget cutbacks that dated, on their part, to the 1990s has resulted in toilets that are not clean, sinks that are not disinfected enough or not even clean. They ended up with *C. difficile*. I'm guessing that when the inquiry is called and we look at the hospitals that have been struggling with *C. difficile*, we may very well point the finger at the same culprit: sanitation in our hospitals.

In some of the Montreal hospitals, the housekeeping staff were stretched so thinly that they were given 37 seconds to clean a toilet. Well, things have changed. They don't do this any more. They realized that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, and it's a lot easier to keep your hospital facility clean than to deal with the superbugs. Once it hits, it spreads; it becomes an outbreak, people get infected and people die.

Dr. Mark Miller is the head of infection control at Montreal's Jewish General Hospital and a specialist in hospital-acquired infections. He told the *Gazette* that hospitals are just not clean enough: "It's the general sanitation in the hospitals that is under the microscopic eye right now.... You've got fewer housekeepers. You've got less cleaning of patient rooms and less intensive (cleaning)." That was at the time when Quebec was struggling with their outbreak of *C. difficile*. They certainly did not point toward a high-tech solution. They pointed toward keeping our hospitals in good shape, and clean.

Hospital-acquired infection costs a lot of money to treat and costs a lot of heartache for the families that are touched, that get infected, that lose loved ones. Former New York state Lieutenant Governor Betsy McCaughey argued in a June 6, 2005, editorial in the *New York Times* that when hospitals invest in prevention and precaution, "they are rewarded with as much as a tenfold financial return." In their state, hospital-acquired infections have added "about \$30 billion ... to the nation's"—sorry, not the state; the whole United States—"total health costs. This tab will increase rapidly as more infections become drug-resistant."

Back in Canada, researchers estimate that the total attributable cost to treat MRSA infections is about \$14,360 per patient. Again, they point out that part of the solution lies in the meticulous cleaning of equipment in hospital rooms. Researcher Kris Owens, who recently demonstrated that MRSA can live on surfaces for weeks, told the media, "The results of this study clearly demonstrate the need for frequent handwashing and environmental disinfection in health care settings."

In sum, lack of cleaning support puts the sanitation of hospitals at risk and increases the risk of outbreak of hospital-acquired infections. OCHU has long called for the government to bolster cleaning in hospitals and long-

term-care facilities. Unfortunately, the number of workers cleaning Ontario hospitals is still dropping steadily because of years of cutbacks to their particular departments.

*C. difficile* can spread quickly throughout an institution from patient to patient or from caregiver to patient. The problem is compounded by patients being transferred to multiple institutions and the huge number of part-time staff who are forced to work at more than one facility to make a living. This is particularly true in the long-term-care system, which relies heavily on part-time staff. Front-line health care workers are the backbone of infection control. The government must recognize that fewer staff to disinfect and clean hospitals will open the door to increased hospital infection rates.

Thirdly, the government needs to legislate Ombudsman oversight of hospitals and long-term-care facilities. Did you know that Ontario is the only province in Canada whose Ombudsman does not have a mandate to oversee hospitals? The role of the Ombudsman has evolved over the years; it has evolved in Ontario, and it has evolved throughout the provinces and territories of Canada. But for some reason unknown to me, this government still refuses to give Ombudsman oversight over hospital complaints.

In the May 10, 2008, edition of the *Hamilton Spectator*, our Ombudsman, Mr. Marin, criticized the province's response to the *C. difficile* outbreak and said—and this is the Ombudsman of Ontario whom I'm quoting: "This is exactly the kind of systemic issue which our office would be poised to handle if we had jurisdiction." He recognized the *C. difficile* outbreak as exactly the type of situation that calls for his office's jurisdiction over hospitals.

Ontario Ombudsman André Marin's office receives many serious complaints regarding hospitals that he cannot investigate. In 2007, there were 228 of those complaints. Giving the Ombudsman oversight of hospitals and long-term-care complaints would be one important step in restoring confidence in our health care system.

I've said before that health care is just as much an art as it is a science. At the core of it all, you have a provider who needs to establish a trusting relationship with the client. Once this trust is gone, the opportunity to provide best-quality care is also gone. Once our trust in our hospital system is shaken and weakened, it's a direct attack on the quality of care that those hospitals can provide. Giving Ombudsman oversight of hospital and long-term care would go a big step toward restoring people's faith in our health care system.

**1620**

Don't get me wrong; I am proud of the health care system we have in Ontario. We have a very good health care system. We have good hospitals that provide good care to hundreds of thousands of people every year. When there's a complaint, your first line is to talk to your health care provider. If the complaint cannot be resolved,

every hospital has a way to handle complaints and they can help to bring a resolution.

When that doesn't work, then people want a neutral third party to hear their complaints and give them closure. This is what Ombudsman oversight would do. We don't wish for any more *C. difficile* outbreaks; I hope there are not going to be any more. When a family has to live through those difficult times—we had Mrs. Linda Del Grande with us last Friday talking about the horrific experience of her father in one of Toronto's hospitals. That was a healthy elderly gentleman who went into the hospital because he had a urinary tract problem. He caught three bouts of *C. difficile* and ended up dying in hospital. That was a tragedy for this family. Our best wishes are with this family.

When Mrs. Del Grande came and talked to the media, what she talked about was that this had shaken her confidence in the hospital system. When you lose this confidence, it's important to have access to a neutral third party which you know will be there to defend your rights. When you bring a complaint to a long-term-care facility or a hospital, there's not an equal relationship there; there's a power imbalance. The hospital or the long-term-care facility tends to be a lot more powerful and knowledgeable than the complainant. To have a neutral third party such as the Ombudsman listen to those complaints gives people an opportunity to be heard, to bring closure and to restore confidence in our hospital system for those families where the system has let them down.

In conclusion, an inquiry is important, but it doesn't go far enough. The government needs to implement mandatory reporting immediately, increase funding for cleaning staff and extend the Ombudsman's oversight responsibility to include hospitals.

I will save a few minutes of my allocated time for my colleague MPP Andrea Horwath. Thank you.

**Ms. Laurel C. Broten:** I am pleased to rise and join in the debate. I want to start by expressing my personal sympathy, as all of us on all sides of the House, for any families in the province whose loved ones might have suffered the effects of *C. difficile*. I want to share with Ontarians, and those families in particular, the actions that our government is taking to make sure that we as a province respond appropriately to this outbreak and circumstances in the province—something that is a challenge across the health care system.

We listen to the advice of experts in the area of disease management, infectious disease control initiatives and public health when we make determinations as to how we should take action and move forward in an aggressive and concerted manner to make the fastest progress we can in response to this.

Some of those experts include the chief medical officers of health and the coroner's office, who have both stated that a public inquiry would not help us move any faster to public reporting and would not provide any new information to health care providers. There have already been three independent investigations into *C. difficile*:



the Sault coroner's jury, the Joseph Brant hospital investigation and the Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee recommendations.

As I have said, now is the time to act. It is not the time for more theatrics. It is not the time for more discussions. It is the time to take action, and that is exactly what we are doing.

I think the words of Dr. Richard Schabas, the medical officer of health for Hastings and Prince Edward counties, ring very true when we consider the debate we're having in this Legislature today. He said in an interview with CHCH TV on May 26, and Dr. Schabas knows what he's talking about because he was the province's medical officer of health during the SARS outbreak: "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, and I think largely we already know what the underlying problems are with C. difficile."

I would say that it is the commitment of this government to act on what we already know, to take those critical initiatives, because it is important that we move forward in meeting the needs and maintaining the confidence that Ontarians should have, and do have, I would suggest, in their health care system.

We've announced full public reporting on eight patient safety indicators as part of a comprehensive plan to create an unprecedented level of transparency in Ontario's hospitals. We will be requiring mandatory public reporting of C. difficile by September 30, in line with what hospitals and health care providers—give them some time to get ready for this mandatory reporting.

I think all of us who are standing here on June 10 know how quickly September 30 will be here, but we're not waiting until September 30 to take action. We'll also be requiring mandatory public reporting of MRSA, VRE and individual hospital mortality rates by December 31, and we'll be requiring mandatory public reporting on central line infection, ventilator-assisted pneumonia, surgical site infection rates and hand hygiene by April 30, 2009. Dr. Michael Baker will be our executive lead in patient safety, and his first task will be to work with the experts in the field to address infectious diseases. We have launched the Just Clean Your Hands campaign. We funded 137 infection control practitioners. We formed the Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee. We've created 14 infection control networks.

I think you can see we take this very seriously. We've taken concrete, aggressive action. We're moving forward with the knowledge base that we have to make sure we best protect Ontario patients and make sure they have the health care system they need and deserve and, frankly, the health care system that they voted strongly in favour of in October last year, when they put our government back in office, a government that has worked very hard to return public confidence to a system that was very devastated under the previous Conservative government.

I thank you for the opportunity I've had to speak to this issue today and look forward to continued debate.

**Mrs. Joyce Savoline:** It is with a heavy heart that I rise today to speak on behalf of all the people who have been afflicted, in some cases numerous times, with C. difficile, and the families who have lost loved ones to the outbreak that this government is unwilling to acknowledge. It is an absolute outrage and an insult to our seniors who have worked hard to build our communities and have paid into this health care system. For generations they've paid, to be left vulnerable to this devastating disease.

Seniors are one of the highest-risk groups for contracting this disease. They and their surviving family members deserve to know why they have suffered so horribly for so long without any answers. The Minister of Health has failed these families, to the extent that they are coming to this Legislature and facing the minister in an attempt to be heard and to avoid watching other families experience this tragedy in their own lives.

**1630**

I'm going to share with you the stories of the survivors of C. difficile and the families who have lost loved ones to this tragic circumstance.

Jack Elliott: Jack Elliott was a spry man, enjoying the fruits of his labour with his lovely wife, Dorothy. He wanted to have knee surgery. Why? So that he could keep up with her on their travels as they went to countries where there were cobblestones, which were slowing him down. Jack entered the hospital for elective knee surgery and contracted C. difficile, which led to a subsequent heart attack. Jack Elliott never came out of hospital. Jack knew that there was an infection control expert in the hospital. Jack asked to see this person. He was told that the infection control expert only visits you after you have contracted the disease for a second time.

This is where I must interject into Jack's story. I believe that it is the role of an infection control specialist to avoid contracting any disease—it is things like this that make me wonder how the Minister of Health can stand in his place in this Legislature and tell us that he is doing everything he can, because clearly his ministry-appointed infectious disease staffers are not. Jack asked for a doctor. He knew he was dying. When the code blue rang over the loudspeaker, the doctor did come, but he came to pronounce Jack dead. Jack Elliott did not look like the man his wife had married 40 years previously. His abdomen was distended; his hands were so swollen that he could not wear his cherished wedding ring on his finger any longer. His family, who were unable to comfort him with their touch in his last days, deserve answers now.

Similar tragedies have taken place in hospitals across this province on the Honourable George Smitherman's watch. Fern Merchant, Jack's daughter, brought his picture here a few weeks ago to show the minister that victims of this terrible bacteria have a face and the families left behind are mourning their loss, and they have a face too. Survivors and their families have been e-

mailing me from across Ontario. They know that *C. difficile* is not confined to just a few hospitals, and today the PC caucus is standing in support of their pleas for a province-wide inquiry. Our seniors are entering hospitals throughout Ontario for elective procedures, and they are not coming out.

*C. difficile* is an ugly bacteria and an agonizing death. Those who are fortunate enough to have survived are left a shell of their former selves. One victim, a strapping former football player with many active years ahead of him, has been decimated by *C. difficile*. At the height of his infection, he could barely lift his head off the pillow. He had shed 80 pounds and could not bring himself to eat. The medication that saved his life is only covered by the Ontario health insurance plan while he is in the hospital. Once released, he was forced to pay \$740 for a 30-day supply of this life-saving medication. What is that about? I would argue that this is one of those points that both an ombudsman and a provincial inquiry would point to as inexcusable. If you contract a disease or bacteria in a hospital in the province of Ontario, I would expect that your treatment would continue to be covered by OHIP once you leave the hospital.

On behalf of my constituent, I suggest that the Minister of Health absorb the cost of the drug Vancomycin for any patients who have contracted *C. difficile* in the province of Ontario. These survivors do not have the time and they do not have the energy to fight the Minister of Health in the courtroom over drug coverage. Given the lack of attention paid to this issue by the Minister of Health, it is, in my opinion, the least he could do.

Victor Ansell: Victor Ansell was a healthy 84-year-old man. He was an RAF bomber squadron pilot who actually survived the perils of World War II only to have the misfortune of breaking his hip. He contracted *C. difficile* during or after his surgery. Mr. Ansell never left the hospital. He was not on any medication, he was an active man and he leaves behind a grieving son and his family.

Where are the answers for these families? How many families need to experience similar tragedies before the minister takes action and gets to the root cause of the problem? We are all elected to serve the needs of our constituents, but the minister has taken an oath to protect the health and well-being of every Ontarian.

In a post-SARS world, you have stood in this Legislature and told us on that side that your ministry is ready for whatever infectious disease comes our way, and then, when it happens, nothing happens—nothing for the families who have lost loved ones, nothing for the survivors struggling to regain their health.

This government has given us pat answers, empty platitudes and rhetoric, but little else. In fact, there was a cowering of the minister behind the coattails of a staffer when faced with the prospect of being confronted by Mrs. Elliott and her daughter Fern, until the media pressured him to face up to his obligations.

There is a slim chance that the minister may want to grant the survivors of *C. difficile* and their families the

closure they deserve. Is it possible that the Premier's office is forbidding anybody from taking that action? Well, that would be a grave mistake, because the PC caucus is serving you notice today, here in this place, that we will not forget the survivors, we will not forget the families and we will not let the Ontario public forget that you have failed to protect them.

I implore the minister to take action now, if not to provide closure to those who have suffered through this disease, then at least to preserve his own legacy. Regardless who is withholding this final decision, make no mistake, it is the minister who will be saddled with this shameful record.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** I appreciate the opportunity to talk a little bit about this issue, the *C. difficile* motion that was brought forward by the Progressive Conservative caucus to try to get the government to see the wisdom of having an inquiry into this tragedy that occurred in Ontario.

I felt it important to be able to get up and make a few comments, because the face of this tragedy played out in my local newspaper day after day. Of course, the city of Hamilton is a sister, a neighbour, to Joseph Brant hospital. You just kind of jump over the Skyway Bridge and there you are. Not only was it very close in terms of proximity to my community, but many of the people who live in Burlington once lived in Hamilton and vice versa. It's quite a well-connected set of communities, if you will. So as the horrifying details of this infection were relayed to all of us in Hamilton through reading our newspaper, many of us were just stunned by the pain and suffering that was being revealed.

The pain and suffering of the families, I think, is something that we can never forget and that we can never put aside as we debate these issues and as we try to determine what steps need to be taken. I think it's important that we acknowledge and recognize that inquiries are called for a certain purpose, and that purpose is to actually do the learning. I know the minister has risen in his place a couple of times saying, "We don't really need to do that learning; we already have a lot of information."

**1640**

I think it's actually incumbent upon the government and the minister to have the conversations with these families through the inquiry, to talk to them about what their experiences were. I think we would all agree that we feel extremely sorrowful for their loss, for their pain and suffering, and also for the families who didn't lose someone, the 177-odd families that were affected at Joseph Brant. We know there were about 62 deaths, but there were others who managed to escape that sentence during this crisis. The reality is that we need to speak to those families. We need to talk to them in the context of what they saw going on in hospital when they and/or their loved ones were being affected—or infected—by *C. difficile*.

Yes, this is about the health care system. This is about the problem that we have in managing infectious disease

in the health care system, and in hospitals particularly. But this is also a human issue. This is about trying to have the humanity to engage in the conversation and make those people feel and know that their government, the people who make the laws in Ontario, are interested enough in their everyday experience, in the layperson's perspective on what happened, to have the inquiry and to get those voices into the mix when it comes to deciding what to do to make things better in Ontario with regards to *C. difficile* and other infectious disease.

It's about making things better. It's about making things better so that people who go to hospital to get better know that that's what's going to happen when they're being cared for in hospital. Nobody in Ontario, nobody at all, I think, expects that when they go to hospital, whether it's for a minor procedure or a major procedure, they're going to come out worse off, or that they may not come out of the hospital at all as a result of contracting a disease within the hospital that made them worse and not better, that made them sicker and did not heal them.

That is the problem we have now. There's a lack of confidence in the hospital system. That lack of confidence will continue until we get to the bottom of what happened and then put that into the perspective of how we fix it for the future. That, I think, is key.

It's key, because overlaying all of this, we have the context of the health tax that this government put in place. People are saying to me, "Here we've been paying extra dollars in our health tax, being assured by the government that this money is all going into health"—which we know it isn't—"yet, lo and behold, after the health tax is implemented"—a very unfair health tax, by the way, one that unfairly financially burdens lower-income families in comparison to higher-income families. Nonetheless, people say, "Well, hold on a minute. We're investing more. The government tells us they're investing more in health care. They're certainly taking more and putting it in the government coffers. Yet we have a disaster like what happened at Joseph Brant hospital and other hospitals in Ontario, taking place—what?—two, three or four years after the implementation of the health tax." That's why this situation cries out for real action from the government.

The member for Burlington did a good job of describing some of the situations that occurred, some of the horrifying realities that people either watched their loved ones deal with or tried to survive through, as well as the people who are actually having those symptoms when they are in hospital with *C. difficile*, which they contracted there.

I can tell you, I have my own personal story of a loved one. She did not contract *C. difficile* in a hospital but she contracted MRSA in a hospital. That person was my own mom. This happened about two years ago. She went in for maybe not a routine procedure, but for surgery. She was told that if they can do this laparoscopy, this procedure, she'll be in and out within three days max. Well, of course, surgery gets scheduled, Mom gets put

out, goes into the operating room and, lo and behold, they can't do the surgery laparoscopically, so they have to do quite a more invasive procedure with my mom. Fine. We're told that she'll be in for about five to seven days, depending on her recovery. After three days, she was starting to look a little better; she was starting to heal. Major surgery for a woman who is about 70 years old is difficult no matter what. She has borderline diabetes—okay, Mom, I'm not going to tell everybody your whole health history; I promise. But the reality is, there were some complicating factors. After three days or so, she was looking better, and on the fourth day, all of a sudden, she took a turn for the worse.

She suffered enormously day after day after day. My sister and brothers and I really did not know what to do or where to turn. It was not something where the hospital came out and said, any time early on in the process, that she had MRSA and that she had contracted it at the hospital. We didn't find that out until well into the process, after much grilling, how this could have gone so terribly wrong and what exactly the problem was. She spent over six weeks in the hospital. And we were lucky, because near the touch-and-go point, when we weren't sure whether she was going to make it through or not, some of the doctors were suggesting that maybe they should open her back up again. But everybody knew that if they did that, the chances of her survival were going to go even further down.

Although I certainly wouldn't suggest that the experience I had and my mom had is the same as what has happened with the *C. difficile* situation, I can tell you that these infectious diseases that are running rampant in our hospitals in Ontario have to be dealt with. And so, yes, New Democrats are going to support the motion put forward by the official opposition, because we think that not only is it important to do the investigation, to get the inquiry going, but we think it's important to hear the voices of those families and people who were affected. We don't think that there's been a lot of that. It's been done through the media, but we think the government needs to take responsibility for hearing from those families and understanding what they were going through and how to make it better from the perspective of the customer, if you will, of our hospital system, which is the people of Ontario.

What we also need is the government to speed up the implementation of the immediate reporting of these situations in hospitals. There's nothing at all to stop the minister from tomorrow sending out a directive to the Ontario Hospital Association and all of the hospitals of Ontario that says, "Starting June 15 or July 1, you have to start reporting on your websites and reporting publicly the incidences of MRSA, *C. difficile* and VRE." What would be so hard about that? But no: "We're going to drag our feet. We're going to stretch it along." We're sorry, but we just don't think that's good enough. We think there are things that have to happen immediately, and one of them is the immediate reporting.

My colleague from Nickel Belt, our health critic, put on the record very clearly what we see as a systemic problem within the health system. And mark my words, it's going to get worse with the implementation of more P3 hospitals in the province of Ontario, where the cleaning function gets hived off to the lowest bidder as part of their amalgam of contracted services, which get put together as a model for private sector hospital services. I've got to say, I'm worried about that. We know already that housekeeping and cleaning are a major part of this problem. We know that quality control in that area needs to be upgraded significantly. But we also know that when you're trying to save a buck, you're cutting corners. You're cutting corners and you're cutting staff. We are very, very concerned that this government's penchant for privately operated hospitals is going to cause a great increase in these kinds of incidents. So we need to rethink that.

I would hope that as the auditor looks at these issues in time, he's going to find a recommendation strongly against the hiving off of these services to separate and totally different entities from the main operation of the hospital. It's going to be a huge mistake, and it's going to be on the backs of this government and the one before them that took us down this road in the first place.

Finally, we believe that there is an office in Ontario that can help us right now to start providing the kind of transparency, the kind of accountability, the kind of oversight that we just don't see with hospital boards in communities across the province. Different boards are different and some very respected, well-renowned people sit on hospital boards in hospital jurisdictions or in the cities and LHINs across the province. But I've got to tell you, people don't have any clue who those people are, generally speaking. There's very little accountability. There's very little public participation in hospital boards. They're not elected bodies.

**1650**

Quite frankly, one of the things that this government can do immediately is expand the scope of the Ombudsman of Ontario, a place where there sits already the expertise, the ability, the proof of the office in terms of getting into the systemic problems that exist in large organizations and in small organizations. We know we have an Ombudsman. Let's use the Ombudsman.

Yes, we will support this motion, but we believe there are a number of things that we need to do and that this minister needs to do today to begin to deal with this crisis in Ontario.

**Mr. David Oraziotti:** I'm pleased today to have the opportunity to speak to the opposition day motion with regard to this issue. On this side of the House, we take this issue very seriously, contrary to some of the comments that are coming from the opposition benches about our government being not interested in acknowledging or being concerned about this particular issue.

I want to highlight a couple of the things that we've done that I think very clearly demonstrate our commitment to ensuring patient safety in the province of Ontario

and highlight some of the investments we've made around this issue, as well as the work by many of the experts in the field who have made recommendations that in the case of the particular hospital in my riding, the Sault Area Hospital, have already been implemented and have been validated by the Office of the Chief Coroner.

First of all, I want to say that the Conservative motion is not going to help us deal more effectively with this issue because this investigative process has already taken place. Certainly, in the case of Sault Area Hospital, a full and thorough investigation by the chief coroner's office has been followed through on and those recommendations have been made available for all hospitals in the province of Ontario to review. I think it's very clear by our government's record that we're certainly continuing to move forward with openness, transparency and accountability when it comes to infection control in the province of Ontario.

As I hear the opposition members talking about another study, another inquiry, more recommendations, more reports—that's not what we need. People need action. They need these recommendations implemented. The recommendations are out there. We're all very much aware of how this disease is spread and how we can prevent it, reduce it, and those recommendations are being implemented. In the case, as I've said, of the Sault Area Hospital, they've certainly been implemented.

The chief medical officer of health and the coroner's office have stated that a public inquiry would not help us move any faster to public reporting and would not provide any new information to health care providers. So, while it makes for good theatrics here in the Legislature to have the opposition members suggest that this is important to do because they feel it's convenient to do this, it really does not add to the importance of the dialogue and the moving forward effectively with recommendations that need to be implemented to improve patient safety in the province of Ontario.

I'm certainly taking my advice from medical experts in the field and not from other members in the Legislature when it comes to these types of decisions. Politicians should not be making these decisions. Experts in the health field should be making these decisions that will help us move forward with better patient infection control. I think that's important to recognize.

There have already been three independent investigations into *C. difficile*: the Sault coroner's jury, the Joseph Brant hospital investigation and the Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee recommendations. Let's get on with the implementation. Let's work to build capacity in our hospitals, to build the capacity for the reporting processes that we are moving forward with, with eight additional areas of reporting for hospitals in the province of Ontario. Let's not get bogged down and tripped up on further investigation, further inquiries and further studies, because we know what the recommendations say. We know what the coroner's office is saying.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. David Oraziotti:** I see that members in the opposition aren't interested in supporting what the coroner's office is saying in terms of how we should move forward. That's the message that I get today. The motion, I think, in many ways is redundant, because we know what we need to do to help prevent these types of infections in the province of Ontario.

In my riding in Sault Ste. Marie, the Sault Area Hospital has taken steps to protect patient safety. In fact, the chief coroner's observations were consistent with SAH's findings at the start of the outbreak and support the plan that the hospital has in partnership with the Ministry of Health. The plan, which was developed with the assistance of Dr. Michael Gardam—I'm speaking with respect to the Sault Area Hospital experience. Dr. Michael Gardam is an infection control expert who made 29 recommendations dealing with a wide range of changes, which have all now been implemented.

I'm very pleased that we're moving forward in this regard. I also think it's important to recognize that in Sault Ste. Marie we're providing funding for a new hospital, and in the new hospital, we're going to have double the single-bed room capacity that we had in the old hospital—about 25% of the beds were single-room beds, and in the new hospital, about 50% of the beds are going to be single room. Everyone knows that there is a correlation between overcrowding in hospitals and availability of single rooms. The opposition party had eight years to move forward on a new hospital in my community. It didn't go anywhere. I'm not sure how many hospitals the NDP built, but I don't think it was very many, if any at all. Frankly, I don't know what a \$3-billion cut to health care funding is going to do to help us move forward with the additional infrastructure and resources that we need to improve health care in Ontario.

So I will not be supporting the opposition motion. I'm going to be listening to recommendations from medical health experts in the province of Ontario.

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** I'm pleased to join in the debate today that an independent investigation into the sad and tragic deaths caused by the outbreak of C. difficile in Ontario hospitals be done by the McGuinty government and reported back to the Legislature in 90 days.

It's regrettable that it's now June 10, and an opposition day motion is needed to bring attention to this matter that this Premier and the Minister of Health have known about since 2004. Four years and over 260 deaths later, the minister still has no desire to grasp the importance of this issue. Just a few short weeks ago in this chamber, we discussed how the Minister of Health Promotion isn't doing her job of protecting the health of Ontarians, and today we're debating the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's same style and approach.

Yesterday, I asked the Premier in the Legislature here about an investigation into the deaths of at least 260 Ontarians due to C. difficile. He referenced an investigation into this matter as "good theatre." I see that his Liberal colleagues are reading their scripts and they're also calling it "good theatre." I've heard other Liberal

members say that this afternoon. This is a Liberal Premier who has broken more promises than anybody else in the history of Ontario. He has the nerve to refer to an investigation into the deaths of four times as many people as died from SARS as "good theatre." You guys should hang your heads in shame.

Let's talk about theatre here for a couple of minutes. You let those deaths happen under your watch, when you knew better in 2004. You knew better. You were told—and you didn't. Now, let's refer to some of the people in the Legislature, the Liberals, who have used good drama in the past. Let's take the House leader, Mr. Bryant, whose theatrics are unmatched. We've all seen him. We know he practised this many times. In June 2003, he said that the only way to get to the truth is to have a public inquiry. So, I say to the Liberal House leader, what's the problem? Why aren't we having a public inquiry? Was that just play-acting?

Let me see. Here's some theatre: When referring to a public inquiry, a Liberal MPP stated that "anything less than this would amount to nothing more than an absolute cover-up and stonewall on the part of the government of Ontario." This was Dwight Duncan in 2000.

Let me add another one. The finance minister's profound yet theatrical opposition pointed out more than 10 years ago that "there is no compelling reason why the government cannot and should not call a public inquiry." Despite the insincerity of the member, I can't disagree with that statement. What I can agree with is the fact that, like so many of his Liberal caucus colleagues, he said one thing while he was in opposition, and now he feels he doesn't need to be responsible to the people of Ontario.

Let me see: another Liberal member, referring to 30 deaths from SARS. "It is perfectly reasonable for you to call a public inquiry. Do it in the name of the people who did die. Do it in the name of the health care workers who were on the front line," said the now Minister of Economic Development and Trade in 2003. Wow. Isn't it interesting that she doesn't feel the same way today, despite the fact that nearly 10 times more Ontarians have died from C. difficile.

**1700**

But hang on; she wasn't done. Let me quote her again: "These are significant, tough questions.... The only way that we will get to this is through a public inquiry." And today? She's nowhere near as dramatic. As a matter of fact, she's silent and she's not being accountable to the people of Ontario.

There are more encore performances by the members opposite. We've waited long enough; we deserve to hear some theatrics from Mr. McGuinty: "Public inquiries give us facts on what happened in the past, and they give us valuable recommendations for the future. They give the public the answers that they desire and to which I believe they are entitled." This is the Premier that, when in opposition and after, passionately discussed the fact that 23 deaths occurred from SARS. He went on to say, "We all share a very heavy responsibility to learn from

this tragedy.... The holding of a public inquiry will help us do just that.”

In case you missed it, I will repeat again—and you can look in Hansard—yesterday he said a public inquiry was “theatre.” What a change in the Premier’s passionate view. His accountability changed the minute he walked across the floor. The difference today—and his Minister of Health is being held to the fire on accountability in Ontario—is that nearly 10 times as many deaths have occurred from an infectious disease he has known about since 2004 as occurred during the SARS scare. So today I say to the Premier and the Liberal members I’ve mentioned, if you truly believe in what you’ve said in the past, you will support today’s motion.

I want to close quickly by saying that the dramatic statement from the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, the minister whose level of concern for the care of elderly Ontarians is summed up by the fact that he said he would wear a diaper—there’s no good excuse to reject the call for a public inquiry, said Mr. Smitherman.

The show’s over, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi:** Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on this motion. At the outset, I’d like to state that I will be voting against this particular motion.

Before I get into the reasons that I will be voting against the motion, let me start by thanking our health care professionals—our doctors, our nurses—who work very hard to ensure that our hospitals are places where people go to get the best medical care in the world. Despite all the difficulties, despite the cutbacks from the past, from the Conservative government, they have always banded together to provide the best service possible.

I speak from experience. Not that long ago, my father had to go to the hospital in Hamilton due to a heart emergency, and given that he had recently received some treatment in a hospital in another country, the hospital staff were extremely careful to ensure that he was properly quarantined and other patients were not being put at risk due to what he may have been exposed to. I was extremely impressed by the precautions and various steps which were taken by the hospital staff.

We are looking at a situation in Ontario where a number of investigations have been undertaken in order to determine the causes of *C. difficile* in our hospitals, and this is not the time to have more public inquiries and investigations and that sort of stuff. That is not going to solve the issue at hand. What we need to do is act. We need to ensure that we provide our hospitals and our health care workers the proper tools necessary to ensure that public health is properly maintained. That is why we have seen the requirements for mandatory public reporting, starting by September 30, in terms of *C. difficile*, MRSA, VRE, and other steps which have been taken by various hospitals.

If I could just talk about the Ottawa Hospital and the steps they have taken in terms of infection control, Ottawa Hospital is nationally recognized for its leadership in infection control. They have a very effective

infection prevention and control program, which is a key component to their quality patient care. The program helps ensure the protection of patients, health care workers, staff and visitors from preventable nosocomial disease, through surveillance, education, consultation, outbreak investigation, research, and the development of policies and procedures. There are a total of eight infection control practitioners in the Ottawa area in various hospitals ensuring that infection such as *C. difficile* is properly controlled.

To combat this global rise in infection rates, the Ottawa Hospital has also implemented several measures to address infection rates, including hand hygiene programs with increased access to alcohol gel; screening patients in admissions for silent carriage of resistant organisms; use of single rooms, gowns and gloves to control transmission; renovations to patient care areas; increased housekeeping resources; and education awareness campaigns for patients and health care providers.

These are the kinds of initiatives that we need to ensure and provide the essential tools necessary to our health care providers, not to mention to keep investing in our health care system, which very much has been a key mark of this McGuinty government. Since 2003, in Ottawa alone we have spent millions and millions of dollars in our health care system.

Just this morning, I’m very proud that Premier McGuinty announced an addiction strategy for our youth in Ottawa, dedicating \$5.5 million in a whole addiction strategy, providing treatment beds for youth 13 to 17 years old, making sure that we provide for outreach and prevention of substance abuse in our schools for kids, and supportive housing to ensure that we continue to build a healthy community, a healthy Ontario.

That is why infection control in our hospitals is important, and that’s why we don’t need more investigations. What we need is to provide tools to our health care providers so they can continue the excellent job they do. In Ottawa, we have seen some very positive results in that regard.

**Mr. John O’Toole:** I want to put some context into the debate this afternoon on the opposition day motion. The remarks pretty well summarized by our critic, Elizabeth Witmer, are something that the public should be aware of. She’s been leading the fight on this and it’s being ignored by the McGuinty government. That’s basically the context, but the history here in these rash outbreaks in the health care system—you have to look to the history to know the future, because the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour.

But this is a real contradiction, because if you look at 2003 and you look at Mr. Smitherman at the time in opposition in the SARS outbreak—I think it was 44 lives at stake, and a very short timeline ramp-up to it. Little was known about it by anyone, including the medical officers of health. It was difficult, yet defined—but there was an inquiry called and quick action was taken under the leadership of Elizabeth Witmer. That’s the history.

Now, what provoked that? I have to give the opposition of that day, Mr. Smitherman, some credit when, on May 6, he called for the inquiry, and we responded. So if you look at our motion today, that's really all we're talking about. It was two or three weeks, but the point is, in these things they should drop the political rhetoric and do the right thing.

I'm concerned now because with C. difficile there's no information available to the public. There are no reporting requirements. There's no accountability—a typical failure of leadership here, a failure to report to the people of Ontario on a threat to families. I'm going to bring a specific case to this, but 14 hospitals have voluntarily reported and we have 306 deaths. What are we doing? Nothing. Yes, they've had an expert, Dr. Michael Baker, and he has reported and has called exactly what Mr. Smitherman should be doing, and he's not following his advice.

But I want to put a real human face to this tragedy. I have a constituent I haven't seen for some time whom I used to work with at General Motors. His name is Vic Humphreys. Mr. Humphreys sent me an e-mail and also gave me full permission to use the sad statement that I'm about to read. His mother died in March. She contracted C. difficile, was diagnosed at Oshawa General Hospital and died on March 15, 2008. It's a tragedy and I express our sympathy. It reminds me of our need to express sympathy to the families and groups of people affected by C. difficile. Are they getting the proper supports today? That's my first instinct.

It isn't political jabber that's going on here. And Mr. Humphreys took the time to bring the tragedy of this whole thing. Here's the case: His mother is since deceased. I'll read it because I want to get it right.

#### 1710

“My father who is 94 and currently a resident in a nursing home”—in Port Hope, in long-term care—“is suffering from what can only be described as ‘chronic C. difficile.’”

His mother got it and, I believe, infected the father—he was sent to Scarborough Centenary Hospital, where he contracted it—C. difficile. They discharged him from there to the long-term-care home where his mother was. The mother had it, he had it, and they're in long-term care. How many other people in that Port Hope long-term-care facility might have the same problem? Because he contracted the virus at Rouge Valley. He was given a drug in the hospital. This is the most important thing: “The hospital deemed him to be ready for discharge and he was sent to a nursing home. At this time he has been given three courses of Vancomycin....” He did not have to pay for it and yet, when he was sent home, he had to pay \$1,000 for it—not covered under any plan. This is two-tier health. Those who can afford it stay alive and those who can't, die. That's what the minister is doing. It's not just the actual C. difficile issue; it's the treatment. Modalities are very expensive. They're not covered. Those who have plans can pay for it and might live longer, and

those that don't—and by the way, the rest of the people are affected for the rest of their lives.

I have other cases and the member from York North has a similar story. This is about people's lives. We're calling for an inquiry to put a stop to this and bring some accountability to this important health care outbreak.

**Mrs. Liz Sandals:** I am pleased to rise and speak to this item today. I think it's important that we recognize that as we're here this afternoon having this debate about C. difficile, everyone in this chamber is agreed that it is a very important issue, that it is a serious health care issue and that we need to address it, that we need to support Ontario's hospitals in addressing the problem of C. difficile and other infections that are spread in hospitals.

Where the point of disagreement comes is on what is the most effective way of getting on with addressing the problem of C. difficile. We in the government believe that a public inquiry is not necessarily the best way of getting on with it. What a public inquiry would do is give us a very lengthy process when we discuss what the problem is and what we should do with it. In fact, that has already happened in this province three times; we don't need to do it a fourth time. So my colleague from Sault Ste. Marie talked about the fact that there was already a coroner's inquest in that city concerning hospital deaths related to C. difficile. That was a very public process, and the coroner's jury presented recommendations on how we should address it which are quite public. There was an investigation into some C. difficile deaths at the Joseph Brant hospital. Again, the information is public; the recommendations were public. I did note that the member from Kitchener-Waterloo has referenced several times today the actions of the health minister in Northern Ireland, who I take it—and I have no reason to disbelieve her—appointed an expert panel to look at the issue in Northern Ireland. This is a worldwide problem. I would point out that essentially the same thing has already happened here in Ontario. If anything, we are ahead of the much lauded minister from Northern Ireland, because in fact we have already appointed a Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee, and that advisory committee, made up of experts—an expert panel, if you will—has already provided us with the recommendations.

So we do in fact have a good idea of what needs to be done. What we need to do is work with hospitals to make sure that we get on with getting those infection control measures in place in each and every hospital in Ontario.

There's also been considerable comment about how many deaths there have been, what we know about the problem, and whether we need more information and how to get at that. I would like to point out that, based on the recommendations of some of these previous investigations, that process is already in place. The Minister of Health has already advised hospitals all around Ontario that they need to provide public reporting of C. difficile infections in each and every hospital, and that reporting will become mandatory by September 30.

While it hasn't been mentioned here this afternoon very much, there are actually some other infectious agents that are often associated with infections that people pick up in hospitals. One is often referred to as MRSA. The third is the VRE. Again, because in different areas we've had different problems, with different germs and hospital mortality rates, all of those will be reported starting December 31, 2008. So in fact the request to provide information and to make that mandatory, and I would add to make that information public, we have already set that in place.

In addition to that, we will be requiring mandatory public reporting for central line infection. Again, sometimes you find infections that occur in hospitals when people get intravenous injections, ventilator-assisted pneumonia, surgical-site infections and hand hygiene. All of these will be reported by April 30, 2009.

I would just say that we are already addressing the problem, and that's what is important, to get on with the implementation of control.

**Mrs. Julia Munro:** In the moments I have, I want to leave a couple of messages. We've already looked at the fact that for many of the members opposite it's a question of, "That was then, this is now," in terms of the kind of quotes they provide when we look back at the requests they made for an inquiry into SARS.

But I want to talk about a family in my riding. It was one of those classic cases of someone who went into the hospital, in this case to be treated for a quadruple bypass, and having successfully survived the surgery, was then a victim of *C. difficile*. One of the things that struck the family—and we had a conversation about this—was the kind of inconsistency within the hospital in terms of isolation, whether people approached him gowned or not gowned.

It struck me as a contrast to the time of the SARS outbreak in Toronto. Not only is there the question of the years of this government ignoring *C. difficile*, as opposed to the prompt reaction we had towards SARS, but also the protocols that were put in place. I certainly remember that everyone who came in contact with anyone was gowned, masked and gloved. This government is now saying, "We're going to act, yes. We don't need an inquiry," but then you can have patients who can tell you that there isn't a protocol. Some are gowned, some aren't.

It just speaks to the fact that this government has come late in this process. They have allowed all of the reports to go unchallenged and unmet. They have allowed people in this province—200 or more, frankly—to lose their lives. It's really a question of supporting this motion today.

1720

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** Let me begin today by also extending my sympathies to the families who have been affected by *C. difficile* and find themselves obviously in some very difficult circumstances.

But I do appreciate the opportunity to speak to this motion today, although I must say I'm a bit surprised by

what seems to be a bit of an odd choice to me for a motion from the official opposition—which is the second consecutive odd choice, I might say. Last week we saw the official opposition bring forward a motion dealing with rural school closures in Ontario. This, coming from a party that—at the end of their mandate, we found ourselves in a situation with about 15,000 fewer teachers working in the system at a time of increasing enrolment. Of course, during our period, where there is declining enrolment, we are seeing an incredible level of investment in rural schools on top of what was already there before. And yet under that circumstance, they brought forward that motion; a bit of an odd choice, I would expect.

Today we see ourselves here today with another motion that's interesting: a health-care-related motion brought forward by the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, coming from the official opposition—again, a party which is interested in taking \$3 billion out of the health care system. I guess there's a link between \$3 billion and an ability to fix these kinds of issues, as they see it. I'm not quite sure how those two things connect.

I have to tell you, it is a bit difficult for me as a member from northern Ontario to sit here and watch the official opposition bring forward motions related to health care. As someone who comes from Thunder Bay, I had first-hand experience of how that party, when they were in government, dealt with health-care-related issues as part of a whole host of issues that they dealt with.

I can go back to the Northern Ontario School of Medicine. I can tell you, when I was a member of city council, that member who brought forward this motion today, who was the health minister at that time—and I remember being a member of city council who came down to have a meeting with that particular minister, and the dismissive attitude that we received when we were trying to achieve a medical school campus for Thunder Bay. I remember it very clearly. I also remember the former member whom they had appointed to lead the charge on that—Jim Gordon, I think was his name; a member from Sudbury who used to sit in this chamber beside Mike Harris. What did that guy do when he made a recommendation back to them? I was attending those meetings on behalf of the city of Thunder Bay while we were trying to get a medical school campus for our community. I remember it very clearly. On behalf of the mayor, I attended those meetings, and then I would leave those meetings and I'd go back to the mayor and I'd say, "This gentleman's a snake oil salesman; we're not going to get the medical school campus. This guy's selling snake oil." Sure enough, what happened a short time later? Jim Gordon, on behalf of that minister who brought this motion forward today, announced publicly that the city of Thunder Bay was not going to get a campus for the medical school. That's how they attended to health care issues in northern Ontario. That's what they did: publicly announced it. And yet today if you talk to them about what they did when they were in government, they'll tell you that they supported the



Northern Ontario Medical School and that it was they who are responsible for the establishment of the medical school in Thunder Bay when just the opposite was the case. They publicly announced that they wouldn't do it, and yet today they crow and they walk around and strut around this place like they attended to the issues in Thunder Bay and northern Ontario.

The same thing with the new hospital; they do it on the new hospital as well. They publicly announced that they wouldn't build a new hospital for us. They publicly announced that they wanted to retrofit a 50-year-old building—that's what they wanted to do when that member was the health minister—and eliminate 200 to 300 acute care beds in our community. That's the reaction we got from them, and yet still they come here today and they bring forward, as their idea for an opposition day motion, a health care issue when they dumped all over the people of Thunder Bay and north-western Ontario when they had the opportunity to address these issues. And today, somehow, I'm supposed to figure out rationally in my mind how a party that wants to take \$3 billion out of health care wants to address issues like *C. difficile*. We've had it already: a Soo coroner's jury—

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm rather shocked at what I'm hearing. I guess the first thing: I would certainly ask the member to withdraw what he has just said. It was our party that made the announcement about the new—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** I appreciate the information.

I'll return to the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan, who still has the floor.

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** Thank you, Speaker. Unbelievable. She continues to stand up in her place and mislead the people in this—

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Bruce Crozier:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I heard the word “lying” across the floor. Perhaps the honourable member would consider that.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** I didn't hear it.

I return to the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan, who has the floor.

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** They publicly announced, that government, that there would not be a campus for the medical school in Thunder Bay; publicly announced that they wanted to retrofit a 50-year-old hospital in Thunder Bay and not build a new hospital and take 200 to 300 acute care beds out of our community. That was the point of your Health Services Restructuring Commission, which visited Thunder Bay before it visited other communities in the province. That's exactly what they did.

On this particular issue, calling for a public inquiry—why? To slow things down even more so that we can't implement what has already been implemented?

**Mrs. Julia Munro:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would just ask that the debate be on the motion that is before us.

**Interjection:** It is.

**Mrs. Julia Munro:** I haven't heard “*C. difficile*.”

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** I appreciate you drawing that to the Speaker's attention, and I would caution the member—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** I would ask the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan to please take his seat.

I would ask him to make his comments with respect to the text of the motion. I return to the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** Thank you, Speaker; I appreciate that. The text of the motion is connected directly to a party that brings forward a motion and is talking about trying to address health care issues in Ontario when they want to take \$3 billion out of health care. Perhaps it's too bad their clock has run out, or they could explain to the people of the province how they could do that.

Speaker, my time is almost up. Three independent investigations into this issue already; we've already begun implementing the recommendations coming from most of those investigations—more to be implemented. A public inquiry would do nothing but slow this down.

I appreciate the time.

**Mrs. Maria Van Bommel:** I also have to stand and speak against this motion. It's very clear in the words of the chief medical officer of the province and the coroner's office when they state that an inquiry will not move this further or faster along, and I absolutely agree with that.

One of the members talked about “good theatre.” There is a place and a time for an inquiry, but I also think that the public has become very wary about the cost benefit of inquiries, especially when the answers and the solutions are there and we need to move with them rather than slow things down by having inquiries.

Hospitals do provide the primary control on this. They are the ones who know the risks, and they have been trying to develop strategies and implement infection control strategies and processes for their hospitals. I want to take two of my own hospitals in my riding into consideration when I talk about that, and those are the two hospitals within the Middlesex Hospital Alliance. They're both small rural hospitals. They've been recognized by the Ontario Hospital Association for the work they've been doing on infection control. They've been partnered in the last five years with 3M through infection prevention services to conduct a complete assessment and analysis of prevention and control of infection.

I want to bring into the record what their data is. Their data is already published for the public to see on their hospital website. On that site, they have the distinction of having below the Canadian and Ontario averages for infection control. They are working with three hospital-acquired infections that they report on, and as it happens they are MRSA, VRE and *C. difficile*. In Strathroy, one of the two hospitals, their *C. difficile* record for 1,000 patient admissions in 2005 was 5.5%. In 2006-07, they

had it down to 2.89%, which brings them below the Ontario average. The Ontario average is 7.4%. Newbury Hospital, a Four Counties Health Services hospital, per 1,000 patient admissions was 6.5% in 2005 and in 2007-08 was 6.38%—again below the Ontario average. They are benchmarking. They have recognized the need to do this. Everyone in my riding can see this information on the website. This is public information.

This hospital has acted. They have set the best practices for this type of thing. They know what to do. They don't need an investigation. They don't need an inquiry. They're already reporting to our constituents. All we're saying is that by September 30 we will have mandatory reporting from all hospitals. But I'll tell you right now that my hospitals are ready to do it tomorrow, and I know a number of the hospitals in this province are that far along. So why would we slow this down with investigations and unnecessary inquiries?

1730

**Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** It is a pleasure to stand here today and join the debate on the opposition day motion, which requests that we have a public inquiry on this issue. I think, right from the start, all members from all parties of this House express their condolences to the family about the tragic circumstances. The tragedy of a death in the family is something that I think we have all experienced in some way and is something that we don't wish upon anybody, regardless of the cause, regardless of the way that that death has occurred.

I think we're being asked today whether we want to do something or talk about something—two very distinctly different things. What the opposition motion says to me is that there has been an issue within the hospitals, and I don't think there is any argument about that. I think we'd all agree that that has been the case. The question that is being put before us is, what do you do next? What have you done, and what will you do next? What the opposition party is asking us to do today is, in my opinion, to think about it some more and talk about it some more to see if some sort of a discussion is going to make this better. That may be a good idea if it had the support, I would think, of the chief medical officer of health or the chief coroner. If you take an analysis of the motion that has been put forward today and the responses that we've received to date on this issue, you will find that the people whose expertise we rely on, whose expertise has been relied on in the past by the opposition parties on both sides, have said, "No. A public inquiry in this case is not what you want to do. What you want to do is take action." What they are doing, what both gentlemen are doing, is supporting the efforts that are being made by the current Minister of Health to deal with this very, very important issue.

I think many of us in this House have been touched, and certainly I have been touched, by a very similar issue. I had a close relative in a hospital in Mississauga who contracted MRSA. I don't know if anybody else in the House has been through that experience, but certainly at a time when somebody is at their sickest, when

somebody is at a time in their life when they've got a very serious illness, to have to go through the quarantines, to have to go through the isolation, to know that you cannot go and visit that person because they are suffering through this infection, is something that I don't think any of us in this House would downplay at all. It's something we all treat very seriously. It certainly was not a pleasant experience for us to go through, or for the relative who found themselves in that situation.

I really don't think we should be using this to further any political agenda. What we should be doing is what we think is the right thing to do next. Whom do you rely on for that type of information? As I've said, it's very, very clear that the chief medical officer of health and the chief coroner's office have stated that a public inquiry simply would not help us move any faster. Surely that's what we all want in this House: to move quickly, rapidly, on this issue. I believe that would be a sentiment that all members would express, and it would not provide any more new information to our health care providers within the province of Ontario. As has been said by other speakers, we've already had three independent investigations into C. difficile. The Sault Ste. Marie coroner's jury, the one in a neighbouring municipality to mine at Joe Brant and the provincial infectious disease advisory committee recommendations have all come forward and have all been able to provide advice and some learning to the government of the day and to the opposition parties. But surely now is the time to act. It's time to implement those recommendations, and it's time to move forward on a practical, day-to-day basis within the health care system in Ontario.

Hospitals have a primary obligation for controlling their own environments. They have this information as well now. As a result of the investigations, this information is now in the health care system in a fashion that simply wasn't there before. Some of it is very simple: things like rigorous hand washing. Some of it is just an increased dedication to things like sanitation and cleanliness. Dr. Richard Schabas, who was the provincial medical officer of health during the SARS outbreak, has commented on this, and I will quote him: "I'm not sure a public inquiry is necessarily the logical next 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, and I think largely we know what the underlying problems are with C. difficile."

I say that I share that sentiment. I say that I think all members of the House would want us to act on behalf of those members of the public who have experienced a tragedy in their own lives as a result of this infection. Surely they would want the government to act quickly and rapidly and move to put an end to this type of infection occurring in the hospitals that has caused such a tragedy to these families. It's time to move on.

I think that the opposition motion that is being debated today, I don't believe—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Thank you very much.

Mrs. Witmer has moved that the Legislative Assembly calls upon the McGuinty government to restore public confidence in Ontario's health care system by immediately initiating an independent investigation into the sad and tragic deaths caused by outbreaks of C. difficile in Ontario hospitals and report back to the Legislature in 90 days; and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls upon the government of Ontario to hold a public inquiry to determine what steps can be taken to reduce the risks of outbreaks and prevent further deaths related to C. difficile. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1736 to 1746.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Mrs. Witmer has moved opposition day motion number 5. All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be counted by the table staff.

#### Ayes

Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	Runciman, Robert W.
DiNovo, Cheri	Klees, Frank	Savoline, Joyce
Dunlop, Garfield	Marchese, Rosario	Scott, Laurie
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norm	Shurman, Peter
Gélinas, France	Munro, Julia	Sterling, Norman W.
Hillier, Randy	Murdoch, Bill	Witmer, Elizabeth
Horwath, Andrea	O'Toole, John	Yakabuski, John

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be counted by the table staff.

#### Nays

Arthurs, Wayne	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Balkissoon, Bas	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Bartolucci, Rick	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bentley, Christopher	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramsay, David
Brown, Michael A.	Kular, Kuldip	Rinaldi, Lou
Caplan, David	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Chan, Michael	Mauro, Bill	Sandals, Liz
Colle, Mike	McMeekin, Ted	Smith, Monique
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Smitherman, George
Dickson, Joe	Milloy, John	Sousa, Charles
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol	Van Bommel, Maria
Duguid, Brad	Moridi, Reza	Watson, Jim
Duncan, Dwight	Naqvi, Yasir	Zimmer, David
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Oraziotti, David	
Fonseca, Peter	Pendergast, Leeanna	

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):** The ayes are 21; the nays are 43.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** I declare the motion defeated.

*Negatived.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Pursuant to standing order 37, the question that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

## ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

### SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** The member for Nickel Belt has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given today by the Minister of Children and Youth Services on the matter of clothing allowances. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes. I recognize the member for Nickel Belt.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** I'd ask the House to come to order. I have to be able to hear the member for Nickel Belt make her presentation. Would the House please come to order.

I recognize the member for Nickel Belt.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** This morning I asked a question of the Minister of Children and Youth Services about a winter clothing allowance and back-to-school allowance for people on Ontario Works. The minister said, "A single mom with two kids on social assistance is today 27% better off—a 27% higher income now—than when we were elected." I quote from the Hansard.

That number is rather surprising to me and certainly requires some explanation. So I would ask the minister if she could please explain this figure as follows: What are the ages of the children she is referring to? Ontario Works varies depending on the age of the child. What are the dates that this 27% is calculated from, and was the period of time included in there? Also, does that 27% take into account inflation that took place during that period of time she is referring to? Also, does this take into account the child benefits that are supposed to increase on July 1, 2008? That has not taken place yet, given that we are in June. Does it also include federal programs such as the child benefit and the GST credit that the federal government gives to low-income families in Ontario? Does it also include the increase to the federal child benefit that the province has allowed to go through?

When we look at it, our most recent figures—and those are also shared by the income advocacy centre—for a lone parent with one child under the age of six go as follows: In 2003, which is when she got elected, when the government came into power, the maximum social assistance for a single parent with one child aged 6 or under, adjusted for 2007 figures, was \$11,492 a year. In 2007, the maximum social assistance rate for a single parent with one child under the age of 6, here again adjusted for 2007 figures, is \$11,458. So our calculation shows a decrease, a percentage change of 0.3 lower than when they came into power, a far cry from 27%.

When we take into account all of the above changes but we also take into account inflation, changes to the federal benefits, the Ontario child benefit, then we come to a real increase of 4%. So to hear the minister say, "a 27% higher income now" and "27% better off"—it's

very misleading to the public to suggest that social assistance recipients are far ahead, in real terms, of where they were in 2003. It leaves the wrong impression of the situation of people on social assistance.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** Do you think so?

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Yes, I do think that it leaves the wrong impression. It also gives the wrong impression of this government's policy. Like, 27% sounds pretty good—

**Interjection:** Sounds substantial.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** —sounds substantial. The reality, in our calculation, is far less; it's between a minus 3% real increase or, if we take into account the federal benefits and the new Ontario child benefit, we are looking at 4%. So where is the discrepancy coming from? How can she justify using, "A single mom with two kids on social assistance is ... 27% better off—a 27% higher income now—than when we were elected"? I would need some explanation.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** I recognize the parliamentary assistant, the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

**Mrs. Maria Van Bommel:** The McGuinty government is fully committed to helping all Ontario children reach their full potential. That is why our government committed \$2.1 billion in new investments over five years in the form of the Ontario child benefit. This historic investment is strengthening families and providing children with the opportunity to achieve their full potential, and it is a significant turning point in Ontario's fight against poverty.

For the first time ever, the Ontario government is providing support to all low-income families, regardless of whether their parents are working or are receiving social assistance. The ongoing support provided by this program will help parents to make the transition to work and financial independence because they will continue to receive the OCB after leaving social assistance.

Beginning this July, eligible families will receive up to \$50 per month per child. When the OCB is fully implemented in 2011, this figure will grow to \$91 per month per child, or \$1,100 per year per child. With the OCB, a single mother with two children on social assistance will receive 27% more compared to when our government took office. When the OCB is fully implemented in 2011, this number will rise to 34%.

I refer the member for Nickel Belt to page 50 of the Ontario budget for 2008, where we have an indication that talks about—the member asked about the age of the children. If you look at page 50, you will see that this is a single parent with two children ages five and seven. This is annualized income since 2003-04.

If we take that further, we will see that the McGuinty government recognizes that Ontarians' extraordinary

costs are more than twice a year. They need support year-round. That's why we're incorporating the back-to-school and winter clothing allowances into the monthly OCB. Over the course of the year, all families will receive more than these amounts of the allowance through the OCB payment and the full national child benefit supplement, which will no longer be deducted from social assistance payments. Any family receiving social assistance who feels they are experiencing significant financial challenges should speak with their case worker about help that may be available to them.

The OCB will not only benefit Ontario's families; it will also benefit municipalities. Because the OCB is funded 100% by the province, social assistance costs for municipalities across Ontario will decrease by \$15 million this year. For the Sudbury region, in 2008-09, that's a saving of \$210,000.

We have already seen examples from some communities using these savings to provide additional support for the vulnerable citizens in their communities. We've also increased social assistance rates for four consecutive years, for a total increase of 9%, after more than a decade of frozen and slashed rates.

That's not all. The McGuinty government has been busy improving supports for vulnerable Ontarians since we took office. We have increased the minimum wage from \$6.85 to \$8.75, and it's on its way to \$10.25, which is more than a 50% increase. We've created 22,000 child care spaces and funded 18,000 affordable housing units and 35,000 rent supplements. More recently, in the budget we doubled student nutrition program funding to \$32 million over three years and added \$135 million for a low-income dental program and \$100 million to repair 4,000 affordable housing units.

We know that while we have made great strides, there is still more to be done to support our most vulnerable. That's why Premier McGuinty, for the first time in the province's history, created a cabinet committee focused on poverty reduction. That is where our minister is today: She is doing consultations in Scarborough at this time. By the end of the year, this committee will have developed a comprehensive strategy, with targets and indicators to measure our progress.

Our government is fully committed to ensuring that Ontarians have the opportunities and the tools they need to reach their full potential, and that is the intent of our minister and our government.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

*The House adjourned at 1800.*

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO**  
**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

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

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

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (L)	Hamilton Mountain	
Albanese, Laura (L)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
<b>Arnott, Ted (PC)</b>	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the committee of the whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (L)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
<b>Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (L)</b>	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
<b>Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (L)</b>	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / procureur general
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
<b>Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (L)</b>	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
<b>Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L)</b>	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Brotten, Laurel C. (L)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Brown, Michael A. (L)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (L)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
<b>Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)</b>	St. Paul's	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, government House leader / ministre des Affaires autochtones, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
<b>Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (L)</b>	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
<b>Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L)</b>	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique
<b>Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (L)</b>	Barrie	Minister of Culture, minister responsible for seniors / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
<b>Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)</b>	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (L)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (L)	Niagara Falls	
<b>Crozier, Bruce (L)</b>	Essex	Deputy Speaker, Chair of the committee of the whole House / Vice- Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Delaney, Bob (L)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (L)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (L)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (ND)	Parkdale–High Park	
<b>Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L)</b>	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
<b>Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (L)</b>	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
<b>Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L)</b>	Windsor–Tecumseh	Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre des Finances, président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Oakville	
<b>Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter</b> (L)	Mississauga East–Cookville / Mississauga-Est–Cookville	Minister of Tourism / ministre du Tourisme
Gélinas, France (ND)	Nickel Belt	
<b>Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John</b> (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
<b>Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael</b> (L)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (ND)	Kenora–Rainy River	Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
<b>Horwath, Andrea</b> (ND)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Third Deputy Chair of the committee of the whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hoy, Pat (L)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (L)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Brampton–Springdale	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (ND)	Welland	New Democratic Party House leader / leader parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Kular, Kuldip (L)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (L)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (L)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (L)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
<b>Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah</b> (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (L)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
<b>McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton</b> (L)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier and President of the Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
<b>McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted</b> (L)	Ancaster–Dundas– Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
McNeely, Phil (L)	Ottawa–Orléans	
<b>Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine</b> (L)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (ND)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
<b>Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John</b> (L)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (L)	Huron–Bruce	
Moridi, Reza (L)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (L)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (L)	Sault Ste. Marie	

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (L)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
<b>Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (L)</b>	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président
<b>Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L)</b>	Scarborough–Agincourt	Minister of Energy / ministre de l'Énergie
Prue, Michael (ND)	Beaches–East York	
<b>Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L)</b>	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (L)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (L)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (L)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Leader of the Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (L)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (L)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
<b>Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (L)</b>	Nipissing	Minister of Revenue / ministre du Revenu
<b>Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L)</b>	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / vice-premier ministre, ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Sorbara, Greg (L)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (L)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (ND)	Toronto–Danforth	
<b>Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L)</b>	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship / ministre des Petites Entreprises et de l'Entrepreneuriat
Van Bommel, Maria (L)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
<b>Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L)</b>	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
<b>Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (L)</b>	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
<b>Wilson, Jim (PC)</b>	Simcoe–Grey	Second Deputy Chair of the committee of the whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	Opposition House leader / leader parlementaire de l'opposition
<b>Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (L)</b>	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (L)	Willowdale	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

**Estimates / Budgets des dépenses**

Chair / Président: Tim Hudak  
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Garfield Dunlop  
Gilles Bisson, Kim Craiton, Bob Delaney,  
Garfield Dunlop, Tim Hudak, Amrit Mangat,  
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole, Lou Rinaldi,  
Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Finance and economic affairs /  
Finances et affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy  
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Jean-Marc Lalonde  
Sophia Aggelonitis, Ted Arnott, Wayne Arthurs,  
Toby Barrett, Pat Hoy, Jean-Marc Lalonde,  
Leeanna Pendergast, Michael Prue, Charles Sousa  
Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**General government / Affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Présidente: Linda Jeffrey  
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: David Oraziotti  
Robert Bailey, Jim Brownell, Linda Jeffrey,  
Kuldip Kular, Rosario Marchese, Bill Mauro,  
Carol Mitchell, David Oraziotti, Joyce Savoline  
Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Government agencies / Organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Présidente: Julia Munro  
Vice-Chair / Vice-Présidente: Lisa MacLeod  
Michael Brown, Kevin Flynn, France Gélinas,  
Randy Hillier, Lisa MacLeod, Julia Munro,  
David Ramsay, Liz Sandals, Maria Van Bommel  
Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Justice Policy / Justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti  
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Jeff Leal  
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Christine Elliott, Peter Kormos,  
Jeff Leal, Reza Moridi, Yasir Naqvi,  
Lou Rinaldi, John Yakabuski, David Zimmer  
Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Legislative Assembly / Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon  
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Kevin Flynn  
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon, Bob Delaney,  
Joe Dickson, Kevin Flynn, Sylvia Jones,  
Norm Miller, Mario Sergio, Peter Tabuns  
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Public accounts / Comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling  
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Jerry Ouellette  
Laura Albanese, Ernie Hardeman, Andrea Horwath,  
Phil McNeely, Jerry Ouellette, Liz Sandals,  
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel, David Zimmer  
Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Regulations and private bills /  
Règlements et projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue  
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Paul Miller  
Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle, Kim Craiton,  
Gerry Martiniuk, Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch,  
Michael Prue, Tony Ruprecht, Mario Sergio  
Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Social Policy / Politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri  
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Vic Dhillon  
Laurel C. Broten, Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo,  
Helena Jaczek, Dave Levac, Shafiq Qadri,  
Khalil Ramal, Laurie Scott, Peter Shurman  
Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch





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